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## WHERE HIRING DECISIONS ARE MADE: HOW TO INTERVIEW SUCCESSFULLY

The objective of the interview is simple and singular. TO GET A JOB OFFER! Once you have the offer, you then have the opportunity to accept or reject it.

This may sound pretty fundamental but you would be amazed how many job applicants either do not know this or forget it during an interview ... sometimes with disastrous results.

As you prepare for interviews and actually meet employers, remembering this objective is the single most important thing you can do.

You are NOT interviewing to:

- Decide if you would like to work for the company being interviewed. There will be plenty of time to think this through after the interview or after you have actually received the offer. Do not let your initial opinion of the company distract you from your objective. If you don't get the job offer, it will not make any difference if you do or don't like the position or the company.
- Broaden your knowledge of available opportunities. There are far more effective and efficient ways to learn more about the opportunities available to a candidate with your background. A "ho-hum" attitude has no place in an interview. Leaving the employer with the impression you are just "shopping around" is usually a fatal mistake.
- Learn what the particular company can do for YOU. The interview is your chance to show the employer what you can do for him or her and the company. If you don't get the offer, what the company can do for you will be of no significance. We will have information for you on salary, benefits, job responsibilities, advancement potential, the employer, department and company. We will answer any additional questions you may have concerning the position or company.

YOUR SINGULAR PURPOSE IS TO GET THE OFFER - whether it is good, bad, or average. You can always turn down an offer once it has been extended to you.

## PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

There are several things you should do to prepare yourself for the interview. Your preparation before the interview can, in fact, make the difference between receiving and not receiving the job offer.

Pre-interview preparations in the order of their importance are:

### Prepare a Resume for the Specific Interview

Before your actual interview, you will have a good idea of the qualifications the company is seeking to fill the position. Be prepared to tailor your standard resume to fit the requirements of the position for which you are interviewing. Take extra copies of your modified resume to the interview even if the company already has copies of your standard resume.

### Research the Company

The more you know about the company with which you are interviewing, the more comfortable you will be during the interview and the more prepared you will be to show genuine interest in the company. An interviewer will be impressed by your interest and motivation, and you will be able to explain what you can do for the company. Your counselor will give you information about the company prior to your interview.

### Be Prepared to Play by the Company's Rules

Follow whatever procedures are suggested or required without question or comment -regardless of how ridiculous they may seem. Many companies have set procedures for interviewing. By complying fully and graciously, you can show the employer your general attitude and your ability to work well with others, regardless of the circumstances. Remember, the company's primary business is NOT hiring.

### Plan Your Dress for the Interview

Your attire may seem trivial, but you would not want to miss a job offer simply because the employer did not like the way you were dressed. Dress conservatively. For men, research has shown a navy blue or charcoal gray solid or pinstriped suit with a current tie and a long-sleeved starched shirt will make the most favorable impression. Women should wear a business suit with no frills or ruffles, closed-toe shoes, light nail polish, and minimal, conservative jewelry. If you are not sure of the company's work environment, it is better to dress more conservatively than more liberally for the interview.

### Allow Sufficient Time for the Interview

You will probably meet with several individuals during the interview cycle. You will not make your best presentation if you are worried about another appointment. Rushing any of the interviewers at the company could be a fatal mistake. Concentrate on your current situation. Don't think about what you will say to the department manager while you're meeting with the Personnel Manager.

### Arrive Early for the Interview

Plan to arrive at the company 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time. Arriving late or barely on time are negative signals to the employer. There is NO excuse for late arrival at an interview. Arriving early allows you time to compose yourself and to use the facilities to check your appearance before announcing your arrival.

### Keep Yourself in a Positive Frame of Mind

The purpose of your interview is to discuss the job position, company and related topics. You are not meeting with the employer to discuss inconveniences or personal problems. If your interview begins negatively, it may be difficult to turn it into a positive situation later. Begin every response on a positive note. Rather than replying, "No, I don't." "No, I never had any experience." or "No, we never did it that way." try saying: "That area was handled by our..." "I hope to pursue that area in my next

career move." "Is that responsibility part of the daily requirements?" "Let me share where I think my experience fits."

### After Your Interview

Immediately after your interview call your counselor. It is vital to communicate your feedback from the interview to your counselor so he or she may let the employer know how you felt about the opportunity. Your counselor will also let you know how well the employer felt you would fit the position and the company. Do NOT wait until you drive home, run errands, or return to work. If your counselor is not available, please leave your name and a message.

## JOB INTERVIEW TYPES

There are different types of job interviews you may participate in during the hiring process. Here are the major ones and tips on how to handle them.

### Stress Interview

Stress interviews are a deliberate attempt to see how you handle yourself. The interviewer may be sarcastic or argumentative, or may keep you waiting. Expect this to happen and, when it does, don't take it personally. Calmly answer each question as it comes. Ask for clarification if you need it and never rush into an answer. The interviewer may also lapse into silence at some point during the questioning. Recognize this as an attempt to unnerve you. Sit silently until the interviewer resumes the questions. If a minute goes by, ask if he or she needs clarification of your last comments.

### One-On-One Interview

In a one-on-one interview, it has been established that you have the skills and education necessary for the position. The interviewer wants to see if you will fit in with the company, and how your skills will complement the rest of the department. Your goal in a one-on-one interview is to establish rapport with the interviewer and show him or her that your qualifications will benefit the company.

### Screening Interview

A screening interview is meant to weed out unqualified candidates. Providing facts about your skills is more important than establishing rapport. Interviewers will work from an outline of points they want to cover, looking for inconsistencies in your resume and challenging your qualifications. Provide answers to their questions, and never volunteer any additional information. That information could work against you. One type of screening interview is the telephone interview.

### Lunch Interview

The same rules apply in lunch interviews as those held at the office. The setting may be more casual, but remember it is a business lunch and you are being watched carefully. Use the lunch interview to develop common ground with your interviewer. Follow his or her lead in both selection of food and in etiquette.

### Committee Interview

Committee interviews are a common practice. You will face several members of the company who have a say in whether you are hired. When answering questions from several people, speak directly to the person asking the question; it is not necessary to answer to the group. In some committee interviews, you may be asked to demonstrate your problem-solving skills. The committee will outline a situation and ask you to formulate a plan that deals with the problem. You don't have to come up

with the ultimate solution. The interviewers are looking for how you apply your knowledge and skills to a real-life situation.

### Group Interview

A group interview is usually designed to uncover the leadership potential of prospective managers and employees who will be dealing with the public. The front-runner candidates are gathered together in an informal, discussion-type interview. A subject is introduced and the interviewer will start off the discussion. The goal of the group interview is to see how you interact with others and how you use your knowledge and reasoning powers to win others over. If you do well in the group interview, you can expect to be asked back for a more extensive interview.

### Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews are merely screening interviews meant to eliminate poorly qualified candidates so that only a few are left for personal interviews. You might be called out of the blue, or a telephone call to check on your resume might turn into an interview. Your mission is to be invited for a personal face-to-face interview. Some tips for telephone interviews:

**Anticipate the dialogue:** Write a general script with answers to questions you might be asked. Focus on skills, experiences and accomplishments. Practice until you are comfortable. Then replace the script with cue cards that you keep by the telephone.

**Keep your notes handy:** Have any key information, including your resume, notes about the company, and any cue cards you have prepared, next to the phone. You will sound prepared if you **don't have** to search for the information. Make sure you also have a notepad and pen so that you can jot down notes and any questions you would like to ask at the end of the interview.

**Be prepared to think on your feet:** If you are asked to participate in a role-playing situation, give short but concise answers. Accept any criticism with tact and grace.

**Avoid salary issues:** If you are asked how much money you would expect, try to avoid the issue by using a delaying statement or give a broad range with a \$15,000 spread. At this point, you do not know how much the job is worth.

**Push for a face-to-face meeting:** Sell yourself by closing with something like: "I am very interested in exploring the possibility of working in your company. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you in person so we can both better evaluate each other. I am free Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning. Which would be better for you?"

**Try to reschedule surprise interviews:** You will not be your best with a surprise interview. If you are called unexpectedly, try to set an appointment to call back by saying something like: "I have a scheduling conflict at this time. Can I call you back tomorrow after work, say 6 PM?"

## **ANATOMY OF THE JOB INTERVIEW**

Interviews take various forms and are conducted in various sequences. You may, for example, begin in the personnel department and then be escorted to the offices of interviewing supervisors later. Some companies conduct interviews in conference rooms, individual offices or over lunch. Some companies require testing. You will probably be interviewed by more than one person. Although there

is no standard "structure", there are recognizable steps or stages within any interview sequence. It will be up to you to recognize the interview stages and to act and react accordingly to each stage. The basic parts of the interview are The Arrival, The Initial Contact, The Icebreaker, The Chronological Interview, The Topical Interview, The Interview Close and The Exit. Each part is important and deserves separate and detailed attention.

### The Arrival

Typically, the first person you will meet is the receptionist who may or may not be expecting you. Greet the receptionist and tell him or her your name and the individual's name you wish to see. Then, follow his or her Instructions.

### The Initial Contact

Regardless of whom you contact initially among the company personnel with the exception of the receptionist, your greeting should include a firm handshake and an enthusiastic "hello" followed by an introduction of yourself. If your first contact is a supervisor in the department offering the job, he or she may talk with you first, introduce you to other staff members and speak with you again before you leave. Your initial contact may be with a personnel employee within the company. He or she will instruct you on how to proceed with your contacts and provide a preview of your agenda while at the company. Remember to "play by the company rules" without question.

### The Ice Breaker

In every interview, there is a short interval of "small talk" before "business talk" begins. You should respond with enthusiastic and pleasant answers to remarks and questions regardless of how trivial they may seem. This part of the interview is also your opportunity to get on a first-name basis with the interviewer. After The Icebreaker, do not hesitate to drop the "Mister" or "Ms." and simply call the interviewer by his or her first name.

### The Chronological Interview

Unless you take action, the interview probably will be a completely "chronological interview" controlled solely by the interviewer. Unfortunately, this form of interview provides a poor framework for the interviewer to discover the skills and goals he wants in his new employee and for you to explain how you can satisfy those job requirements. Consider the chronological interview as part of the introductory phase of your interview. You should bring the chronological interview to a close no later than 5-7 minutes after it begins. While being careful not to appear domineering or manipulative, you must take the initiative and subtly begin The Topical Interview. Shifting to The Topical Interview is not difficult simply look for the first opportunity to ask this question:

"Pat, what exactly will my first assignment be?"

When the interviewer responds with a description of the initial responsibilities of the position, your opportunity to convince him or her that your qualifications match the position requirements has begun.

### The Topical Interview

The Topical Interview is completely different from The Chronological Interview. Instead of being guided by a backward review of your previous jobs, The Topical Interview focuses on the responsibilities of the specific job for which you are interviewing. Remember, your strategy is to find out exactly what will be expected of you in the new position and to convince the interviewer that you have the skills to perform exactly as expected in the position.

## The Interview Close

The Closing phase is perhaps the most important aspect of the interview insofar as making a final impression is concerned. If you close the interview properly, you leave the interviewer with a positive impression of you - head and shoulders above other applicants for the position. The Close involves four steps:

1. Briefly recap the reasons you believe you are qualified for the position.
2. Regardless of the interviewer's response, **STAY ENTHUSIASTIC!!!**
3. Make the statement that the position is exactly what you are looking for and that you would like an offer from the company. (As in all sales, always ask for the offer.)
4. As you prepare to leave, tell the interviewer you would enjoy working with him or her personally.

By following this closing technique, you will have convinced the interviewer that you are definitely interested in the job, you can do the job and that you would like an offer to work with the company. Perhaps most important, you have convinced the interviewer that you will be a part of his or her team and that you are the right person for the job.

Remember that you want an offer.

A typical sequence for an interview close might be as follows:

APPLICANT: "Tell me, Bill, do you think I qualify for this position?"

INTERVIEWER: "Yes, Tom, I think you do. However, we have several more interviews to complete before we make a final decision on extending an offer."

APPLICANT: "Fine, Bill, from what you told me, I know I can perform the job responsibilities and I would like your offer to come work for your company."

At this point, you should expect to be dismissed or taken to another interviewer.

## Very important:

You must convince all parties in the interview cycle that you are the candidate for the position. Assume each interviewer knows nothing about you and start your interview procedure from the beginning. Keep your responses consistent - don't change your goals, duties, etc. from one interviewer to another. All interviews, regardless of whom the interviewer may be, should be conducted with a topical interview and a strong, positive close.

## The Exit

Your exit from the interviewer's office should be viewed as an additional opportunity to display a positive attitude about the position and company. At the interviewer's office door (or at the elevator), you should repeat your statement that you have the ability to do the job and that the position is exactly what you are looking for. You should also take this opportunity to tell the interviewer you would enjoy working with him or her personally.

Reinforcement at the Exit phase can make the difference between receiving the offer and not receiving the offer.

### After the Interview

While the interview is still fresh in your mind, write down the strong and weak points of the interview. By doing this, you will be able to review your performance prior to your next interview and work on a stronger presentation of yourself as the right person for the job.

On the day following the interview, call the employer to again express your interest in the job. Tell the employer you thought over everything discussed in the interview and that you are even more interested in the job now than you were when you left his or her office the previous day. Although the phone call is most effective, if you cannot reach the employer by phone, send a mailgram with the above message.

By following this interview procedure, you have done everything possible to ensure a good chance of receiving an offer from the company.

## MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION ON JOB INTERVIEWS

Here's what you should keep in mind the day of the interview and immediately afterward.

### Before the Interview

- Be on time. Being on time (or early) is usually interpreted by the interviewer as evidence of your commitment, dependability, and professionalism.
- Be positive and try to make others feel comfortable. Show openness by leaning into a greeting with a firm handshake and smile.
- Relax. Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation. And remember, the interviewer is just as nervous about making a good impression on you.

### During the Interview

- Show self-confidence. Make eye contact with the interviewer and answer his questions with a clear voice. Work to establish a rapport for the interviewer.
- Reflect before answering a difficult question. If you are unsure how to answer a question, you might reply with another question. For example, if the interviewer asks you what salary you expect, try answering by saying "That is a good question. I would basically expect an offer that is fair based on my education, professional experience and accomplishments."
- When it is your turn, ask the questions you have prepared in advance. These should cover any information about the company and job position you could not find in your own research.
- Do not ask questions that raise red flags. Ask, "Is relocation a requirement?", and the interviewer will assume that you do not want to relocate at all. Too many questions about vacation may cause the interviewer to think you are more interested in taking time off than helping the company. Make sure the interviewer understands why you are asking these questions.

- Show you want the job. Display your initiative by talking about what functions you could perform that would benefit the organization, and by giving specific details of how you have helped past employers. You might also ask about specific details of the job position, such as functions, responsibilities, who you would work with, and who you would report to.
- Avoid negative body language. An interviewer wants to see how well you react under pressure. Avoid these signs of nervousness and tension:
  - \* Frequently touching your mouth
  - \* Faking a cough to think about the answer to a question
  - \* Gnawing on your lip
  - \* Tight or forced smiles
  - \* Swinging your foot or leg
  - \* Folding or crossing your arms
  - \* Avoiding eye contact
  - \* Picking at invisible pieces of lint

### After the Interview

- End the interview with a handshake and thank the interviewer for his or her time. Reiterate your interest in the position and your qualifications. Ask if you can telephone in a few days to check on the status of your application. If they offer to contact you, politely ask when you should expect the call.
- Send a “Thanks for the Interview” note. After the first interview, send a brief thank-you note. Try to time it so it arrives before the hiring decision will be made. It will serve as a reminder to the interviewer concerning your appropriateness for the position, so feel free to mention any topics discussed during your interview. If the job contact was made through the Internet or e-mail, send an e-mail thank-you note immediately after your interview, then mail a second letter by post timed to arrive the week before the hiring decision will be made.
- Follow up with a phone call if you are not contacted within a week of when the interviewer indicated you would be.

## COMMON JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

By rehearsing interview questions, you'll become more familiar with your own qualifications and will be well prepared to demonstrate how you can benefit an employer. Some examples:

1. Why do you want to work here? Or What about our company interests you?



Few questions are more important than these, so it is important to answer them clearly and with enthusiasm. Show the interviewer your interest in the company. Share what you have learned about the job, the company and the industry through your own research. Talk about how your professional skills will benefit the company. Unless you work in sales, your answer should never be simply: "money." The interviewer will wonder if you really care about the job.

**2. What are your best skills?**

If you have sufficiently researched the organization, you should be able to imagine what skills the company values. List them, then give examples where you have demonstrated these skills.

**3. Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?**

The ideal answer is one of flexibility. However, be honest. Give examples describing how you have worked in both situations.

**4. What are your career goals? Or What are your future plans?**

The interviewer wants to know if your plans and the company's goals are compatible. Let him know that you are ambitious enough to plan ahead. Talk about your desire to learn more and improve your performance, and be as specific as possible about how you will meet the goals you have set for yourself.

**5. What are your hobbies? And Do you play any sports?**

The interviewer may be looking for evidence of your job skills outside of your professional experience. For example, hobbies such as chess or bridge demonstrate analytical skills. Reading, music, and painting are creative hobbies. Individual sports show determination and stamina, while group sport activities may indicate you are comfortable working as part of a team.

Also, the interviewer might simply be curious as to whether you have a life outside of work.

Employees who have creative or athletic outlets for their stress are often healthier, happier and more productive.

**6. What have I forgotten to ask?**

Use this chance to summarize your good characteristics and attributes and how they may be used to benefit the organization. Convince the interviewer you understand the job requirements and that you can succeed.

## **MOST DIFFICULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

When preparing for an interview, go through the following list of questions and write down appropriate responses. Don't memorize your answers; review them for content before your interview.

### **PERSONAL**

1. Tell me about yourself?

Respond by asking, "What specific information or details would you like to know?" Be careful with an interviewer who allows you to talk as long as you wish on this question. Limit your answer to 2 minutes, don't ramble and avoid discussing details. Your answer should relate to the job opening – discuss qualities which show how you could benefit the employer.

1. If hired, how long would you stay with us?

"I am looking for a career opportunity; I would like a challenging position that would lead to additional responsibilities within the same company."

2. How soon are you ready to make a move?

"I am ready to accept an offer from your company immediately. However, I don't want to leave my current position abruptly without letting my supervisor and coworkers know the status of my work. I would like to give my current employer two weeks notice. However, I would be able to start learning your software and operating procedures in the evenings during that time."

3. What factors are involved in a move for you? Do you have family or personal obligations that could keep you from moving?

Do not give the interviewer a list of problems (or potential problems). Stress the importance of your position to your family. Your spouse/significant other wants you to work in a position where you are happy.

4. Why are you leaving your present job? / Why did you leave your most recent job?

Stick to one response - don't change answers during the interview!

"Due to economic cut-backs. " "Reduction in the work force due to economic problems. " "To obtain a position that offered more opportunity and challenge. Do not say I am always looking for a good opportunity, if this were the case then why should they hire you if you are just going to continue to look. Do not cast any negative shadows over your employer or boss, no bridge burning parties you might as well get up and leave now. You should have a legitimate reason that takes little conversation like health reasons or family issues.

5. How do you feel about leaving your benefits?

"My main objective is to find a challenging and responsible position. Benefits are secondary."

6. Describe your ideal working environment. If you had your choice of companies and jobs, where would you go? What qualities do you look for in a job?

"My main objective is to find a challenging opportunity which will afford me the chance to make a meaningful contribution." OR "I have enjoyed all of my previous positions and accept each new assignment as a challenge and an opportunity to continue to learn and develop."

7. What do your co-workers think of you?

"I have always worked well with both the employees in my department as well as employees in other departments."

8. Why haven't you found a new position by now?

"As you know, the employment market has been effected by the economic downturn and I want to make sure the position I accept is the right one."

9. Have you thought of leaving your current position before now? If so, what has kept you there until now?

"I have been approached for a few opportunities. Although I have considered them, I have been pretty satisfied with my current employer and did not want to make a move unless I was sure I had found the right opportunity."

10. Do you believe you might be happier in a different size company?

If you received most of your experience at companies similar in size to the one with which you are interviewing, make a point of it in your response: "As you can see from my background, I feel I can perform at my best in a \_\_\_\_\_-sized company. However, I am flexible and can adapt to different working environments." If you have experience in companies of varying sizes, emphasize your flexibility: "As you can see from my background, I have been successful working in companies of various sizes. "

11. Do you have any objections to psychological tests?

NO!

12. What other types of jobs/companies are you considering?

"I have several other possibilities under consideration and I am presently evaluating which one would offer me the most challenge and provide the opportunity to contribute. "

13. Have you kept up-to-date in your field? If so, how?

"I subscribe to publications and trade magazines. " (Name two or three of the publications and magazines published in your field of expertise.)

14. What was the last book you read / movie you saw / sporting event you attended?

It is always positive to show an interest in reading - especially of professional / industry development materials. However, you may want to also include interests away from work so the interviewer will see you have a personality aside from your work interests. Movies and sporting events show the interviewer more about your personality and how you might fit in with other employees.

15. How would you describe your personality? Give me 3 adjectives that describe you.

"I am friendly and like meeting and working with people." OR "I am successful, fair but firm and expect to give anything I do 110%." OR "I am friendly, hardworking, conscientious, truthful, organized, and thorough." (Pick any three.)

16. What are your goals? What are your short range (1-3 years) and long-range (4-6 years) objectives?

Talk about the job for which you are interviewing. "My immediate goal is to obtain a position, which is challenging and will offer me the opportunity to continue to learn and advance to more responsible and challenging assignments. " OR "My immediate goal is to find the right position which will offer a challenge and afford the opportunity to reach my full potential. "

17. What are you doing or have you done to reach those objectives?

"As you can see from my background, I have been assigned increased responsibilities and more difficult assignments as I had the experience to handle them. I see this next opportunity as one more learning process to accomplishing my objectives,"

18. What new goals have you established recently?

"To continue to gain as much as possible from each new experience and opportunity."

19. How do you feel about people from minority groups?

"I get along and work well with people from all ethnic backgrounds."

20. How would you feel about working for a man/woman?

"I respect and work well with my superiors regardless of their gender."

21. If you could begin your career again, what would you do differently?

"I have been very fortunate to make the most of the opportunities offered to me, therefore I would not do anything differently. "

22. According to your definition of success, how successful have you been to this point?

"I would say I have been very successful. I have always had challenges, which have been able to meet and have been able to make meaningful contributions both on and off the job. "

23. What hours are you accustomed to working?

"I usually arrive at work early so I can organize my day and work until I finish the project I'm working on which often requires working past regular business hours. Basically, I arrange my schedule around projects at work - I do whatever it takes to get the job done."

24. Did you bring a resume?

ALWAYS bring several copies of your resume as you may meet with several individuals.

25. If hired, what do you see in your future?

"An opportunity to contribute towards increased efficiency and profits which in turn will provide me with a challenge to continue to excel. I want to grow professionally by making meaningful contributions and gaining added responsibility. I feel promotions will come as a result of hard work."

26. Will you be out to take your boss' job?

"No Sir/Madam, my main objective is to work hard and make a contribution and an impact on this organization. I feel if I do so, promotions will come."

27. Isn't this a career switch?

"No, I do not feel any change is a switch. I feel we gain skills, knowledge and experience from everything we do which is applicable in almost every other area of endeavor."

28. What else do you think I should know about you?

This normally is asked toward the close of the interview and provides you with the opportunity to either summarize your strengths or to point out any areas of your background, which you feel, was not covered during the interview. Have 2 or 3 strong points to make in less than 2 minutes, which will recap how you can make a difference to the company with which you are interviewing.

29. Do you generally speak to people before they speak to you?

"It really depends on the situation. I will introduce myself to new people if it is appropriate. If someone is speaking and I feel it is appropriate to give my input or ask questions, I will contribute. I also try not to interrupt conversations when it is apparent it is a closed conversation or presentation."

## SKILLS

1. Why should we hire you? /What can you do for us that someone else can't do?

Relate past experience, which represents success in solving problems, which may be similar to those of the prospective employer. "As my record indicates, I have made a meaningful contribution to my previous/present employer and I will be able to bring the same experience to interviewer's company." OR "My qualifications and experience give me the necessary skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution to interviewer's company."

2. How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?

"My previous experience has proven that I am a quick learner. Since this position and my previous assignments are similar, I will be able to become productive immediately. "

3. You may be overqualified or too experienced for the position we have to offer.

Possible answers: strong company needs strong employees, experienced people are at a premium today, emphasize interest in a long-term association with the company, employer will receive a faster return on investment because you have more experience than required. "My previous experience just means I can do a better job in a shorter period of time. In addition, I can assist your organization in more areas."

4. Have you helped increase sales/profits? If so, how?

Site one or two specific examples.

5. Have you helped reduce costs? If so, how?

Site one or two specific examples.

6. How much money did you ever account for?

If you were not directly accountable for money, explain your role in terms of budgeting, sales, etc. (profit or revenue related).

7. Do you like working with figures more than words?

Answer this question with the available position in mind but do not limit yourself to one or the other, exclusively. "I have more experience working directly with figures but I have also been responsible for reporting conclusions and reasons behind those numbers in our executive reports and meetings. " OR "Most of my experience has involved writing reports and preparing presentations interpreting financial data."

8. What were your most significant accomplishments in your current or most recent position?

Site specific examples. "I assisted in the development of a new product line which increased the company's revenue by 23%. "

9. Would you describe a few situations in which your work was criticized?

"In regard to my work, my dealings with my superiors and fellow employees has been very positive. "

10. If I spoke with your current or most recent boss, what would he or she say are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your strong points/weaknesses?

Give three strong points and relate them to the interviewer's company and the particular position for which you are interviewing. "I am organized; I can accomplish objectives by working well with others and I'm determined to reach the company's objectives." Give only one weakness and turn the negative into a positive. "I am sometimes impatient and do the work myself if the project is running late."

11. Can you work under pressure, deadlines, etc.?

"I have never had a problem working under pressure or meeting deadlines. As you can see from my resume, many of my previous assignments were completed before schedule." OR "I have always been able to do my best work when under pressure or have short deadlines to meet."

12. Are you creative?

Give one or two examples.

13. Are you a leader?

Give one or two examples.

14. Are you analytical?

Give one or two examples.

15. What kind of student were you?

If your GPA was high or you graduated with honors, emphasize these points. If your GPA was average, explain the reasons in a positive way. "I carried a full course load while working 30 hours a week at a public accounting firm." Or "I was Treasurer of a business fraternity, a reporter for the school newspaper and recognized as an outstanding member of the ABC Society."

16. What is your leadership/management style?

"I can adapt to the management style of the company I work for as well as that of the individuals under my direction."

## SUPERVISORY SKILLS

1. Are you or could you become a good supervisor? /Why do you feel you have management potential?

Give an example. "I was responsible for a support staff involving 5 employees made up of 4 project assistants and a secretary." OR "I was not officially a supervisor, however, I was responsible for various temporary employees in my department which involved anywhere from 1 to 6 temporaries at various times." OR "As you can see from my background, each of my prior positions have increased in responsibility and authority. Based on this I am confident that I can handle managerial positions."

2. Did you ever fire an employee? If so, what were the reasons for firing the person and how did you handle it?

3. What do you think is the most difficult task as a supervisor?

## INTERVIEWING COMPANY

1. What do you know about our organization?

Discuss products, services, revenues, problems, people, and history. "ABC Company employs 500 employees involved in the manufacturing of widgets. 1988 revenues were \$56 million and you are presently expanding your operations with the addition of two new manufacturing facilities."

2. Why do you want to work for our company?

You would like to be part of a company project, solve a company problem, etc. You like what you've heard about the company's policies, goals, management, etc. "I understand your company is interested in employees who want to work hard and make a meaningful contribution."

## POSITION

1. Please **give me your definition of... (The position for which you are interviewing).**

2. What position do you expect to have in two years/five years?

"I have not identified a specific position down the road. I am more interested in the contribution I can make and feel with hard work, the right position will become available when I am ready for it."

3. How would you structure this job?

"I am not in a position to make this determination. I do not fully know how your company is structured or how each position relates to the other positions."

## SALARY\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

1. Why aren't you earning a higher salary with your level of experience?

2. What salary do you feel this position should pay?

Be careful - the market value of the position may be the answer. "My understanding is that a job like the one you're describing may be in the range of \$\_\_\_\_\_."

3. What salary do you think you are worth? What kind of salary are you looking for?

"I am sure your organization offers a competitive salary, however, until I learn more about the position and the responsibilities I would like to defer that question."

## PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS

1. How would you evaluate your present or most recent firm? What do you think is wrong with your current or most recent company?

"My last employer gave me an excellent opportunity to contribute by offering me increased responsibilities and challenges." OR "My last company was a good place to work. My boss and coworkers provided me with an opportunity to grow and develop. "

2. What features of your current or most recent position did you like most/least?

"I liked the opportunity to contribute and make a difference in my department and the organization. "

OR "I enjoyed having the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution requiring innovative concepts and teamwork."

3. Which of your previous jobs did you like best?

"I have enjoyed all of my previous positions. Each provided me with an opportunity to continue to gain more experience and responsibility."

4. What do you think about your current or most recent supervisor?

"He/she provided me with the opportunity to continue to learn and make a more meaningful impact on both my position and my contribution to the over-all operations. "

5. In your current or most recent position, what problems have you identified that had previously been overlooked? How have you saved your company or department time, money or unnecessary problems?

6. How did you obtain your past positions?

"Most of my prior positions were obtained through my own contacts."



# QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

1. Why is this position open?
2. How often has this position been filled in the past 5 - 10 years?
3. What are the primary reasons given when past employees have left this position?
4. Why did the person who most recently held this position leave?
5. What would you like do differently by the next person who holds this position?
6. What are some of the objectives you would like accomplished in this job?
7. What objectives is most pressing? What would you like accomplish in the next 2 to 3 months?
8. What are some of the long-term objectives you would like accomplished through this position?
9. What freedom would I have in determining my work objectives, deadlines, and methods of measurement?
10. What type of support does this position receive in terms of people, finances, etc.?
11. What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position? How do you think these could be best handled?
12. Where could an employee go who is successful in this position and within what time frame?
13. In what ways has this company been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
14. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
15. How will the performance of the employee in this position be judged? What accounts for success?

# POSITIVE TRAITS & CHARACTERISTICS

When interviewing, be prepared to discuss in quantitative terms, through illustrations, the following traits/characteristics as they apply to the position for which you are interviewing:

- Sharp; intelligent; quick
- Strong communication skills
- Professional corporate image
- Self-starter; self-motivated
- Presentation skills (including self)
- Thoughtful; assertive; you express your thoughts then listen to others' opinions; good timing
- Dependable - job will be done
- Sense of responsibility
- Attitude - willing to do what it takes to get the job done
- Realistic assessment of skills, potential, attainment of goals, strengths and weaknesses
- Motivated by improving skills, experience
- Can discuss philosophical issues
- Flexible, adaptable, driven (when appropriate)
- Disciplined
- Work through problems; you ask for help quickly if needed
- Set realistic targets and meet them
- Don't wear emotions on sleeve very often
- Know when to quit; when enough is enough

# EMPLOYER HOT BUTTONS

Before your interview, think of at least one example in your present or most recent position where you have exhibited the following qualities:

- **DEPENDABLE** - Missed only one day of work in the last two years, given a key to the office, could sign checks, never had a supervisor, officer of a social group.
- **SELF STARTER** - Designed own job duties, took over a new department, set a production record, developed a new system, went to night school, handled company credit union, in charge when boss was away.
- **LOYAL** - Gave a long notice on last job, helped the old company on Saturdays, great reference, respected former boss, would not leave during busy season, turned down offers while working.
- **INTELLIGENT** - College grades, wrote a paper on studied at night, Ranking in class, test results, special duty in the military, fraternity/sorority.
- **FRIENDLY** - Elected to an office, member of several social services groups, teaches Sunday school, presented award/gift from last job, counseled fellow employees, projects warmth
- **PRODUCTIVE** - Turned out number of work, won a production award, increased sales, wore several hats, set records.
- **LEADER/MANAGER** - Officer in the service, promoted to manager, elected president of -, reduced turnover by %, increased productivity by..., and opened a new branch or department.
- **ACCURATE WORK** - Former boss said produced number because of accuracy, collects stamps, treasurer at church.
- **STABLE** - Had one job for - years, worked every summer for attended night school for - years, lived in Houston all your life.
- **CREATIVE** - Designed a new system, created a new technique, writes as a hobby, solved a problem in a unique way, invented.

# COMMON JOB INTERVIEW MISTAKES

Want to know what not to do at the job interview? Learn from the mistakes of others. Here's "18 Deadly Interview Mistakes Job Seekers Make," adapted from Drs. Caryl and Ron Krannich's 101 Dynamite Answers to Interview Questions.

1. Arrive late for the interview.
2. Indicate you are late because the directions you were given were not good.
3. Look disheveled and inappropriately dressed.
4. Slouch in your seat.
5. Don't maintain good eye-contact with the interviewer.
6. Do your company research at the interview by asking, *"What do you guys do here?"*
7. Don't make a connection between your skills and the needs of the employer.
8. Brag about how great you are, but neglect to cite evidence of your accomplishments.
9. Respond in an unfocused, disorganized, and rambling manner.
10. Remain low-key and display no enthusiasm for the job.
11. Answer most questions with simple "yes" or "no" answers.
12. Appear desperate for a job – any job.
13. Call the interviewer by his or her first name, or use the wrong name.
14. Give memorized responses, forgetting parts in the process.
15. Badmouth your current or former employer.
16. Ask *"How am I doing?"* Or *"Are you going to hire me?"*
17. Blurt out, *"I need to make at least \$35,000. I hope this job pays at least that much,"* near the beginning of the interview.
18. When asked *"Do you have any questions?"*, reply *"No."*

# SAMPLE LETTERS

## THANK YOU LETTER

Date

(Person Interviewed With)

(Title)

(Company's Name)

(Company's Address)

Dear,

I certainly appreciated the privilege of interviewing with the (Company's Name) team for the position of (function). After getting to know you, (the firm) and the area, I feel that this position offers me a promising opportunity.

I believe the position you are seeking to fill presents an exciting challenge to persons committed to success in this field. I also believe that my experience and background uniquely qualify me to meet the challenge.

- As requested, I have enclosed a completed application for employment, as well as my expense voucher (if applicable), along with copies of airline and hotel receipts for your records (if applicable).

I appreciate the chance to be considered for the position and thank you for your interest. I look forward to hearing from you very soon!

Sincerely,

- NOTE: The paragraph regarding applications and expenses would be applicable to your Human Resources thank you only. Delete from all other letters.

## ACCEPTANCE LETTER

Date

(Person Interviewed With)  
(Title)  
(Company's Name)  
(Company's Address)

Dear,

It is with great honor and pleasure that I accept your recent offer of employment. (Company's Name) is an exciting field. I believe that working at (Company's Name) is a unique opportunity that will contribute to the success of (Company's Name).

As formerly agreed, I will begin work on (date). I am looking forward to a mutually beneficial and rewarding experience.

Sincerely,

## RESIGNATION LETTER

Date

(Your Supervisor)  
(Company's Name)  
(Company's Address)

Dear,

I regret to inform you that I am leaving (your current company) on (date). This was a difficult decision, as working for (your current company) has been a positive experience and one for which I am thankful. I have acquired a great deal of knowledge here, and have appreciated the opportunity to work with you. However, my consideration of a career enhancement opportunity has led me to accept a position with another company. This final decision was reached only after thorough consideration.

I wish continued success to (your current company) and to you. Please feel free to contact me after I leave if I can be of any further assistance to the Company.

Sincerely,