



Portfolio (POF)

Class 03

The interview and the portfolio's presentation

The first interview is usually the most difficult one. And, honestly, there are good chances the two or three first ones will be quite bad. Here, just like for anything, it is a learning process. You will get used to presentations and recurrent questions; you will learn what to say and what to avoid talking about. You will become more comfortable, with time.



Before the interview

Make sure to prepare five or six questions you may use in order to start a dialogue, to take a dynamic part in the conversation at the beginning, especially if you must wait a few minutes before the interview begins.

Try to identify your strengths and weakness, qualities and flaws, what you excel at and what you need to improve. Questions about this are almost systematically asked in interview. If you aren't too sure, ask your colleagues and friends, they should be able to help you. Employers actually feel more secure about a candidate when they know their limits.

The arrival at in interview's location

For an interview, relax and remember to breathe. You don't want to be out of breath when answer questions. Try to look at ease while staying formal and polite.

Upon arrival, greet the interviewer, looking at him or her in the eyes and give a firm handshake. It is the perfect time to hand the interviewer your business card which should be simple, well designed, and represent you efficiently.

Even though your resume was priorly sent, offer a hard copy of it to the interviewer. It often happens that your resume aren't at hands. Otherwise, it will send the signal of a well prepared candidate. Also, take out a pen and a block of paper. Even if you don't plan taking notes, it will leave a very positive impression.

If no projects of the company are visible or shown, do not hesitate asking to see some. This will show your interest. Ask questions about the company, its projects, etc. You can even mention how you could be useful in such situations.

The portfolio's presentation

Too often, candidates come in the office, sit and opens their portfolio to show their projects. This is very wrong. You were asked to come over and you prepared for it, but let the interviewer tell you why they asked you to come. Let the interviewer lead, at first, at least. In fact, some interviewers aren't that interested in seeing your portfolio. If they asked to meet with you, they are already quite convinced you are an interesting candidate. They mainly want to know who you are.

It is of common knowledge an employer takes a decision about a candidate in the first 7 seconds after the first words were pronounced. The decision may change in the course of the interview, but the final decision is usually taken within 90 seconds. This part of the interview is clearly very important. You have a very short time to change an unfavourable decision or to validate the interviewer's choice to hire you.

If the employer doesn't ask to see your portfolio or if he or she looks at it very fast without any question, don't panic. It may mean the decision is already taken and you've got the job.

A good interview consist in a dialogue. Wait for a question to be asked and use the time that is given for you to answer to convey the information you want to communicate.

You can be sure you will be observed as you are talking. Don't rush thing, speak at a normal speed and leave time for the interviewer to interact. When interested about you work, you will be asked to show your portfolio.

While showing your projects, start by talking briefly about it before showing it. But be careful not to talk too much. A few words only in order to create anticipation but also to allow the interviewer to interact.

Make sure to have a little something to say about each of your projects. Just a few word about the context, the goals and the results. Again, make sure to give the interviewer to think and ask a question before showing another piece of work.

Try not to focus too much on the design or the technique, but more about the objectives, problematics and solutions. Tell about the results and the client's satisfaction, etc.

Know that all developers (and it is even more true with designers) don't like their portfolios. Try to show pride even though you aren't satisfied. Never apologize about one of your project or an aspect of it. In the business, everybody knows how difficult it is to work with clients and that you rarely get to do what you intended to.

Show you are enthusiastic and passionate about what you are doing. Let the interviewer know you are ambitious and use time given to you to mention your different abilities.

Be very attentive. When nervous, we tend to think too much about what to say, so much that we don't hear what is being said or asked by the interviewer. Use anything you hear that could help value your candidacy.

To the last question of the interview which is always « Do you have any question? », most of the candidates answer « No » before leaving. Why not dare a question such as « are there reason why you would hire me ». Now there is one interviewer that will be surprised! The answer may allow you to rectify a misunderstanding or to clarify a situation.

Various advises:

- Start and finish the interview with a solid handshake. A soft handshake or one given with hesitate fingers only feel weird.
- If you can, bring mock-ups or sketches along with the final results. Many employers are interested into the creative process.
- Never talk about salary or holidays during the first interview.
- For designer, make sure to know the names of the fonts you used. You might very well be asked about it.
- You are both a developer and most probably as well, somehow, an artist. But you are an artist using technologies. Show this « geek » side of yours !
- Mention you creativity, your ability to solve problems and you ease to work in group (although we are all loners for the biggest part of us).
- Tell the interviewer you really want the job and ask for his or her card. Take a good moment to look at the card (most of people don't).
- Another good answer to give at the final question : « In the eventually you would give me the job, how could I exceed your expectations? »

Non verbal language

Your portfolio and what you are saying during the interview is very important, of course. But your body expresses various important things without you noticing. Knowing basics of non verbal communication can help you succeed at the interview.

Your impact breakdown (based on recent studies):

7 %	What you are saying during the interview
38 %	Voice, grammar, self-confidence
55 %	Outfit, manners, arrival and introduction at the interview

Outfit (dress code):

70 %	of employers don't like a candidate which is fashionable, trendy..
65 %	of employers admit the outfit is an important factor to choose between two equally qualified candidates.
	Colors generally have a negative impact.

Gestures having negative impact during the interview :

- Play with your hair or touching your face.
- Not making eye contact or not smiling (or not smiling enough).
- Bad posture bad seating.
- Crossing arms over your chest.
- Excessive hand movements, tossing on the chair.
- Bad handshake

After the interview

After leaving the interview, write down your impressions as soon as possible. Note what triggered your attention and what you would have liked to say but didn't. Send the interviewer a short email to thank him or her for the interview and use this message to tell what you forgot to mention or to bring perspective to some of your says. You can be sure you will be positively remembered doing so.

The hiring interview

After you have been confirmed having been selected for the job you were interviewed for, most of candidate accepts anything without negotiating. Employers tend to respect candidates who takes a short period to evaluate the offer and give an answer. Without doing so systematically, do not hesitate to take a day or to in order to make a good decision. The incertitude you create doing such a thing can put you in a powerful situation to negotiate.

From a financial perspective, evaluate precisely what you need for a decent living, to reimburse your school debt, etc. Try to get to know the minimal and maximal wage of the employees from the company hiring you in order to make a realistic counter-offer. If a better salary isn't possible, you can always try to negotiate the number of working days a week, flexible hours, days off or holidays.

When you finally accept an offer, do not destroy all of the contact to made during your job search. You may send them a shot note telling about your new job. You can even send them a short note to thanks them and to inform them about you new job. You may eventually need to use these contacts.

The new job

To have a new job implies before anything else to adjust your, personality, creativity and skills to the company's culture and requirements and to those of your new colleagues.

Day after day, you will discover colleagues working in different ways than yours, and you will learn a lot about new methods, new techniques and project management. This new knowledge is very important as it will finally make you a real web developer or designer. The first job is the most difficult to find especially because a new worker involves all this learning. After that, jobs are way easier to find.

Make sure to be available to help your colleagues, be nice to them and make follow ups on what you're asked for. In this type of job, all need to know they can count on each other.