



WHEN YOU'RE READY FOR A NEW JOB

Tips to Help You
NAIL THE INTERVIEW

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TIPS TO HELP YOU GET THE JOB

You've been asked to interview - that's great! Your qualifications have made the employer seriously consider you for the job, and now want to see how you will fit into the organization. The interview is your chance to get the employer interested enough to want to extend an offer. I can't tell you how many times I've sent someone in to interview that had every technical skill needed to do the job, only to be rejected because they didn't present themselves well, or weren't a good cultural or personality fit. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare for your meeting.

Remember, the more prepared you are, the less stressful and more productive the interview will be. A good Recruiter will help you get prepared.

THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

This is just as serious as a face-to-face interview, and getting asked to come in is the goal of this call. Treat it that way. Make sure you will not be interrupted while on this call, and **NEVER** take any incoming calls.

THE FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

Personal Appearance

First of all you need to make sure you present a professional image. You can ensure this by doing the following:

Clothing should be:

- Cleaned and pressed, with shoes shined
- Business style in conservative colors
- Men – wear a suit, or sport coat with shirt and tie
- Women – wear a suit with skirt or pants, avoid low-cut blouses and very short skirts

Personal Hygiene

- Men
 - Hair neatly trimmed and combed
 - Facial hair neatly trimmed or shaved
 - Avoid heavy colognes
- Women
 - Hair brushed or neatly done up
 - Avoid heavy make-up and perfumes

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Start by reviewing your resume and knowing what you want in your next position. Thinking about the following things will help you avoid any uncomfortable surprises during the interview. Keep in mind that the interview process is designed to answer a very basic question – can this person solve my problems? Make sure they know the answer is a resounding **YES!**

Do Your Homework - Learn as much about the opportunity and the company as possible. Visit the company's website, or do a Google or LinkedIn search of anyone you will be meeting with. Make sure you at least know the following:

- Name of company.
- Approximate number of employees.
- The position you are interviewing for and the main responsibilities.
- Who you will report to if you got the job.
- The names and titles of the people you will be interviewing with.
- The time of the interview, the company's address with directions, and phone number.

Prepare Your Briefcase or Portfolio - Limit yourself to one hand-held item at the interview containing the following:

- 3 clean copies of your resume.
- 3 copies of your references with names, phone numbers, and how you know them.
- 2 pens (blue or black ink).
- Small breath mints (NO GUM) or any necessary medication that may be needed.
- Any research you have on the company.
- In case you need to fill out an application, have past employer addresses, phone numbers.

THE INTERVIEW

Make sure you arrive at the company's lobby at least 5 minutes early. Once inside, be on your best behavior and realize you are being judged by everyone that sees you, and they may be asked about their impression of you. Always address the person you will be meeting as "Mr." or "Ms." until asked to do otherwise.

Calm Your Nerves – Although some stress can actually be beneficial, the more relaxed you are, the better you will perform in the interview. Take a few deep breaths to help yourself relax and remember the following:

- Interviews are centered on the subject you know best – you and your experience.
- If you've done your homework, you have at least as much information about the company as they do about you.
- Interviewers expect you to be a little nervous.
- Most interviewers themselves are nervous too.
- You have nothing to lose. If things don't work out, you are no worse off than you were before.

Some Definite DON'Ts - These are some things to avoid during the interview that can kill your chances of getting an offer:

1. **Act disinterested** – If you don't have at least some interest in the job, don't bother interviewing.
2. **Go unprepared** – You can't ask intelligent questions if you don't know anything about the company.
3. **Talk too much** – When responding to a question or making a comment, get to the point.
4. **Talk too little** – You are expected to be an active participant. One-word answers make you look disinterested.
5. **Display bad manners.**
6. **Chew gum during the interview.**
7. **Derogatory comments about your current/past employer** – This makes you look like you have a bad attitude, or may be difficult to get along with.

8. **Take credit for things you didn't do** – You should definitely explain your role in accomplishments, but don't overstate your authority or responsibility. It's a small world; they may know someone you know.
9. **Hide gaps in your resume** – False dates or periods of unemployment are easy to detect. Simply address any gaps in your resume or any other concerns with a direct explanation and why they were necessary, or what you learned from them.
10. **Show a lack of confidence in the potential employer** – You can express concerns about some aspect of the potential employer's strategy or operations – especially if you can offer a better approach. Employers want people who are excited about the opportunity and not focused on past mistakes.

Greeting the Interviewer - Greet them with a firm (but not choking) handshake. You may want to have a tissue in your pocket to wipe your hands if you tend to have sweaty palms. Let them talk for the first few minutes. You may pick up some interesting information about the company or the interviewer (things you might have in common, or the current "fire" they are trying to put out), that you can use later in your conversation.

Handling Casual Conversation - Casual conversation may seem unimportant and while it can cause problems, it also provides you a lot of good information. Casual conversation should be handled the same way you would the "formal" interview, keep your answers concise and positive. If you let down your guard and give a strong negative opinion, you have already created an impression that may be difficult to overcome.

You can also learn a great deal about the interviewer during the casual conversation. You may find common interests, or find that they don't have time to do any of their hobbies because they are always working. This could give you a glimpse into what may be expected of you.

During The Interview

Talking - When talking, use a natural tone, but express enthusiasm and excitement for the opportunity, and passion for what you do. A passionate job candidate will beat an "average" job candidate every time, and in some cases will beat a more experienced job candidate that comes across as "flat".

Eye Contact – Keep good eye contact without staring. A gaze of more than 10 seconds can become unnerving. If you continually look down, you come across as untruthful or unsure of yourself.

Posture – You want to be relaxed, but don't slouch in the chair or be too rigid. Try for a natural and comfortable position.

Interruptions or Shocking Statements – Some interviewers will stage a few interruptions to see how you handle the situation. Some also will make a somewhat shocking statement such as "This place is a complete mess" to see how you handle and respond to the statement. Acknowledge the statement, and ask why they feel that way. Try to view these in a positive way, such as how it might be a good opportunity for you to have an impact on the way things are done. Don't follow suit and start bad mouthing your current employer or co-workers. If this proves to be a test, you will fail miserably.

If the Interview is Over a Meal - It is not uncommon for an interviewer to take a job candidate to lunch during the interview. Remember, lunch is still part of the interviewing process. Follow these suggestions:

- Stay away from foods that are difficult to eat or have a strong odor to them.
- Stick to dishes that can be easily cut into small pieces
- Avoid foods with a lot of sauce on them (you may end up wearing it)
- Order something in the middle of the price range, or let the interviewer order first and follow their lead.
- After eating, take a quick trip to the restroom to check for food stains on your clothing or food in your teeth.

At the Conclusion of the Interview - When the interview is coming to a close, you need to ensure that you leave a good lasting impression. Make sure to reiterate that you are very interested in the position being offered and that you would very much like to work for the company and your potential manager.

- Summarize how you can benefit the company
- Ask how well you match what they are looking for (listen for any possible misunderstandings)
- Tell them you want the job and ask what is necessary to go to the next step
- Thank them for their time
- Send them a Thank You note or email within 24 to 48 hours
- Call your Recruiter to give them feedback
- Go relax and have a drink - you've earned it!

Remember, if you're working with a Recruiter, they should know the key issues of the company trying to fill the position. This information can help you emphasize the skills or experience you have that will really get their attention during the interview. That type of information is very rarely seen on a typical job description and can be a huge advantage over someone just responding to a job posting. Getting some of the "inside" information can make your preparation much more effective and the results of the interview much more positive.

Good Luck!

Jeff King

Recruiter/President, PPS