



Interview Skills

"The core message about interviewing is that you have to do a good job of selling yourself. Through your appearance, demeanor, and the way you answer questions, you have to convince the interviewer that you possess the skills and personal attributes necessary to be successful in the job."

-MAX MESSMER



THE JOB INTERVIEW

A job interview is a presentation, a performance, and an audition. If you are granted an interview, it means you have successfully grabbed the attention of an employer who has decided to meet with you in person, face-to-face. The employer has some idea that you might be qualified for the job, otherwise he would not be committing valuable time to seeing you.

To be successful in a job interview means putting your "best self" forward. Preparing for an interview involves sharpening your communication skills, anticipating certain questions, projecting confidence, maintaining a positive attitude, displaying enthusiasm, emphasizing your best attributes, expressing your personality, and creating a good first impression. It is important to stress your skills, abilities, and strengths. You must clearly and confidently communicate your accomplishments and achievements.

The goal of an interview is to get a job offer. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you are the right fit for the job. Your interview, then, will be as much about your personality and attitude as it will be about your qualifications and credentials.

EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

Approach your interview from the employer's perspective. It is important that you focus only on relevant traits and attributes. You should tailor your presentation so as to emphasize your specific qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the job in question. Target all of your comments and remarks to the employer's concerns. Put yourself in the employer's shoes.

Keep focused on what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you. Keep in mind the specific needs, interests, values, and biases of the employer. Address the issues that you know the employer cares about. Match your qualifications to their needs. Make your comments employer-centered rather than self-centered. Speak the employer's language. Be sure all your statements answer the underlying most important question: "What can you do for our organization?"



PREPARATION

Do your homework. Prepare in advance for your job interview by doing some in-depth research. Gather useful information about the employer. Be informed and knowledgeable about the company and the job.

Plan ahead. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Determine your key qualifications. Spell out specific details of your background and credentials and commit to memory the major points of your presentation.

Rehearse your presentation beforehand by conducting a mock interview. Practice formulating and expressing your responses to potential questions.

"A job interview is a business meeting between a job candidate and one or more interviewers. The purpose is to determine whether a match exists between what the company requires and what the candidate offers."

-JOHN LA FEVRE



PRESENTATION

Dress appropriately. Arrive on time. Maintain good eye contact. Observe proper protocol and good etiquette. Use proper grammar. Offer a solid handshake. Be alert. Listen carefully.

Bring along a portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, letters of reference, and awards. Bring extra copies of your resume.

PERFORMANCE

Relate a few relevant stories, testimonials, or anecdotal examples as a way of providing supportive evidence of your skills and abilities. Telling stories also allows you the opportunity to communicate positive feelings and emotions, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication.

Ask appropriate questions. Prepare a few good solid questions in advance. Don't ask about salary and benefits. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation. Express an interest in wanting to learn more about the company.

WRAP UP

At the end of the interview, make a closing statement. In that statement, you can express gratitude for the interview and summarize your main points. Indicate how your qualifications match the needs of the company. State confidently your assertion that you can make a worthwhile contribution to the company. And then, finally, ask for the job.

Always send a follow-up letter immediately after the interview as a way of thanking the employer and reiterating your interest in the job.

"I've met individuals who have saved lives, built nations, or unlocked the mysteries of the universe... and the most easily observable thread which connected these persons was their ability to present well in a job interview."

-WINSTON CHURCHILL

