Interviewing

Congratulations- You have an interview. Now is the time for the employer to determine whether you have the right qualities and personality for the job. Prepare for this by knowing what to do before, during, and after an interview.

Before the interview

I. Know Yourself

- Be ready for the most commonly asked questions: PRACTICE OUT LOUD.
  - Keep answers work-related: no personal information.
- **Practice- consider conducting a mock interview and get feedback on your performance**
- Develop a 30 Second Speech. If you only have a moment with an employer (like at a career fair) introduce yourself and explain who you are concisely.
  - Tell about the path you took to get where you are in your career. Where have you been, where are you going, and what you have to offer now. Think about your skills and experiences that would benefit the employer.
- Think about relevant examples/stories from your past experiences that apply to the job you are applying for. You can use these stories to illustrate skills and abilities.
- Prepare your references. Let them know you have an interview and provide details on the job (if you haven’t already).

Prepare to bring: copies of your resume, cover letter, and references, a portfolio or work samples, a notebook, pens, directions, information about the interview, and information to fill out an application.

Consider: your first impression to the employer includes your pre-interview communication, personal appearance and grooming, and your professionalism (manners and social skills).

II. Know the Employer

- If you are seriously interested in a company – you need to know something about them, their products and services, locations, how they brand themselves etc. Do your research!
- Don’t ask anything you could have found out for yourself before the interview.
- Do research on your interviewers. Know who they are and what role they play in the company.
- Get directions to the interview site. Know how to get there and be aware of the traffic, parking, building location, etc.

III. Know the Job

- Know the job responsibilities and be ready to connect them to your skills and abilities.
- Review the soft and hard skills that make you qualified for the position
  - Soft skills: Dependability, trust, communication, developing relationships, hard-working.
  - Hard skills: Experience, training, record of achievement, interests, abilities.
- Do not ask about salary, benefits, or perks – cover those issues after you’ve been offered a job. You may be asked about salary, so research an average salary range for the position.
At the interview: Understand the power of first impressions!

IV. Dress Appropriately

- Get a good night’s sleep.
- Shower and wear clothing that is clean and pressed.
- Your interview outfit should be one step nicer than what you would usually wear to the job.
  (If you would wear jeans & sneakers to work, interview attire should be slacks and nice shoes. If you would wear “office attire” at work, appropriate interview attire would be a suit).
  - Example of Professional Attire for women
    - Classic white collar outfit: black, charcoal grey or navy pantsuit, white blouse, scarf, or necklace, matching pumps, hose, belt, and bag.
    - Non white collar: black dress pants, well-fitting blouse/ sweater, dress shoes.
  - Attire for men
    - Executive positions: business suit.
    - Classic white collar outfit: navy blue blazer, grey slacks, white shirt, striped tie, black dress shoes, black socks, black dress belt.
    - Non white collar: dress or khaki pants, dress shirt, casual dress shoes.

- Clean, polished shoes (no sneakers or flip-flops).
- Smell fresh and clean not of cologne, perfume, or smoke.
- Brush your teeth and use deodorant.
- Hands should be clean and nails neatly trimmed.
- Makeup - find the right balance not too much or little.
- Shave or trim facial hair.
- No bizarre haircuts/styles, unusual facial hair, visible body piercings, and (if possible) cover tattoos.

V. During the Interview

- Go by yourself. Arrive on time. Your interview starts when you are on site.
- Leave your cell phone in the car.
- Be friendly and polite to everyone you meet.
- Show that you are motivated.
- Shake hands firmly and smile.
- Maintain good eye contact, good posture and be aware of your speech patterns (monotone, too fast).
- Be aware of your body language including facial expressions and gesturing while speaking.
- Be enthusiastic, confident and well informed about the company.
- Deliver a strong opening statement (30 second speech) that discusses your training, skills, and accomplishments. Make sure to only discuss professional topics.
- Ask questions. Conversation is good, but make sure to stay on topic.
- Bring extra copies of your resume and reference sheet.
- Avoid verbal garbage “um” “like” and “you know” and slang terms. Don’t curse!
- Never be negative – do not refer to problems with prior jobs, management, supervisors, co-workers, etc.
- End with a strong summary statement that highlights you qualification and indicates your excitement for the position.
• When faced with a difficult question
  o Make sure that you understand the question being asked
  o Take a moment to think (a little silence is ok)
  o Answer briefly in a non-damaging way (state the facts and present as an advantage)

VI. Interviewing Tips

• Balance speaking and listening. People who talk too much or too little don’t get hired.
• Have a list of questions to ask when prompted. The questions should communicate your interest in the job and the company.
• End the interview with a firm handshake. Write your thank you letter within 24 hours.
• Sample Interview Questions:
  o Practice these before your interview.
    ▪ Tell me about yourself.
    ▪ Why are you interested in this job? Company?
    ▪ Why should we hire you?
    ▪ What makes you qualified for this job?
    ▪ What is your greatest strength?
    ▪ What is your greatest weakness? (always turn a negative into a positive)
    ▪ Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
    ▪ Tell me about a time when you had to handle a difficult situation?
    ▪ What is your greatest accomplishment and why did you choose it?
    ▪ Be prepared for the random question designed to make you think on your feet
      - If you could have any super power what would it be and why?

• When prompted always have questions prepared to ask.
  • Questions you can ask:
    Note: never ask a question you could have found out through research!
    ▪ What does the ideal candidate for this position look like?
    ▪ Can you tell me about a typical day for a person in this position?
    ▪ What are the most important things this position will need to concentrate on in the next three months?
    ▪ What do you enjoy about working here? What is the biggest challenge?
    ▪ What is the reporting structure?
    ▪ What is the timeline for filling this position?

• Researching resources:
  ▪ Internet
  ▪ Library
  ▪ Current/ former employees
  ▪ Professional/ Trade associations and unions
  ▪ Dunn & Bradstreet Directory or Sorkin’s Directory
VII. Final Points

- Following-up
  - Send a thank you note to each person who interviewed you within 24 hours (see more on thank you notes below)
  - Reflect on the experience and make notes
  - Make sure you follow-up as promised in your interview

- Negotiating Salary
  - If you are offered a job, you need to learn how to negotiate salary
  - Avoid stating a number, but be familiar with the typical salary range
  - Be willing to compromise

- Making a decision
  - When deciding on a job offer ask for 24 hours to think about it
  - Make a pro and con list about the position
  - Consider your career goals and your life situation
  - Make a formal acceptance or decline of the position
Types of interviews

- Telephone Screening Interview
  - Call from employer to screen for required qualifications
  - Have your job search materials organized and at hand

- In-person Screening
  - Gathers an initial first impression of your attitude, interest, and professionalism
  - Prepare as you would for a regular interview

- Selection Interview
  - Questions about your qualifications used to determine if the position is a good fit
  - Establish rapport (before and after interview). Show how you would be a natural addition to the team

- Work Sample Interview
  - Demonstration of a skill set via portfolio or skill demonstration
  - Practice describing your portfolio and brush up on your skills

- Peer Group Interview
  - Meeting with potential co-workers to determine if you are a good fit
  - Be friendly and show confidence. Balance being assertive and aggressive.

- Group or Panel Interview
  - Three or more people asking you questions about your qualifications
  - Direct your answer to the person who asked the question, but maintain eye contact with everyone in the group

- Luncheon Interview
  - Interview over a meal to assess your ability to handle social situations
  - Choose something easy to eat so you can pay attention to the conversation

- Stress Interview
  - Questions intended to cause discomfort to determine how you react to stress
  - Stay calm and take your time responding

- Video Conference Interview
  - A interview done by video can be one on one or with a panel
  - Practice using the same program in the same setting if possible

- Interview types adapted from careeronestop.org
Thank You Notes

The Importance of Thank You Notes

In a competitive job market, the thank you note cannot be neglected. Writing one can give you an advantage over other candidates and increase your chances of being hired. Statistically, less than 10% of interviewees ever follow up with thank you notes. Imagine how positively that 10% will be viewed. A thank you note can make a candidate stand out from the rest of the pool.

How to Write a Thank You Note

Thank you notes should be sent as soon as possible after the interview. To have the most influence, it must be sent before the hiring decision is made, and it should say more than just “thank you”:

1. **Be Sincere**
   
   Convey your appreciation for the meeting and express your continued interest in the position.

2. **Personalize It**
   
   Reemphasize your strongest qualifications. Take this opportunity to feature your most relevant skills. Indicate how those skills match the job requirements or qualities the employer is seeking. Also, use this opportunity to answer or expand upon any key points from the interview.

3. **Restate Your Appreciation**

Typed vs. Handwritten

For more conservative employers, you may want to consider typing your thank you note. However, a handwritten thank you is perfectly fine. This requires legible handwriting and tasteful note cards.

**Can you email a thank you note?**

An e-mail thank you note *may* be appropriate if you have communicated with the interviewer via email *prior* to your interview or if you know a decision on the position will be made quickly and mail would not arrive in time. Caution: Do not make the note overly friendly, which people have a tendency to do with email.

Choose this method wisely; some employers may prefer the traditional “snail-mail” approach. Also, handwritten or typed hard copy thank you notes typically get filed in an applicant’s folder, whereas email is typically read sooner, but then deleted.

**When in doubt, use a hand-written note.**
Dear Mr. Curry:

I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to interview yesterday for the Service Technician position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about the organization and the service department.

Your projects for next year, the new database and the tool upgrades, sound fascinating and very useful to your customers. I know that my previous experience in __________ and my skills in ______________will be helpful to you on both of these projects, and that I could make a positive contribution to your team.

Thank you again for the time in your busy schedule. It was a pleasure meeting you and I hope to speak with you soon. Please feel free to call me at 555-555-5555 if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Kyle Barrett