

## **Before, During & After - TIPS FOR THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

### **Before the Interview**

#### **Research the Business**

Research the business thoroughly before the interview, their website is a great place to start as well as any business journals or reports available. The Chamber of Commerce may be able to give you information about the business' activities in the community. Talk to people who know about the firm, especially any current or past employees if you happen to have these contacts in your network of peers. You may even make a phone call to the company and briefly ask the receptionist what you need to know.

#### **Be Mentally Prepared**

Prepare yourself mentally. Have confidence in yourself as being the best possible candidate for the job. You will want to project competence, self-confidence, and enthusiasm

#### **Look Your Best**

Wear conservative clothing. The interview outfit varies depending on the job you want, the business image, and your own comfort with your personal appearance. A clean, well-groomed appearance will increase your self-confidence and make a favorable impression. Pressed, clean, fresh clothes are the rule. Wear minimal jewelry and polished unscuffed shoes. Avoid use of any heavy perfumes, cologne, aftershave, or body lotion the day of an interview.

#### **Be Prepared**

It can be helpful to find out in advance the name and title of the person who will interview you when possible. For some jobs, you may be interviewed by more than one person. When you know the name in advance, you are less likely to forget after being introduced. Call the employer's office a day or so before the interview to find out who will conduct it.

Take the items you will need: a copy of your resume, your job application data sheet, your references, samples of your work when appropriate, and a pen and paper pad in case you need to complete any forms or take notes. Your portfolio contains all the items you will need and will also help paint a picture of your past experiences in a professional manner.

Go to the interview alone and plan to arrive five to ten minutes early. When possible it is advantageous to drive to the site of the interview in advance so you will have no trouble finding the location and can accurately judge your appropriate drive time for the day of the interview. When you arrive at the office, introduce yourself and tell the receptionist you have an appointment for an interview. Give the time of the appointment and the name of the person who will interview you.

Greet your interviewer by name, shake hands, and introduce yourself. "Hello Mr./Ms. So and so" is always appropriate. Do not call your interviewer by his or her first names unless asked to. Wait for the interviewer to offer a seat. Do not sit down until the interviewer has.

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### **During the Interview**

#### **Relax**

If you are nervous, it may help to mention it. Interviewers are used to nervous job applicants. Simply saying, "I'm a little nervous about this interview; the job is important to me." Will help create a more relaxed situation.

#### **Eye Contact**

Look the interviewer in the eye, but avoid staring. Vary your tempo and tone of voice. Sit up straight and look alert. Do not chew gum, or smoke even if the interviewer does. Do not hesitate to smile when appropriate, interviewers hire people they like.

#### **Use Discretion**

Be honest in your answers, but steer away from troublesome areas. You, more than the interviewer, can control the content of the interview. Know in advance what you want to say, and look for opportunities to say it. Expand your answers to include points that may not otherwise be addressed. Teamwork can be one area of concern to employers. Provide examples that show you work well with other people.

When you have questions about the job's duties, ask them early in the interview so you can target your abilities to the job as the interviewer progresses. Relate your comments to the employer's needs, rather than your background and accomplishments.

#### **Things to Avoid**

Do not talk too much about the past. This is one of the most common mistakes job applicants make. Do not boast about what you have done. Instead, talk about the employers' needs and how you can meet them.

Do not mention financial or personal problems.

Do not bring up salary, vacation, or fringe benefits. Wait for the interviewer to introduce these subjects. The best time to talk about salary is after you have been offered the job. You are in a much better position to negotiate once you know the full details of the position and have been offered the position.

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### **After the Interview**

#### **Ask Questions**

Often you may be invited to ask questions at the end of the interview. Be sure to have some questions that will help you in deciding whether the position is suitable for you. You may want to ask for information you need before you accept the position. However, these questions should not be your only questions.

Many employers do not make a job offer at the time of the interview because they take information on the applicants before a hiring team or review committee. The process can take some time, so it is appropriate to ask the interviewer about the hiring process.

#### **Thank the Interviewer**

Thank your interviewer at the close of the session. Offer your references if they have not already been requested. End the interview with a firm hand shake.

When you are offered a job, pre prepared to accept it, to reject it, or to get answers to any additional questions you may have. Know the salary range or employment package (salary plus benefits) that is acceptable to you.

#### **Follow Up**

Within 24 hours of the interview date, send a thank you note\*. If you still want the job, be sure and state that fact.

Be patient. The employer probably wants to check your references and see other applicants before deciding.

An interview can be a stressful experience. Consider it a recognition of your assets and an opportunity to gain something valuable without risking anything but your time. Preparing yourself will make a big difference.

\* See Examples in the **Guide to Thank You Letters** posted in Other Job Seeking Tools on this page