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In - Person Interviewing

The objective of the interview is to obtain an offer. During the interview, you must gather enough information concerning the position to make a decision. To a large degree, the success of your interview will depend on your ability to discover needs and empathize with the interviewer. You can do this by asking questions that verify your understanding of what the interviewer has just told you, without editorializing, or expressing an opinion. By establishing empathy in this manner, you'll be in a better position to freely exchange ideas, and demonstrate your suitability for the job.

Pre-Interview

Research the Company. Utilize the internet to review annual reports, trade magazines and newspaper articles, company information and industry statistics. Know the company's products and services. Be informed about the organization's history, geographical locations, general methods of operation, purpose, reputation, potential growth, organizational structure, etc. Review the industry if possible so that you know what is going on and where the organization stands among its peers. Surf the Internet, organizations have homepages both for recruiting and for internal communication. Based on this research, you will want to formulate some questions about the organization. Always ask the questions in terms of what you can do for the employer or the employer's needs, programs or policies. Be prepared to tell the interviewer why their company is attractive to you. If possible, scout out the location the day before the interview to avoid any last minute problems.

Items to Bring to the Interview

References. We suggest you provide references from a peer, a manager and a user/client - familiar with your work. Include their names and companies as well as home and work phone numbers. Always consult with references for their approval and to ensure that their remarks are positive.

Resume. Review your resume thoroughly and be prepared to discuss all points. Always bring a resume copy identical to the one supplied to the interviewer. Bring along samples of your work, if possible. Never discuss or show proprietary information.

Other Items:

- Bring a folder and pen to jot down notes.
- Prepare and review your questions as well as specific responses.

- Bring directions to the interview location as well as the interviewer's phone number in case you are running late.
- Bring along your recruiter's phone number to give immediate feedback after the interview.
- Bring any supplemental information that might be necessary to complete an employment application if asked to do so. This might include past salary histories, previous home addresses and dates, previous employer addresses, graduation dates, school addresses, etc.

Arrival at the Interview

- Arrive no earlier than fifteen minutes before the interview, but **no** later than five minutes prior to the interview.
- Allow adequate time for traffic, parking, and a last minute appearance check. Review your notes and go in with confidence.
- If asked, complete an application. Complete the application in full and leave no blanks. Do not write "see resume" as a response to any application questions. Respond to "expected salary" questions as "open" and "current salary" questions truthfully. List references if requested. Your recruiter's name should be your response to any "referred by" questions.

The Interview

Enthusiasm. Don't ever compromise in this area. Leave no doubt about your level of interest in the job. You may think it's unnecessary to do this, but employers often choose the more enthusiastic candidate in the case of a two-way tie. It is the universal trait of success. The key to personal success is to do more than you have to, so give the interviewer some examples of your initiative and personal successes and extra efforts. The last thing you want to do is come across as "flat" in your interview. There's nothing inherently wrong with being a laid-back person; but sleepwalkers rarely get hired.

We can list many examples where a candidate's skills matched the requirements for the job, and the only reason they were rejected was their perceived lack of initiative and spunk!

Confidence. No one likes a braggart, but the candidate who's sure of his or her abilities will almost certainly be more favorably received. Conduct yourself with confidence and determination to get the job. You have options, of course, and your interviewer knows this but needs to think that you want a job with this company. Don't play coy. Sell yourself. This is your first meeting and the position, as well as future promotions, may depend on your presentation. Are you going to sell them on the idea of hiring you, or will they sell you on the idea that this job is not for you? You must present a positive attitude to the prospective employer. You must **NOT** seem disinterested or appear to be job shopping. But, never be overbearing, overly aggressive, conceited, or leave the opinion that "you know it all."

Presentation. The first impression is a lasting impression. Unfortunately, most hiring authorities draw conclusions about candidates' way too early in the interview process. Watch your body language. Maintain good posture, leaning slightly forward indicates

interest. Maintain eye contact. Leaning back could give the impression of a lax attitude. The interviewer gives body language as well. You can determine if you are keeping the interviewer's interest by reading his or her body language.

Attitude. STAY POSITIVE! Even if you decide that you don't feel the position is right for you, never communicate that during the interview. Once you get home, you may change your mind. After you have considered it, if you still feel the position is not a good fit for you, let us know and we can withdraw you gracefully, but keep the door open for future consideration.

Your primary goal during an interview is to get an offer. Until you have the offer, there is nothing to decide. So be sure to put your best foot forward!

Conclusion. At the end of the interview, ask, "**where do we go from here?**" or "**what is the next step?**" If you really think you hit a home run, ask, "**When do I start?**" What you are doing is asking for feedback on how well you did.

Post Interview. Send a thank you letter pointing out your strong points that were brought out in the interview and that you are indeed very interested in pursuing the opportunity.

Types of Interviews

All job interviews have the same objective, but employers reach that objective in a variety of ways. You might enter the room expecting to tell stories about your professional successes and instead find yourself selling the interviewer a bridge or editing code at a computer. One strategy for performing your best during an interview is to know the rules of the particular game you are playing when you walk through the door.

The Screening Interview

Companies use screening tools to ensure that candidates meet minimum qualification requirements. Screening interviewers often have honed skills to determine whether there is anything that might disqualify you for the position. Remember - they do not need to know whether you are the best fit for the position, only whether you are not a match. For this reason, screeners tend to dig for dirt. Screeners will hone in on gaps in your employment history or pieces of information that look inconsistent. They also will want to know from the outset whether you will be too expensive for the company.

Some tips for maintaining confidence during screening interviews:

- Highlight your accomplishments and qualifications.
- Personality is not as important to the screener as verifying your qualifications. Answer questions directly and succinctly.
- Be tactful about addressing income requirements. Give a range, and try to avoid giving specifics by replying, "I would be willing to consider your best offer."

- If the interview is conducted by phone, it is helpful to have note cards with your vital information sitting next to the phone. That way, whether the interviewer catches you sleeping or vacuuming the floor, you will be able to switch gears quickly.

The Directive Style

In this style of interview, the interviewer has a clear agenda that he or she follows unflinchingly. Sometimes companies use this rigid format to ensure parity between interviews; when interviewers ask each candidate the same series of questions, they can more readily compare the results. Directive interviewers rely upon their own questions and methods to tease from you what they wish to know. You might feel like you are being steam-rolled, or you might find the conversation develops naturally. Their style does not necessarily mean that they have dominance issues, although you should keep an eye open for these if the interviewer would be your supervisor.

Either way, remember:

- Flex with the interviewer, following his or her lead.
- Do not relinquish complete control of the interview. If the interviewer does not ask you for information that you think is important to proving your superiority as a candidate, politely interject it.

The Meandering Style

This interview type, usually used by inexperienced interviewers, relies on you to lead the discussion. It might begin with a statement like "tell me about yourself," which you can use to your advantage. The interviewer might ask you another broad, open-ended question before falling into silence. This interview style allows you to guide the discussion in a way that best serves you.

The following strategies, which are helpful for any interview, are particularly important when interviewers use a non-directive approach:

- Come to the interview prepared with highlights and anecdotes of your skills, qualities and experiences
- Remain alert to the interviewer. Even if you feel like you can take the driver's seat and go in any direction you wish, remain respectful of the interviewer's role. If he or she becomes more directive during the interview, adjust.
- Ask well-placed questions. Although the open format allows you to shape the interview, running with your own agenda and dominating the conversation means that you run the risk of missing important information about the company and its needs.

The Behavioral Interview

Many companies increasingly rely on behavior interviews because they believe previous behavior indicates future performance. In these interviews, employers use standardized methods to mine information relevant to your competency in a particular area or position. Depending upon the responsibilities of the job and the working environment, you might be asked to describe a time that required problem-solving skills, adaptability, leadership, conflict resolution, multi-tasking, initiative or stress management. You will be asked how you dealt with the situations. Your responses require not only reflection, but also organization. To maximize your responses in the behavioral format, use the three-step STAR process defined below:

Situation or Task	Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
Action you took	Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
Results you achieved	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

- It's also helpful to think of your responses as stories. Arm yourself with a small arsenal of example stories that can be adapted to many behavioral questions.
- Remember that many behavioral questions try to get at how you responded to *negative* situations; you'll need to have examples of negative experiences ready, but try to choose negative experiences that you made the best of or -- better yet, those that had positive outcomes.
- Limit rambling and tangents. While you can't control what is asked, you can control what you say.
- Listen carefully to each question. If you are unsure, rephrase the question and ask for clarification. When you respond, be sure to recall your past accomplishments in detail.
- Anticipate the transferable skills and personal qualities that are required for the job.
- Review your resume. Any of the qualities and skills you have included in your resume are fair game for an interviewer to press.
- Reflect on your own professional, volunteer, educational and personal experience to develop brief stories that highlight these skills and qualities in you. You should have a story for each of the competencies on your resume as well as those you anticipate the job requires.

- Prepare stories by identifying the context, logically highlighting your actions in the situation, and identifying the results of your actions. Keep your responses concise and present them in less than two minutes.

The Audition

For some positions, such as computer programmers or trainers, companies want to see you in action before they make their decision. For this reason, they might take you through a simulation or brief exercise in order to evaluate your skills. An audition can be enormously useful to you as well, since it allows you to demonstrate your abilities in interactive ways that are likely familiar to you. The simulations and exercises should also give you a simplified sense of what the job would be like. If you sense that other candidates have an edge on you in terms of experience or other qualifications, requesting an audition can help level the playing field.

To maximize on auditions, remember to:

- Clearly understand the instructions and expectations for the exercise. Communication is half the battle in real life, and you should demonstrate to the prospective employer that you make the effort to do things right the first time by minimizing confusion.
- Treat the situation as if you are a professional with responsibility for the task laid before you. Take ownership of your work.
- Brush up on your skills before an interview if you think they might be tested.

The Tag-Team Interview

Expecting to meet with Ms. Glenn, you might find yourself in a room with four other people: Ms. Glenn, two of her staff, and the Sales Director. Companies often want to gain the insights of various people when interviewing candidates. This method of interviewing is often attractive for companies that rely heavily on team cooperation. Not only does the company want to know whether your skills balance that of the company, but also whether you can get along with the other workers. In some companies, multiple people will interview you simultaneously. In other companies, you will proceed through a series of one-on-one interviews.

Some helpful tips for maximizing on this interview format:

- Treat each person as an important individual. Get each person's business card at the beginning of the meeting, if possible, and refer to each person by name. If there are several people in the room at once, you might wish to scribble down their names on a sheet of paper according to where each is sitting. Make eye contact with each person and speak directly to the person asking each question.

- Use the opportunity to gain as much information about the company as you can. Just as each interviewer has a different function in the company, they each have a unique perspective. When asking questions, be sensitive not to place anyone in a position that invites him to compromise confidentiality or loyalty.
- Bring at least double the anecdotes and sound-bites to the interview as you would for a traditional one-on-one interview. Be ready to illustrate your main message in a variety of ways to a variety of people.
- Prepare psychologically to expend more energy and be more alert than you would in a one-on-one interview. Stay focused and adjustable.

The Mealtime Interview

For many, interviewing over a meal sounds like a professional and digestive catastrophe in the making. If you have difficulty chewing gum while walking, this could be a challenge. With some preparation and psychological readjustment, you can enjoy the process. Meals often have a cementing social effect-breaking bread together tends to facilitate deals, marriages, friendships, and religious communion. Mealtime interviews rely on this logic, and expand it.

Particularly when your job requires interpersonal skills, companies want to know what you are like in a social setting. Are you relaxed and charming or awkward and evasive? Companies want to observe not only how you handle a fork, but also how you treat your host, any other guests, and the serving staff.

Some basic social tips help ease the complexity of mixing food with business:

- Take cues from your interviewer, remembering that you are the guest. Do not sit down until your host does. Order something slightly less extravagant than your interviewer. If he badly wants you to try a particular dish, oblige him. If he recommends an appetizer to you, he likely intends to order one himself. Do not begin eating until he does. If he orders coffee and dessert, do not leave him eating alone.
- If your interviewer wants to talk business, do so. If she and the other guests discuss their upcoming travel plans or their families, do not launch into business.
- Try to set aside dietary restrictions and preferences. Remember, the interviewer is your host. It is rude to be finicky unless you absolutely must. If you must, be as tactful as you can. Avoid phrases like: "I do not eat mammals," or "Shrimp makes my eyes swell and water."
- Choose manageable food items, if possible. Avoid barbeque ribs and spaghetti.
- Find a discrete way to check your teeth after eating. Excuse yourself from the table for a moment.
- Practice eating and discussing something important simultaneously.

- Thank your interviewer for the meal.

The Follow-up Interview

Companies bring candidates back for second and sometimes third or fourth interviews for a number of reasons. Sometimes they just want to confirm that you are the amazing worker they first thought you to be. Sometimes they are having difficulty deciding between a short-list of candidates. Other times, the interviewer's supervisor or other decision makers in the company want to gain a sense of you before signing a hiring decision.

The second interview could go in a variety of directions, and you must prepare for each of them. When meeting with the same person again, you do not need to be as assertive in your communication of your skills. You can focus on cementing rapport, understanding where the company is going and how your skills mesh with the company vision and culture. Still, the interviewer should view you as the answer to their needs. You might find yourself negotiating a compensation package. Alternatively, you might find that you are starting from the beginning with a new person.

Some tips for managing second interviews:

- Be confident. Accentuate what you have to offer and your interest in the position.
- Probe tactfully to discover more information about the internal company dynamics and culture.