

Interviewing Tips

by Jen Edwards, Vice President of Operations

Before the Interview

- Be prepared!
- Be certain of the time and place of interview and the name of your interviewer.
- Be able to list your job-related strengths and give examples of your accomplishments. Some examples of points to make would be:
 - Good job stability
 - Good attendance
 - Excellent references
 - Related job experience
 - Willingness to learn
 - Excellent health and attendance
 - Above average intelligence
 - Ability to handle stress
- Be prepared to answer when asked questions such as, “What would you say are your weaknesses?” Turn it around and make your weaknesses seem like positives. Say something like, “I’m a workaholic. Sometimes I just can’t seem to quit working and leave the office until 7pm.” or “I tend to be a perfectionist. I can’t help making sure every detail is just right.”
- Know something about the industry, the company, and the position for which you are interviewing. Be prepared to ask and answer intelligent questions regarding these areas.
- Expect the unexpected!
- Be prepared to discuss issues on your resume or application such as lapses in employment or reasons for leaving a job, and do so in a positive manner.
- Be prepared to discuss the starting date for the position and when you would be available to start.

Opening of Interview

- Show up a few minutes early.
- Bring extra copies of your resume, a pen, and a notepad.
- When introduced, make a conscious effort to remember names (or learn them in advance, if possible).
- Greet interviewer, pronouncing name correctly, firmly shake hands (only if the interviewer offers first), and wait for the interviewer to sit down or invite you to sit down before seating yourself. Smile, lean forward, look him/her in the eyes, and act confident.
- Avoid smoking and chewing gum, even if invited to do so.
- Engage in a few minutes of small talk to break the ice and establish a rapport. Look for common interests.
- Ask the interviewer questions such as:
 - How long have you been with this company and what are your feelings about your own experiences here?
 - What are your plans for expansion?
 - How do you currently identify the promotable person in your company?

During the Interview

- Be friendly, social and conversational. Laughter shows self-confidence and that you are comfortable.
- Speak clearly and think before you talk. Keep responses concise and to the point.
- Do not find fault with anyone, particularly a previous boss or company. Try to be positive.
- Be sure to get some kind of job specifications from the interviewer early on so that you can highlight the parts of your experience and skills that directly relate to the position.
- Always be honest. Do not volunteer negative information, but answer truthfully when questioned.
- Keep the interviewer's attention by speaking intelligently about something that he/she is interested in and by varying the tone of your voice and the tempo at which you speak.
- Inquire about the future of the position by saying something such as, "Assuming I am chosen for this position and I were to exceed your expectations, where could I expect to be in three to five years and what would my responsibilities be at that point?"
- When discussing compensation, try to avoid giving a definite answer. You don't want to knock yourself out of the running by asking for too much, and you don't want to sell yourself short by asking for too little. Ask questions like, "What does this position generally pay?" or "What have others in this position made in the past."

Closing the Interview

- If offered a job, you need not respond on the spot. Take some time to think it over.
- Don't be discouraged if not offered a job. The purpose of the first, even second interview, is to get invited back for another.
- Don't initiate talk of money until you are offered the job. You will be in a better position to negotiate at that time. Also, you should not bring up the subject of benefits until you have been offered the position.
- Make sure to leave on a positive note. Shake hands, thank interviewer for his/her time, indicate interest in the position, and ask when a decision will be made.
- Send a follow-up letter thanking the interviewer again for his/her time, and again re-emphasizing your interest in the job. See a **Sample Follow-Up Letter** on the following page.

YOUR NAME
Street Address
City, State ZIP Code
(Area Code) Phone Number

Date

Name, Title of person contacting
Company Name
Street Address
City, State ZIP Code

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me this morning. It was such a pleasure speaking with you, and the information you provided regarding the details of the position were most valuable to me.

I find the position of _____ very attractive. I was very impressed with your company and am enthusiastic about the prospects of joining your team. After reviewing your comments about the job requirements, I am convinced that I can make an immediate contribution toward the growth and profitability of _____.

I would appreciate an opportunity to become a member of your staff, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name