

Interview Basics
Sales Consultants & Management Recruiters of Honolulu
An affiliate of MRI Network
www.mrihonolulu.com
(808) 533-3282

1. Prepping for the Interview

Before you walk into any interview, you should know everything about both the company and the position for which you're interviewing. In today's world of mass communication, there's no excuse for lack of research.

Your recruiter will be able to brief you on the company, but you may want to search the web or the library for additional information. After you've studied the company, write down a list of questions to ask the employer. For example:

- Why is this position available?
- What training programs will be offered to the person in this position?
- What are your goals for this position?
- What obstacles must be overcome for the person in this position to succeed?
- How will my performance be evaluated?
- What opportunities are there for growth over the next 12 months? In the next five years?
- What growth do you anticipate for your firm over the next 12 months?

2. Questions to Expect

No one can predict the exact questions that an interviewer will ask, but your 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.

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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, your education and any other strengths that pertain to the job.

"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 have been your most significant career accomplishments to date?"

Select some 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 let the interviewer know how you became a better person because of it.

Other Questions to Consider:

"How would you describe your personality?"

"How do you perform under pressure?"

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"What have you done to improve yourself over the past year?"

"What did you like least about your last position?"

"Why are you leaving your present 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?"

3. Dos and Don'ts of Interviewing

Do...

Arrive 15 minutes early. Late attendance is never excusable.

Clarify questions. Be sure you answered the questions the employer really asked.

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Get the interviewer to describe the position and responsibilities early in the conversation so you can relate your skills and your background to the position throughout the interview.

Discuss 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 your composure.

Anticipate difficult questions, and prepare in advance so you can turn apparent weaknesses into strengths.

Dress appropriately. 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 skill of all. By concentrating not only on the employer's words, but also on the tone of his or her 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. You will be able to relate better to him or to her.

Don't...

Answer vague questions. Rather than answering questions you think you hear, get the employer to be more specific and then respond.

Interrupt the employer. If you don't have time to listen, then neither does the employer.

Smoke, chew gum, or place anything on the employer's desk.

Be overly familiar, even if the employer is.

Wear heavy perfume or cologne.

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Ramble. Long answers can make you sound apologetic or indecisive. On the other hand, don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain yourself in detail whenever possible.

Lie. Answer questions as truthfully as possible.

Make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

4. Closing the Interview

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:

"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. This is a great closing question 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.

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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 interviewer's business card so you can write a thank-you letter as soon as possible.

5. Following Up

When you get in your car, immediately write down key issues uncovered in the interview. Think of the qualifications the employer is seeking, and match your strengths to them. Then, call your recruiter! Follow-up at this stage is critical. Finally, write a thank-you letter no later than 24 hours after the interview has ended.