

the INTERVIEW

AIM FOR EVERY POSSIBLE ANGLE

The Job Interview

Your resume may have gotten you the interview, but it can't get you the job. The interview is your chance to show who you are beyond what's on your resume. A meeting between you and a potential employer allows you both to assess your "fit" with the position and company. Keep in mind that an interviewer has a very short amount of time to assess job applicants. Likewise, you have the same amount of time to determine if the company environment is a fit for you.

Recruiters and hiring managers are frequently surprised by how unprepared interviewees are when they come to the interview. You only get one chance to make a great impression, so you have to let the interviewer see you at your best. Remember, it is at the interview that jobs are won or lost!

Use the following 10 steps as a guide to make a great first impression.

10 Steps to Ace the Interview

1. Arrive early

Employers look for people who are punctual and conscientious about appointments. Ten to 15 minutes early is an acceptable arrival time. Prepare for on-time arrival by knowing the location and exact address of the company. Know where to park and whether any parking fees are required. If you're uncertain about how far you must travel for the interview, you may want to consult mapquest.com — it's an online site that helps motorists map their routes as well as calculate the amount of time necessary to make the trip. Take extra copies of your resume and references.

Don't forget your interview actually begins the moment you walk in the building!

2. Know your target

Knowledge about the company may prepare you for questions the interviewer asks. It also can provide insight about current problems and challenges in the company. Use the Internet as a research tool. Finding out pertinent information about the company interviewing you could be

as simple as doing a search at google.com. Having this insight can help you stress how your skills will help the company overcome its problems.

Be prepared to ask questions about the company. Discuss its products and services, competitors, reputation, etc. Show an interest in the company. (Refer back to the information you gathered on your Company Fact Sheet). Moreover, study the qualifications specified in the job description to avoid using generalities in an interview.

3. Know yourself

Human resource professionals and hiring managers want to hire the best candidates for an open position. They look at hard skills, (technical, business-related) and soft skills (communication, conflict resolution, team skills) needed to get the job done. It is not unusual to hire a person who may be lacking one or two of the listed requirements for a position. They also look for a candidate who exhibits confidence and a positive attitude. Are they able to do the job well? Do they have desire and ability to learn? Before the interview, re-read your resume. Look at your skills and accomplishment statements. Practice your marketing profile. Prepare before you go to the interview, and you'll convey self-confidence when talking about yourself.

4. Be yourself

Employers hire people who not only have the skills and abilities to do the job, but whom they believe will "fit" into their organization. Job qualifications are important, but so are displaying a positive attitude, observing courtesies and professionalism, dress and grooming. Hiring managers like to hire people who are likeable and will interact well with other company employees.

5. Dress the part

Be sure you look right for the role — neat, competent, and reliable. This tells the interviewer that you regard the interview as important. For an interview at most companies, dress at least one step above what you may wear on the job.

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6. Make a good impression

An interviewer forms an impression of you within the first ten seconds, so your first impression counts! Display a positive attitude when you present yourself to employers. When two equally qualified candidates are being considered, the one with a positive attitude is often chosen.

Your body language can change the outcome of the interview. Your posture and how you sit or walk can convey either self-confidence or uncertainty. Be sure to sit upright, face the interviewer, and maintain eye contact. Practice assertive listening skills. Remember, the primary goal is to project a positive image!

7. Answer with confidence

If you do your homework and practice, the right words should come easily.

Remember, much of what you say will be conveyed by your manner, not your words. Answers should be direct and concise. Don't speak for more than 30 seconds at a time. Practice makes progress!

8. Ask questions

Asking questions shows interest in the company and the job. This is your opportunity to determine if this company is a fit for you. Is it what you are looking for in your next job?

9. Practice

Consider writing out the answers to frequently asked interview questions. Practice by speaking into a recorder or in front of a mirror. Work with a partner to practice what you'll say. Prepare for when you are invited into the office. Practice your handshake, handling silence, and asking your questions. This will help you feel more comfortable and convey self-confidence during the interview.

10. Follow up

Before you leave, express enthusiasm. Tell the interviewer you are interested in being considered for the job. Ask how he/she feels about your qualifications. Clarify any final questions or doubts. Tell him/her you will check back in a week or so. Never leave an interview without finalizing the next step in the process.

After the Interview

Evaluate the interview. What questions did you ask? What answers did you give? Consider the information you obtained. What did you learn about the company and the interviewed position? What are their needs and expectations? Recall your performance. What did you do well? What do you need to improve for the next interview?

Send a follow-up letter within 24 hours of the interview. Express appreciation and interest in the job. Mention anything else that you may have forgotten to say during the interview.

Job Offer and Acceptance: Negotiating Salary and Benefits

You've been offered the job — congratulations! Now for the fun part — negotiating your salary and benefits! Before the follow-up discussion, learn as much as you can about the company, the position, industry, growth potential, etc. Know what other companies in the area are paying for a similar position. Determine your minimum acceptable salary. Discuss salary in "ranges" rather than in specific amounts. Allow the employer to address the salary range he/she is considering before you divulge your requirements.

Employers expect to pay more for a candidate who is currently employed. The employer may expect an unemployed candidate to accept less and to compromise on compensation. An equitable employer will usually pay what the job is worth in the job market if he/she believes the applicant to be highly qualified.

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