

Interview Preparation

Homework...do you want to work there?

- Do your homework – research and due diligence. Google the company and individual for current news releases etc, so you get a sense of what the company's current projects are. Read any bio's of their employees or executives, these are people you may meet in the lobby, in the interview etc.
- Write down the company address and the interviewer's name and title if you can find it.

Dress Blues...ok, not the time for a fashion crisis

- Rule of thumb - dress for the position up one level from the one you are interviewing for (dress like you would if you were your future boss).
- Impeccable personal grooming is even more important than finding the perfect outfit.
- Visit a public bathroom mirror for a last check before getting on the elevator, especially if you've just eaten, check for parsley!
- Avoid excessive perfume or cologne and excessive jewelry.
- Err on the side of conservative professionalism (a suit), unless your field is very, very, creative.

First impressions...or, No second chances!

- Visit the building the day before, if you need to, so there are no surprises re: location, parking, etc.
- Make sure you have an adequate supply of your business cards, and a professional writing pad and pen to take along. Avoid pens with clickers on the end!
- Arrive in the interviewer's reception area at least 10 minutes early.
- Be friendly and professional **from the time you enter the building**. This includes meeting others in the lobby, on the elevator, and most importantly, the receptionist.
- Carry your coat, briefcase, etc. in your left hand so you can shake hands without shuffling things around.
- When you meet the interviewer, smile, make eye contact, walk with a confident stride, shake hands firmly.
- Repeat their name and ask how they are.
- Image is everything! You are marketing your most important product – yourself!

In the interview room...the ritual begins

- The first few minutes of the interview are the most important.
- Keep all business cards you receive in front of you so you can refer to their names, especially if being interviewed by more than one person.
- Stay aware of your body language, sit upright and lean in slightly. Try to match your interviewer's body language and pace of speaking.
- Demonstrate your ability to manage your side of the exchange by asking questions and taking short notes.

- Use real examples from the past when answering questions – tell your story.
- Use your "5 second marketing" message; ***As a sales rep for ABC Incorporated, my strengths lie in the areas of Research, Relationships and Revenue enhancements...***
- Remember the bottom line - What are you bringing to the table? – How will your working there improve the company's bottom line? Answer with that in mind.

Some Skills you should Showcase: Decision Making, Initiative, Problem Solving, Planning, Ability to Prioritize, Information Technology Literacy, Team Working, Oral Communication, Adaptability, Ability to use Numbers (numeracy), Written Communication, Leadership, Business Awareness, Time Management, Process Improvements.

Your list of possible Questions (don't turn this into an interrogation):

- What position or positions can this job lead to? Is there room for advancement? What is the career path for this position?
- You have a terrific reputation in _____, what are the major insights into _____ that I might gain from this position?
- What skills are considered most useful for success in this position?
- What type of person are you looking for?
- Who is the manager I would be working for and what is that person's management style?
- Why is this position open? How long has it been open? Is this job opening due to growth or is it a replacement? What happened to the previous person in this position (if it's a replacement position)?
- How soon are you looking to fill the position?
- How long does the process typically take? When will you be making a decision on the position?
- Have I answered all your questions satisfactorily? Is there anything you would like to know to help you see the fit I have in your company?
- Save your questions about salary and benefits for later – after you receive an offer – you can still negotiate at that point or turn down the offer.

Closing statements

- I'd really like to work for your firm. I think it's a great company and I am confident I could do this job well. What is the next step in the selection process?
- Clarify any other questions you might have, hours, over-time, flex-time, job responsibilities etc.
- Don't discuss remuneration unless the interviewer brings it up first.
- Do you have any further questions for me that you need clarified?

EMPLOYERS

From their side of the table...

Employers are looking for "**Core Competencies**" – a combination of behaviors that lead to superior performance. Some components include: **Personal style** – how you relate to colleagues, team work, organization and flexibility; **Motivation** – your initiative, creativity, and drive to problem solve; **Knowledge** – specific skills you've acquired; **Aptitude** – your natural capabilities

What you may have to answer

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- Do you feel you made the right career choice?
- Why are you considering leaving your current position?
- What are your short and long term career objectives?
- What are 2 or 3 things that are of importance to you in your next position?
- Do you consider yourself a creative problem solver?
- What motivates you?
- How do you view change and deal with it effectively?
- How do you define leadership and how would you rate yourself as a leader?
- Would you consider yourself a risk taker?
- How do you make decisions?
- How well do you handle stress?
- What is success to you?
- Can you identify 3 character traits that have made you successful?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- Are you a team player?
- How do you get along with your superiors?
- What do you know about our company?
- Do you feel you might be over qualified for this position?
- In what ways will our organization benefit from hiring you?
- What did you like most about your previous job?
- Describe one of your failures and how you handled it.
- In your opinion, what makes a successful manager?
- How do you rate your communications skills?
- How do you rate your time management skills?
- What types of people do you find it difficult or uncomfortable to work with?
- Describe your ideal job.
- How do you spend your spare time?

Stress tests

Sometimes Interviewers ask stressful questions to see how well you do under stressful situations, relax, think it through, then answer if you can, if you can't then simply smile and without apology say something like – "I don't know, but if you hire me, I'll find out for you!" Humour is usually a good way of handling this, unless you've seen no sign of it at any time prior!

Some examples:

- You have 7 minutes to convince me why you're the best candidate for this position.
- How would you respond to a defaulted form Z-65 counter derivative renewal request if your manager ordered you to do so, and if the policy under which the executive board resolves such issues were currently under review?

- Sell me this stapler.
- Have you ever been fired?

Some questions are **ILLEGAL**. BUT if you as a candidate open the door with a comment or statement then the interviewer can probe further. For Example: asking if the company has a subsidized childcare allowance.

Some interviewers may not know they've asked an illegal question, so try to find out the concerns behind the question and then address them.

Possibly they need to determine if you can travel or stay late. You can choose to answer, such as "How old are you?" "I am in my late 40's, too young to retire and old enough to know better than to answer a question like that". Or say "Could you please explain to me how this issue is relevant to the position?"

- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- What religious faith are you?
- Do you have children or plan to have children?
- That's a nice name, is it Jewish, Hispanic etc.?
- Do you have any health problems or chronic conditions of which we should be aware?
- What is your family's economic status?
- Have you ever been tested for HIV?
What is your sexual preference?
- Have you ever been arrested?

After the interview

Write down your thoughts;

- What does the position entail?
- What do you like and dislike about the position and the company?
- Did you make any mistakes or have trouble answering any of the questions?
- Did you feel you were well prepared?
- What could you do to improve your performance in the future?

Follow up the interview with a thank-you note to the Interviewer

- Express your appreciation for the opportunity to interview with the recruiter.
- Express your continued enthusiasm about the position and the company.
- Recap your strengths, being careful to relate them to the requirements of the job and the company.
- Keep it SIMPLE.
- Request to meet again.

Please call either Suzanne or Nicole 403-444-5576 after to let us know how it went. Good Luck!