



Successful Interviewing

One of the most important parts of a job search is the interview. It is your chance to stand out as a friendly and helpful person, and to make a good impression on an employer.

At this point, the employer already knows something about you from your application. More than likely, he or she was impressed by your application because you were chosen for an interview.

Although you have been invited to an interview, you still must prepare if you are to get the job you want. You will need to go into the interview knowing what you want in a job, knowing that you can do the job, and knowing the responsibilities and benefits that go with the job. The key always is to be prepared.

During the interview you will need all of your skills and attributes: personal skills, self-esteem, personality, personal hygiene, goals, dress and attitude. Before you go into the interview, take time to think about your experiences and talents, and find out exactly what the job requires.

You can help your interview be more successful if beforehand you:

- **Know your strengths.** This involves looking at yourself and examining why you are qualified for the job. Write down the reasons, and be prepared to tell them to the employer in the interview. Practice saying these reasons out loud.
- **Examine the responsibilities of the job you are seeking.** What skills do you have that fit the requirements of the job? Practice saying them out loud so you can show the manager that you know the skills needed. Learn to discuss your skills without sounding as if you are bragging in the interview.
- **Learn what you can about the company from different people.** Find out how to pronounce the company's name correctly, and learn about the company and its products.

For example: Richardson's Construction Company invited John to come for a job interview. Before the interview, John wrote down all his construction work experiences, including what he did at each job.

He remembered that he was applying to work as a cement finisher, so he looked at his experiences and matched them

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with the job. He planned to tell the company that he helped finish the cement driveway for the new bank and the cement floor for an addition to the newspaper building.

John also asked a friend who worked there about some of the construction jobs that the company was involved in and asked general questions about the company. He prepared himself well for a successful interview.

Because most employers usually ask the same types of questions during interviews, you can prepare easily by practicing answers to them in advance. Here are some common questions asked at job interviews. Write your answers in the space provided, and practice saying them in a happy, positive, confident way:

- Why are you here?

- What can you do for my business?

- Why do you want to work here?

- What kind of work are you looking for? _____

- Do you know anyone who works here? _____

- Do you like to work with others or by yourself? _____

- What would you do if you did not agree with some instructions you were given? _____

- What interests you about our product or company? _____

- What do you know about our company? _____

A request that gives trouble to many people looking for jobs is "Tell me about yourself." It can be answered in many ways. Here are some guidelines:

- Tell the interviewer about some of the things you enjoy doing and some of your goals.
- Describe your work experiences, providing details of your past jobs and duties.
- Talk about your personality and your likes and dislikes, without bragging or seeming too rigid.

After you have prepared to answer some possible interview questions, then you need to concentrate on other areas that can affect your chances of landing the job.

A primary concern is your appearance. First impressions are almost always based on your appearance, and employers often make hiring decisions in the first 10 minutes of the interview.

Although you cannot affect whether you are tall or short, or have sharp or soft features, you **CAN** control your hairstyle and clothes as well as your personal cleanliness and neatness. Make sure that your clothes are clean and pressed, that you are freshly bathed or showered, and that your hair is cut, washed and styled neatly.

Manners also can make a good or bad impression in interviews. Be polite and friendly, and look the manager in the eyes when you are being interviewed. Be sure to thank the manager for considering you for the job and spending time at the interview.

Never take friends or relatives with you to the interview. If an employer wants to meet your husband or wife, you will be asked to bring him or her on the second interview. Also, never bring radios, food or drinks to a job interview.

Interviews usually are simple question-and-answer sessions. Answer each question calmly and honestly, while showing interest and enthusiasm for the job. Your attitude during the interview is very important. Be positive. Don't criticize other bosses or companies. Managers want employees who can work well with others and by themselves.

As the interview progresses, you may ask the manager several questions. This not only helps you, but it also shows the employer that you have enough confidence to ask when you are not quite sure. Here are some questions you can ask:

- What are the duties and responsibilities of the job?
- How does the job fit into the organization? Who supervises workers in this job, or who is in charge?
- What training will the company give in the beginning?
- How much travel does the job involve?
- Does the company transfer people from one job to another?
- Does the job require special union cards or licenses?
- Do you need special work permits or proof of citizenship?

- How would you (the interviewer) describe a successful person who works in this job?

Always prepare at least three or four questions before you go to the interview. Do not pull out pieces of paper during the interview to ask questions, though. Have the questions firmly in your mind before you leave for the interview.

Avoid questions that make you appear unbusinesslike, unprofessional or immature. Some questions you should **NOT** ask:

- When can I expect my first raise?
- I know it is already May, but will I get a vacation this summer?
- Do we work on holidays?
- Do we get a Christmas bonus?
- How many times can I be late for work after I am hired?
- How many sick days do we get each month?

In most cases, these kinds of questions show the employer that you are more interested in money, benefits and personal satisfaction than in helping the company. The employer wants you to be interested in getting a job done.

Here are some tips for successful interviewing.

DO:

- Act naturally.
- Be prompt, neat and courteous.
- Carry out your promises to return requested information, forms or other papers.
- Ask questions about the job.

Good preparation, manners and attitudes will help your interview be a success.

DON'T:

- Criticize yourself or former employers.
- Be late for your interview.
- Freeze or become tense. However, it's normal to be a little nervous.
- Be impatient.
- Be emotional and start crying.
- Talk too much or too little.
- Arrive unprepared.
- Try to be funny unless it's natural for you.

Most interviews last about 30 minutes. When you think it is almost over, briefly sum up your interest in the job. Tell the manager that you think you are qualified for the job and find out what the next step is. Thank the interviewer and leave.

Afterward, call or write a short letter to the company thanking the manager for the interview. This also gives you a chance to show that you are still very interested in the job.

Interviewing is even more important than filling out a job application form. Being determined to get the job you really want will better prepare you for a winning interview. Good preparation, manners and attitudes will help your interview be a success.

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