

12 Interview Skills

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. The goal of a job interview is to get a job offer.

PRESENTATION

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.

EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

It is important that you focus only on your relevant traits and attributes and that you emphasize your specific qualifications for the job in question. 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, concerns, and biases of the employer. Address the issues that you know the employer cares the most 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 me?"

PREPARATION

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 your main ideas in advance. Commit to memory the major points of your presentation. Determine your key qualifications. Rehearse your presentation. Practice formulating and expressing your responses.

Relate a few relevant stories, testimonials, or anecdotes 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.

Dress appropriately. Arrive on time. Maintain good eye contact. 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.

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 the knowing more about the company.

WRAP UP

At the end of the interview, ask for the job. Indicate how your qualifications match the needs of the company. State confidently your assertion that you can make a worthwhile contribution to the company. Always send a follow-up letter afterwards as a way of thanking the employer and reiterating your interest in the job.