

## Career Development Center

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## Interviewing

### The interview

The hard work you put into your resume has paid off and you have obtained an interview. The employer was impressed by your credentials on paper, now you will be required to make your first personal appearance. While the resume was key in getting you the interview, the interview will be the deciding factor in getting you the job. Now is your chance to mention all the details you were forced to leave out of your resume. Before you head off to your interview, there are certain variables you should not ignore.

In arranging the interview with the employer, be sure to get this important information:

- The full names and titles of those who will be interviewing you, with the correct spelling and pronunciation.
- The date, time and location of the interview. (It may be necessary for you to ask for directions and estimated travel time.)
- Any specific items you will need to bring to the interview (license, portfolio, etc.).

If you are unsure of the exact location and travel time for your interview, you may want to do a test run trip. You will want to arrive 15 to 20 minutes early and be composed when you arrive. Be courteous to everyone with who you talk. Everyone you come in contact with will be evaluating you. Do your best to remember names of any administrative staff that you may have future phone contact with in checking on the status of the search.

### Dressing for the interview

- Neat and professional
- Conservative and tasteful
- Jewelry should be minimized and appropriate
- Do not create distractions with trendy items
- Women should avoid facial piercings, excessive makeup, and short skirts
- Women should wear panty hose
- Men should avoid earrings
- Men should be clean shaven
- Men should wear a dark suit

**Thirty percent of job candidates are eliminated due to poor grooming** (i.e. unpolished or rundown shoes, white socks for men, unmanageable hair, etc.).

### Items to bring

- Copies of your resume on high grade paper
- Copies of your reference list
- Writing utensil
- Notebook/paper
- Interviewer's contact info
- Samples of your work
- Portfolio
- Prepared questions to ask

- Positive attitude

### **Greeting the interviewer**

- Smile
- Firm handshake
- Address the person formally (i.e., “Hello, Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_.”)
- Do not use a first name until you are invited to do so
- Be at your best and remember that the employer is picturing you in the role
- Be positive and powerful right from the start.

**Seventy-five percent to ninety-five percent of the time, the interview outcome is determined by the first few minutes of it.**

### **Using confident body language**

- Maintain eye contact. This establishes rapport and conveys trustworthiness.
- Lean slightly forward as you sit. This communicates your interest. Avoid sinking into your seat and slouching; sit near the front part of the seat if you have a tendency to do so.
- Try to minimize talking with your hands. It is distracting. A good trick to avoid over-gesturing is to bring along a notebook; holding it in your lap will anchor your hands.
- Smile and nod to reinforce your positive image and attentiveness.
- Attend to nervous habits. They are never flattering.
- Speak slowly and clearly; nerves tend to increase the pace of your speech.
- Let the employer control the pace of the interview. If you are not sure whether you are being understood, ask politely, “Did that answer your question?”
- Put enthusiasm behind your words. Seventy percent of communication is non-verbal. The energy behind your words will convince the listener that you mean and can be accountable for what you say.

Practice these techniques before your interview. If you have not taken advantage of the CDC’s mock interview opportunity, inquire about it.

### **Know yourself and your goals**

It is important for you to present a clear idea of your purpose in pursuing the position. You should be prepared to tie this reasoning into your future career goals. There is no way for you to predict the factors that will influence your career decision making in your professional future. If you are unsure about your definite career goals, make sure to give some thought to your short and long term goals that relate to determining your career path. You should have an idea of two short term and two long term goals, and should be prepared to explain why they are important to you and how you plan to reach them. If you are unsure of your goals, meet with the CDC to solidify them before your interview.

### **Know your resume**

When you get to the interview, your resume will be the document used to develop questions relative to your education, work history and personal interests. In preparing for the interview, practice elaborating on the information listed on your resume. If you are not comfortable doing this with certain parts of your resume, then that content should not be included. All content should positively support your goals and interests. It is necessary for you to review your resume again before the interview so the content is fresh in your mind.

Questions related to past jobs must be supported with examples. Your examples will uncover the unique contribution you made to past positions while demonstrating your ability to contribute as a new hire. Employers will remember anecdotal information more than a yes/no response.

**Interviewer :** “Do you work well under pressure?”

**Weak response:** “Yes. That is never been a problem.”

**Strong response:** “Yes. In my last summer job, we constantly had to work with deadlines set by independent contractors. We planned our work according to these deadlines and completed each assignment efficiently. I enjoy being challenged by the pressure to excel and succeed.”

Before an interview, it is natural that you will feel nervous. Harness that energy and make it work for you. Pay attention to your interviewer and what they need to know and learn about you.

## **Know the employer**

Know the company, its service and products. Be aware of any mission statements or mottos that will give you a clue about the kind of employees for who they are looking.

- What is the company’s service or product?
- What is its present financial status?
- Where is it headquartered and how many offices or locations does it have?
- Has it recently merged or been bought out by another company?
- Is it in a growth phase, stable situation or declining position within the particular industry?

## **Know the job**

If at all possible, it is suggested that you obtain a copy of the job description so you can better understand the position for which you will be interviewing. You will be able to anticipate the types of questions that will be asked; thus, leaving more opportunity to prepare your answers and give the best possible interview. Even more importantly, you will develop a list of questions that you would like to have answered during the interview.

## **Ask questions**

Be prepared for the interview to change pace when you are asked if you have any questions. This may be the first time you are given the chance to control the pace and the direction of the interview. Do not let your energy die at this point. Instead, be prepared with a list of questions (three to five is generally enough) that you will direct at the employer. Use this opportunity to find out information that you are interested to know about the job, company, environment, corporate culture, or search process. Be polite and appropriate in the questions you ask (see sample questions at the end of this section). Do not be demanding or insistent about obtaining information an employer might not have readily available. Questions having to do with salary are often sensitive and need to be handled in a tactful manner (see **Negotiating Salary**).

## **Benefits**

Think carefully about the benefits package offered by a company. Consider the weight of certain benefits when you are considering salary.

### **Topics to consider before accepting a position:**

- |                                    |                                |                                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Life insurance                   | • Disability insurance         | • Dependent day/Well baby care     |
| • Health care transportation       | • HMO/PPO premiums             | • Therapy/Counseling               |
| • Vacation, holidays and sick time | • Health insurance             | • Chiropractic care or acupuncture |
| • Tuition reimbursement            | • Maternity or paternity leave | • Promotion review policy          |
| • Adoption benefits                | • Leave or absence             | • Severance pay                    |
| • Physical exams                   | • Tax deferred plans           | • Relocation expenses              |
| • Salary(Base)                     | • Dental insurance             | • Stock options                    |

- Bonuses (sign-on bonus)
- Incentives
- Alcohol/Drug treatment
- Gain sharing
- Vision/hearing care
- Survivor income

If you have detailed questions about a certain company's benefits, the employer may refer you to the Human Resources Department for more information.

## Questions commonly asked by employers

### Personal

- What do you really want to do in life?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you would describe you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- Why should I hire you?

### Professional

- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- How would you describe the ideal job for you?
- How do you work under pressure?
- Which is more important to you, the money or type of job?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and employee.

### Career Goals

- What are your long range and short range goals and how do you plan to achieve them?
- What specific goals have you established for yourself for the next ten years?
- What do you see yourself doing professionally five years from now? Ten years?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What do you expect to be earning in five years?
- How will a job with us lead you to reaching your goals?

### Educational

- Why did you select your college or university?
- What led you to choose your field of major study?
- What college subjects did you like best? Least? Why?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- In what internship, part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?
- What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
- How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
- If you could do so, would you plan your academic study differently? Why? How?
- Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
- Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?

## **Experience/Job Qualifications**

- In what ways do you think you can make contributions to our company?
- If you were hiring a candidate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
- What do you know about our company?
- Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?

## **Behavioral**

- Can you tell me about a time when you overcame an obstacle at work?
- Could you describe an instance in which you dealt with a difficult customer/client?
- How have you demonstrated leadership at work? Can you give specific examples?
- Can you recall a time when you were on a team when a member wasn't pulling his or her weight?
- What would you say to a customer if they told you they were unhappy with your service?
- How did you feel when you were forced to multi-task in your past jobs?

## **Questions typically asked by interviewee**

- What are the opportunities for personal growth?
- Identify typical career paths based on past records. What is the realistic time frame for advancement?
- How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
- What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?
- Can you describe typical first year assignments for this position?
- What would initial and future training programs involve?
- What are the challenging facets of the job?
- What are the company's plans for future growth?
- What is the company's record of employment stability?
- What industry trends will occur in this company?
- How has this company fared during the recent recession?
- What makes your firm different from its competitors?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe your corporation's personality and management style?
- Is it the company policy to promote from within? Tell me the work history of your top management?
- What kinds of career opportunities are currently available for my degree and skills?
- What are your expectations for new hires?
- How would you describe the work environment/corporate culture of your organization?
- How can you utilize my skills?
- What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?
- Why do you enjoy working for your firm?
- What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
- What type of person are you looking for to fill this position?