



The Art of Effective Interviewing

All glory comes from daring to begin.

—Eugene Ware



EXERCISE: Personal Introduction

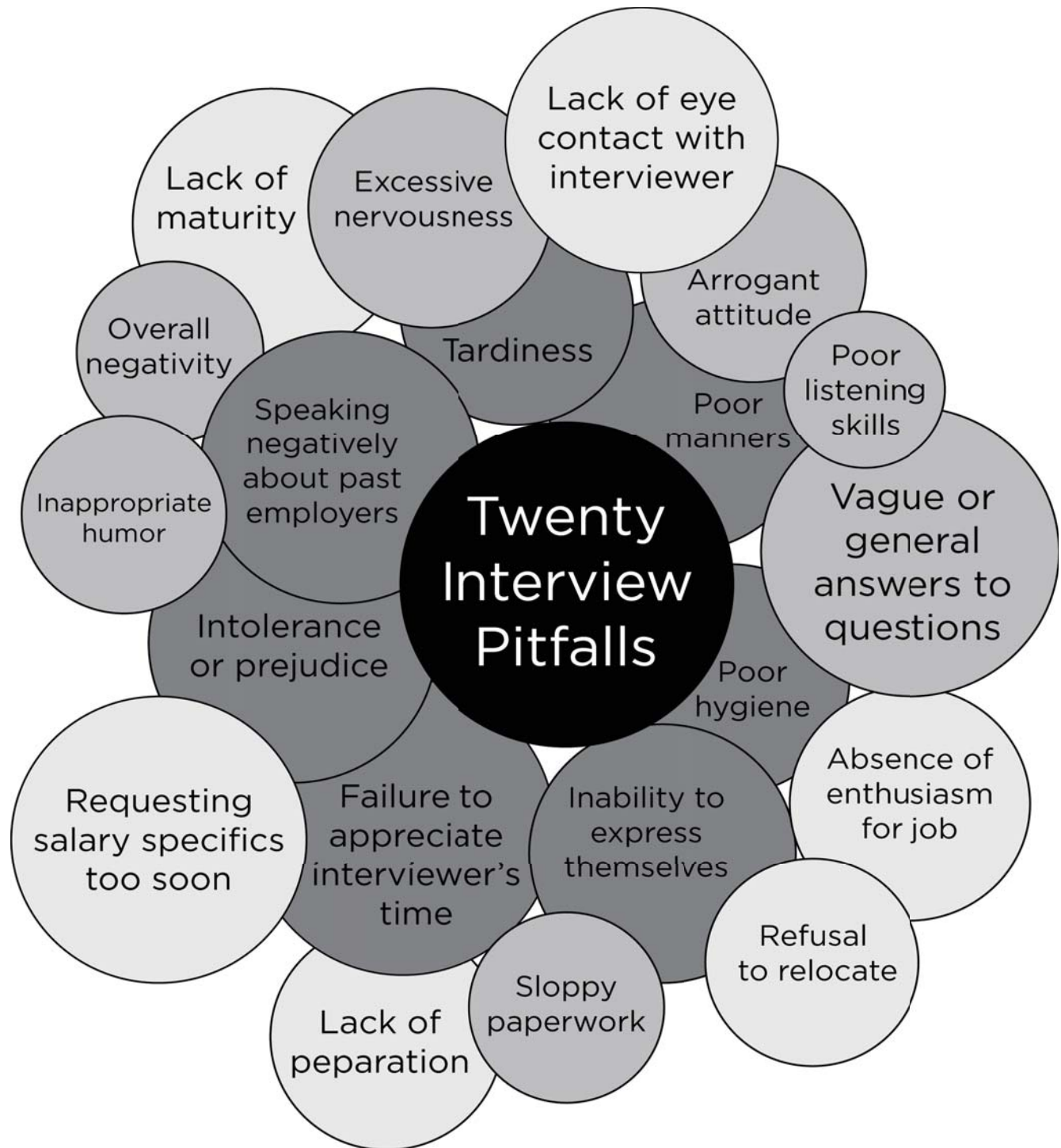
The Art of Effective Interviewing

Interviewing for a job is something almost every person will have to do in their lifetime. For many people it can be an intimidating and frustrating process. But it need not be. The job interview is an excellent opportunity for you to present yourself to a potential employer and make a strong and positive impression in a very short amount of time. We've all heard the old cliché "First impressions last." Like most clichés, this one holds more than a grain of truth.

Over the course of this training, we will break down the job interview process and arm you with the tools needed to put your best foot forward, both with telephone interviewing and interviews that happen face-to-face. By utilizing the building blocks in this workbook, you will be able to avoid the common mistakes people make while interviewing and also create an impressive and memorable first impression with your potential employer.

The Three Keys to a Successful Job Interview

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____





Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.

—Mark Twain

Dressing for Success

The way you dress for a job interview can also have a definite effect on your interviewer. While you are researching your potential employer, try to find out what type of culture it promotes in the workplace. Different types of jobs may require different types of dress. For example, you would dress differently for a job interview at a tattoo parlor than you would for one at a prestigious law firm. For an interview, you want to dress in clothing that indicates you are ready to go to work there today.

Here are some basic guidelines when dressing for an interview:

For Men and Women

- All clothes should be clean and pressed
- Clean, well-groomed hair
- No candy or gum
- Clean, trimmed fingernails
- Clean, polished shoes
- Minimal cologne or perfume
- Empty pockets to avoid jingling
- Avoid flashy clothes that will be distracting

For Men

- Two-piece business suit (dark blue or gray)
- Necktie with a conservative pattern
- Dark socks
- Keep jewelry to a minimum

For Women

- Always wear a suit or jacket (or sheath dress with a jacket)
- Avoid extremely high heels or platforms; no open toed shoes
- Choose a conservative nail color if polishing nails
- Be subtle with lipstick and overall make-up
- Not more than one set of earrings
- Clean, conservative hoisery (near skin tone is best)
- Keep jewelry to a minimum



EXERCISE: Handling Interview Questions

In an interview, how would you handle the following questions?

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What are your future goals? Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
3. What would your previous co-workers say about you?
4. What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?
5. Why do you want to work for this organization?
6. What is your philosophy towards work?
7. Explain why you would be an asset to this organization.
8. What is your greatest strength?
9. Tell me about a problem you had with a supervisor.
10. Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.



Phone Interviews

Phone interviews have become a common tool for search committees and employers when hiring new employees. They are often the first step in the process after receiving a candidate's resume or interest letter. A phone interview is usually used to screen potential candidates and whittle down the list of applicants to save time and resources. A good phone interview can result in you getting a face-to-face interview and possibly even getting the actual job itself!

10 tips when interviewing over the phone:

1. **Prepare your environment.** Make sure you are in a quiet room with no distractions or noises that could make it hard for you to be heard clearly.
2. **Use a good phone.** Make sure the phone you are using is clear. If your cell phone frequently drops calls, make arrangements to use a different phone for the interview. Disable call waiting.
3. **Dress for success.** Even though you are only speaking on the phone, it can be helpful to dress as if you are doing the interview face-to-face.
4. **Have your notes and resume handy.** Keep things like your resume, the job announcement and the name of your interviewer nearby to reference, if needed.
5. **Don't forget to breathe.** Take a breath before dialing and breathe before each answer. This will help keep you relaxed during the interview.
6. **Smile when you dial.** A person can hear in your voice whether or not you are smiling, so it is helpful to keep a mirror handy when you do your interview to make sure you are keeping it bright and pleasant.
7. **Introduce yourself.** Practice a short and energetic introduction beforehand. When the interview begins, introduce yourself clearly and directly. It is fine to engage in some "small talk" at the start as you would if you were speaking to the person face-to-face.
8. **Watch your posture.** The way you hold your body during an interview can often be reflected in your voice. If seated, make sure you maintain a good, straight posture. Stand, if possible.
9. **Speak clearly.** Watch the pace at which you speak during the interview. Don't speak too quickly. Clearly articulate your words. Maintain a nice volume so you can be heard.
10. **Listen actively.** Concentrate on what your interviewer is asking and respond accordingly. Don't interrupt. Keep your answers succinct and specific; avoid rambling or losing your train of thought.



Three Keys to an Effective Job Interview

KEY ONE: Pre-Interview Preparation

One of the main reasons people dread interviewing for a job is that they have not taken the proper steps or done the proper homework for the interview ahead of time. Because of this, on the day of the interview, they find themselves nervous, rushed or disorganized, scrambling at the last minute to pull it all together. If you properly prepare for your interview, you can enjoy the experience and relax, knowing that your preparation has all been done ahead of time.

Many times during an interview, your potential employer will ask you if you have any questions about the company or the specific position. By asking thoughtful and intelligent questions, you can present yourself as a serious candidate who has taken the time to think about the job beforehand. Below are some questions you might want to consider asking, if the opportunity arises.

Questions to ask during an interview

- What are the three strengths/skills vital to this position?
- What are some of the department's ongoing and anticipated projects?
- What challenging aspects would I face with this job?
- How does this company evaluate and promote its employees?
- Can you describe the work environment at this company?
- Is this a new or replacement position?
- What industry trends do you foresee that might affect this company?
- What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
- Is there any other information I can provide to assist in your decision making process?

Questions to avoid during an interview (based on actual interviews)

- How soon can I take my first vacation?
- Will I have to work overtime?
- How do I avoid getting bored at this job?
- Are the people who work here cool or what?
- Can I use your phone? I have to call my ride.
- Why do you think I am the right person for this job?



Practice doesn't make perfect; only perfect practice makes perfect.

—Vince Lombardi

Things to do before your interview

1. **Research company.** Try to learn as much as you can about your potential employer. Resources include the Internet, trade publications, newspapers and current employees.
2. **Prepare documents.** Bring a professional-looking resume, your portfolio or any other material you might need on the day of the interview. Bring extra copies in case your original gets stained or torn.
3. **Plan your arrival.** Locate the address of your interview ahead of time and decide how long it will take you to reach your destination. Do a dry run the night before and leave early on the actual day of the interview to give you adequate time to reach the interview.
4. **Prepare questions.** Think of thoughtful questions related to the position you are interviewing for and the industry itself. Be ready to ask these question if the opportunity arises.
5. **Practice answers.** Familiarize yourself with all of the frequent questions asked during interviews and practice your answers so that they come easily to you.
6. **Dress rehearsal.** Before your interview do a mock interview with a friend, roommate or spouse. Videotape your practice sessions.
7. **Analyze playback.** Watch your videotaped interview practice session and write down your initial impressions. What do you like and what do you not like? Analyze which questions gave you difficulty and practice them again until you are comfortable.
8. **Eat breakfast.** Don't skip breakfast. Eat something so you are not distracted by hunger on the day. Drink water to stay hydrated and avoid dry mouth.
9. **Do a warm up.** On the morning of your interview, do some exercises or go for a walk to shake off any game day jitters. Utilize 5-Minute Warm Up beforehand.
10. **Think positively.** You've done the preparation, so enjoy the fruits of your labor. Look at the interview as a chance to sell yourself to the potential employer. Relax and enjoy it!



KEY TWO: The Actual Interview

Now that all of the preparation has been done, it's showtime! Interviews are an excellent way for you to showcase yourself to a potential employer. This is your chance to sell yourself, your skills and your experience.

1. **Arrive early.** It is best to allow plenty of time to arrive at your interview location. Give yourself some extra time so that you can comfortably deal with unexpected surprises like traffic or detours. Never arrive late for a job interview. Arrive a few minutes early (no more than 15) and give yourself some time to relax before the actual interview.
2. **Proper greeting.** Stand (if seated) and approach the person you are meeting and smile. Shake their hand while maintaining good eye contact and call them by their name. Your handshake should be firm, avoiding either the dreaded "dead fish" or the "bone crusher". You may want to start by mentioning something positive or complimentary, like the drive, the weather, their office, etc.
3. **Body language.** As we have established earlier, your body language tells your interviewer even more about you than your words. If you are relaxed, smiling and gesturing naturally, your interviewer is also more likely to be relaxed. Don't be frozen or stiff; don't be afraid to be expressive (even when seated).
4. **Eye contact.** Remember to maintain eye contact with your interviewer, especially when they are speaking or answering a question. If your eyes are looking somewhere else or wandering, you will be perceived as distracted or disinterested in what is being said.
5. **Vocal quality.** Make sure you speak clearly and articulately so that your interviewer can understand you. Slow down your pace to show that you are relaxed. Also, remember, downward inflection exhibits confidence and certainty while upward inflection shows doubt and shyness.
6. **Remember your intention.** You are there to sell yourself and land this job, so it is essential that you engage and excite your potential employer. Keep your energy up and don't be afraid to clearly state (humbly) why you are the best candidate for this position. Make your case and have fun!
7. **Sincerity.** People can smell insincerity a mile away. Make sure you answer your interviewer's questions honestly and with as much detail as possible. Be specific if you are asked for a particular example. Keep your answers clear and concise and avoid rambling.
8. **Active listening.** Be engaged! Make sure you are present in the interview and listening to everything that the interviewer is asking. Remember what has already been discussed in the interview and refer back to it, if helpful.



9. **Be yourself.** This interview is about you so make sure you put your personal stamp on it. It is important that the real “you” shows up for the interview as well. Smile. Show your personality. If you are comfortable with humor and can include some, do it. You will be much more engaging if you don’t pretend to be someone you are not. Don’t change your personality—highlight it.
10. **Closing.** Stand, shake hands, smile, make eye contact and use your interviewer’s name, just like in your greeting. Your last impression now supercedes your first impression. Thank your interviewer for their time and tell them you look forward to hearing from them.

KEY THREE: Post-Interview Follow-Up

Once an interview is finished, there is still one last piece of the puzzle that must be addressed: the follow-up. It is essential that you follow-up with your interviewer after this initial meeting. This will help to keep you fresh in their mind and will assist in continuing to establish that positive impression.

It is always a good idea to send a thank-you letter to the person who interviewed you. It reinforces your interest in the position and shows your potential employer that you are thoughtful, courteous and professional. If possible, mention any notable topic or tidbit that you discussed during the meeting. This will help solidify you in their memory.

If your interviewer requests any additional information or materials, send them as soon as possible. Many employers look to fill positions quickly and not sending the requested material right away could result in someone else getting the job.

Tips for a good thank you letter

1. Make it look professional
2. Type or write the letter by hand
3. Send an e-mail in conjunction with the letter, if appropriate
4. Restate the position you are applying for
5. Mention a notable topic or item of discussion from your interview
6. Keep the letter short - one page maximum
7. Send it within 24 hours after the interview
8. Mention the names of any other people you met during the interview
9. Thank the interviewer again for their time and consideration

*Communication works fine
for those who work at it.*

—John Powell



(SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER)

423 Lake Mist Drive
Cornelius, NC 82345
555-234-7665

Mr. Nathaniel Summers
Worthington Industries
2345 N. Hamilton Street
Minneapolis, MN 55923

Dear Mr. Summers,

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the graphic designer position at Worthington Industries with me. After meeting with you and observing the company's operations, I am further convinced that my background and skills coincide well with your needs.

I really appreciate the time that you took to acquaint me with the company. It is quite obvious to me now why Worthington Industries retains its employees for so long and has such a positive reputation within the industry. I feel I could learn a great deal from you and would certainly enjoy being a part of Worthington Industries.

In addition to my qualifications and experience, I will bring excellent work habits and judgment to this position. With the countless demands on your time and your busy schedule, I am sure that you require people who can be trusted to carry out their responsibilities with minimal supervision.

I look forward, Mr. Summers, to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samuel Guthrie



EXERCISE: Simulated Interview (Phone)



EXERCISE: Simulated Interview (Face-to-Face)