



The Art of Interviewing

There are two truths you need to accept in order to master the art of interviewing.

1.) People judge you based on the intelligence of your questions vs. the intelligence of your statements.

2.) And, You do not have any decision to make unless you get a job offer.

That being said, your primary goal is to get a job offer. It is not important to decide whether you want the job or not unless you get the offer.

Success is 90% preparation and only 10% perspiration.

PREPARATION

Before you walk into any interview, you should know as much about the company and the position as you possibly can. If you found the position through J.B. Hunt Executive Search, LLC, we should be able to provide most of that information for you. No matter how much information we provide you, search the web or go to the library on your own. In today's world of mass communication, there's no excuse for lack of research.

Prior preparation will enable you to be confident, overcome interviewing inexperience, sell yourself and your qualifications. Begin by preparing employment, educational and miscellaneous inventory sheets which will outline your qualifications. On these sheets, which are for your eyes only, state the facts, don't be modest, don't minimize your strengths, be specific when describing results.

Never Go on an Interview Without First Researching the Company.

One hour on the internet will provide you with all the information you need in preparation for the first interview. Additional information can be obtained at the library utilizing Standard and Poors, Dun and Bradstreet or Moody's Reference Material. This will enable you to know the company's products/services, markets, sales volume, locations and subsidiaries.

Prior planning requires you to inventory all responsibilities performed and to state how well you carried them out.

Prove your competency by stating how well you performed in the past by using the 1-2-3 mini-story technique, i.e. state the problem, describe your solution and emphasize the positive results.

Strive to project eagerness and interest, be a conversationalist by being yourself.

Conclude the interview by getting a "what will happen next" summary, accept the offer on the spot if it's what you want, showing interest in the job offer. Write a brief follow-up letter, report your progress to your executive recruiter.



Interviewing techniques

No one can predict the exact questions that an interviewer will ask, but your executive recruiter should be able to give you a good idea of the hiring authority's personality, his or her typical interview demeanor, and a few important questions that the employer is likely to ask. The fact of the matter is that most employers don't do a very good job at interviewing potential employees themselves. In order to insure you get your best foot forward, it is critical that you are prepared to control the interview or to help keep it on track if necessary. To prepare, think about how you would answer the following questions:

- Tell me about yourself. Keep your answer in the professional realm only.
Review your past positions, education and other strengths.
- What do you know about our organization. If you've done your research correctly, you should have no problem answering this one. Be positive.
- Why are you interested in this position? Relate how you feel your qualifications really match the requirements of the job. Also, express your desire to work for that company.
- What are the most significant accomplishments in your career so far?
Pick recent accomplishments that relate to this position and its requirements.
- Describe a situation in which your work was criticized. Focus on how you solved the situation and how you became a better person because of it.
- How would you describe your personality?
- How do you perform under pressure?
- What have you done to improve yourself over the past year?
- What did you like least about your last position?
- Why are you leaving (did you leave) your present(last) company?
- What is your ideal working environment?
- How would your co-workers describe you?
- What do you think of your boss?
- Have you ever fired anyone? What was the situation and how did you handle it?
- Are you creative?
- What are your goals in your career?
- Where do you see yourself in two years?
- Why should we hire you?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?
- What other types of jobs/companies are you considering?

How to Answer Questions

The question answering rule says, "Answer every question in terms of your background or qualifications or in terms of the job to be filled."

1. "Tell me about yourself" means "Tell me about your qualifications." Preplan a five to ten minute answer describing your education and then mention each job in terms of accomplishment or performance indicators.
2. Personality questions attempt to determine if you have the qualities being sought. "What kind of manager are you?" "Are you creative?" Answer these questions in terms of the obvious answer supported by past or present experiences as proof of your claim.
3. Motive questions are asked to determine if you would enjoy the job. "Describe your ideal job." "Would you rather work for a large or small company?" "What did you like most/least about you last job?" Answer these questions following the question answering rule.
4. Salary questions. When asked what you desire say, "I'm presently earning ____." If possible, avoid answering the question until an offer is made.
5. Prepare for tough questions. Anticipate what they will be. They will focus on; reasons for leaving; quality or performance. Be brief but factual. Write out your answers, refine and memorize.



How to answer the tough questions

There are few tough questions that can make or break the interview. They are usually around compensation or reason for you changing jobs now or in the past.

What kind of money are you looking for? It is never a good idea for the candidate to bring it up, especially during first interviews. The topic of money will inevitably come up however. Some ideas of how to handle it when it does include:

- I don't want to cut off my nose despite my face, so that is a tough question. Needless to say I'd like to earn as much money as possible for me and my family, just as I assume you do. I want to be careful not to overprice or under price myself. I am currently earning \$X, what type of compensation range did you have in mind for this position.
- I don't think it's fair for me to put a price tag on your opportunity. I'm sure you will compensate me fairly for what I am worth to you initially as well as once I demonstrate what I am capable of doing.

Why do you want to or why did you leave your most recent or a past position?

- I am confidentially exploring opportunities outside of my present concern due to the fact that technical challenge and career development opportunities are very important to me. Due to circumstances beyond my control, those opportunities don't exist at my present employer.
- I left XYZ company for what I thought was a better opportunity at ABC company. Unfortunately, a few things changed or did not materialize as promised. As a result I am looking for a company where I can invest my energies and experience and where it will be mutually beneficial for me to express my desire to build a track record of accomplishment.
- Don't be embarrassed of being fired, laid off or having made a mistake. Some of the most successful CEO's in America have been fired from a job before. Be honest, elaborate when necessary and most importantly be prepared to answer the question without hesitation or self doubt. Always keep it positive.

Questioning your way to Success

Employers Like to be Interviewed, Too!

Remember, People judge you based on the intelligence of your questions vs. the intelligence of your statements.

Ask questions that will shed light on the opportunity and open the door for you to sell your applicable background and accomplishments.

After you have studied the company, write out a list of questions to ask the employer.

Begin the interview by asking some questions the answers to which will provide you with an accurate depiction of what is important to the hiring authority and the company. In addition to shedding some light on the position and company for your benefit, it will also open the door for you to sell your applicable background and accomplishments specifically to what is being communicated to you. It would be a mistake to assume you know what is important to employer. It would also be a poor use of your limited time talking about something in your background that is not of interest to the employer. Ask questions with depth.



Example questions:

- What do you to expect me to have accomplished in the first 3 months, 6 months and 1 year?
- What are the most significant challenges I will face in the role during the first year?
- What obstacles must be overcome for the person in this position to succeed?
- In your opinion what are the key ingredients for success?
- Conversely, are there any specific things you believe will result in failure?
- Assuming I joined the company in this role, in what way will my success directly impact you and the way your boss evaluates your results?
- How will my performance be evaluated?
- As the person to whom this position reports, it would benefit me to understand what your most significant job related challenges are?
- In what ways would you expect me to help you in accomplishing your specific mandates?
- Why is this position available?
- What type of training programs will be offered to the person in this position?
- What are your goals for this position?
- What opportunities are there for growth in the next 12 months? Two years? Five years?
- What growth do you anticipate for your firm in the next 12 months?

Have a list, Don't cross-examine, make them job related, ask questions that require an explanation.

1. Interest questions pertain to: job opportunity; the company; its people; its products/services.
2. Job satisfaction questions pertain to; importance of job; responsibility and authority; recognition and career potential.
3. Past performance questions concentrate on people who previously held the position, their performance and where they are today.
4. Sales questions help you determine the kind of person the employer wants to hire in terms of education, experience, future performance and personality. When you understand the kind of person the employer wants to hire, you can then say, "I can do the job you want done because I've done it before and I've done it well." Or describe your compensating asset and/or education.
5. Ask for the job. "I can do what you want and I want the job!"
6. Avoid questions relating to salary, fringes, vacations, and retirement until the job is offered and you accept.

One of the psychological reasons for these questions is the fact that you are asking the employer subliminally to envision you in the role. If he can visualize you sitting in that office, it will create a powerful subconscious image of you as the (whatever the job is) and that alone will significantly increase your odds of getting an offer.

A good piece of advice is to be yourself. If you are successful in landing the job by pretending to be something you're not, both you and your new employer will end up in disappointment. It is a good idea to adjust your communications style during the interview process however. If the employer speaks more quickly than you, it may benefit you to liven up your rate of speech a little. If the employer speaks slowly and is a better listener than you, it would be advisable for you to mirror or chameleonise the style of that individual. If you speak quickly by comparison, odds are they will feel your styles are too different to work. People tend to hire people in their own image. Bear that fact in mind, but be careful not to over do it.



An overview of interview do's and don'ts

Do's

- Do prepare thoroughly prior to the interview
- Arrive 15 minutes early. Late attendance is never excusable.
- Clarify questions. Be sure you answered the questions the employer really asked.
- Get the interviewer to describe the position and responsibilities early in the conversation so you can relate your skills and background to the position throughout the interview.
- Give your qualifications. Stress the accomplishments that are most pertinent to the job.
- Conduct yourself professionally. Be aware of what your body language is saying. Smile, make eye contact, don't slouch and maintain composure.
- Anticipate tough questions. Prepare in advance so you can turn apparent weaknesses into strengths.

•Dress Properly

For men: conservative suit, white shirt, contrasting tie, shoes shined, socks over calf.

For women: skirted suit, or dress with matching jacket, neutral colored hose, simple pumps, and minimum make-up. Make your first impression a professional one.

- Ask questions throughout the interview. An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation.
- Listen. This is probably the most important ability of all. By concentrating not only on the employer's words, but also on the tone of voice and body language, you will be able to pick up on the employer's style. Once you understand how a hiring authority thinks, pattern your answers accordingly and you will be able to better relate to him or her.

Don'ts

- Don't ask how much money does this job pay, or what kind of benefits do you offer.
- Don't answer vague questions. Rather than answering questions you think you hear, get the employer to be more specific and then respond.
- Never interrupt the employer. If you don't have time to listen, neither does the employer.
- Don't smoke, chew gum or place with anything on the employer's desk.
- Don't be overly familiar, even if the employer is doing all of these things.
- Don't wear heavy perfume or cologne.
- Don't ramble. Long answers often make the speaker sound apologetic or indecisive.
- On the other hand, don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no."
Explain whenever possible.
- Do not lie. Answer questions as truthfully as possible.
- Do not make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

Closing the interview

This is the single most important thing you can do. Failing to close the interview well can make the difference between being offered the position be being bridesmaid.

Too many people second-guess themselves after an interview. By closing strongly and asking the right questions, you can eliminate the post-interview doubts that tend to plague most interviewees.



If you feel that the interview went well and you would like to take the next step, express your interest to the hiring authority and turn the tables a bit. Try something like the following:

"Mr. Employer, I'd like to thank you for the time you spent with me. It has been very interesting and enlightening. I'd like to close the meeting by expressing my sincere interest in the opportunity. I have no reservations about my ability to do the job. Furthermore, I'd like to say that you would be making a mistake by not offering it to me. It's not likely a better candidate exists and I can guarantee you that no one will work harder and more effectively towards the accomplishment of the goals and objectives you have described to me during the interview. I can start in two weeks, can I have the job? "

"After hearing more about your company, the position and the responsibilities at hand, I am certain that I possess the qualities that you are looking for in the (title) position. Based on our conversation and my qualifications, are there any issues or concerns that you have that would lead you to believe otherwise?"

You have a right to be assertive. These are great closing questions because it opens the door for the hiring authority to be honest with you about his or her feelings. If concerns do exist, this is a great opportunity to overcome them. You have one final chance to dispel the concerns, sell your strengths and end the interview on positive note.

A few things to remember during the closing process:

Don't be discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with the office first, or interview other applicants, before making a decision.

Make sure you answer the following two questions: "why are you interested in the company?," and "what can you offer?."

Express thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration.

Ask for the interview's business card so you can write a thank you letter as soon as possible.

Follow-up

When you get in your car, immediately write down key issues uncovered in the interview. Think of the qualifications the employer is looking for and match your strengths to them. Call your recruiter! Follow-up now is critical.

A "thank you" letter should be written no later than 24 hours after the interview.

After the Interview

Contact your executive recruiter immediately and communicate what transpired. If you're interested in the position, your executive recruiter can help you get it.

Notes: