



WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR:

- Qualifications
- Positive attitude
- Enthusiasm
- Pleasant facial expression (smile when you can)
- Interest in the company and position
- Stable work history
- Clear sense of purpose
- Antidotal responses to questions with specifics
- Communication skills
- Questions From You
- High-performance standards

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

A job offer. This is your number one goal, and it cannot be stressed enough. You are not interviewing to evaluate the company or broaden your knowledge of available opportunities. You are interviewing to see if you are good enough to get a job offer. An undecided or tentative attitude has no place in a job interview. Leaving an employer with the impression that you are just shopping around is a fatal mistake.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW:

Proper preparation can make the difference between receiving and not receiving a job offer.

- Remember the “75 / 25 “Rule; 75% of the hire decision is based on how you relate to the interviewer. If the people interviewing you, you have overcome a major hurdle.
- Do research about the company (size, products, annual sales revenue, principal lines of business and locations, etc.). Check their website or go to "companiesonline.com." This will not only make you feel more comfortable during the interview, but it will also prepare you to show genuine interest in the company.
- Know the exact place and time of the interview, the interviewer’s full name, the correct pronunciation and his or her title. Find out how many people are involved in the interviewing process and who the final decision maker is.
- Be prepared to ask questions during the interview. Your questions allow the hiring manager to evaluate your professional and personal needs. Insightful questions help both of you determine if your relationship will be mutually rewarding. Avoid questions that relate to salary, benefits, vacations, and retirement.
- Allow sufficient time for the interview. Plan to arrive exactly ten minutes before your actual appointment. There is no excuse for tardiness at an interview.
- Dress appropriately. Plan how you will dress for the interview, remember that there is only one chance to make a good first impression. Men should wear a dark suit, a white shirt, a solid or striped tie, and black shoes. Women have options: Suits with pants, or, skirted suits, or a tailored dress with a matching jacket. With any of the above options, neutral-colored sheer hose, dark pumps, and a minimum of make-up and jewelry should be practiced.
- Keep a positive frame of mind. Set other concerns aside and focus on what you are going to accomplish at the interview. Relax.

THE JOB INTERVIEW:

Interviews can be very formal and structured. Most of the questions will be formulated to uncover your past behavioral patterns and will be rather rapid in pace. On the other hand, they can be informal and conversational such that the pieces of your background will be uncovered in a more random way. Let the interviewer set the tone and match your style with theirs, in accordance with your individual personality. Although there is not one way of interviewing, there are standard steps that apply to every interview process.

➤ **FIRST CONTACT**

Your initial contact may be with a Human Resources employee who will likely instruct you on how to proceed with your interviewers and provide you with a preview of what to expect. Alternatively, you may meet directly with an official of the department offering the job. In both cases your greeting should include a firm handshake, an enthusiastic hello, and lots of eye contact followed by an introduction of yourself.

➤ **THE ICE BREAKER**

In every interview, there is a short interval before getting down to business, which is filled with small talk. Respond with enthusiastic and pleasant answers to remarks and questions.

➤ **THE INTERVIEW**

- Follow the interviewer's leads, but try to get the interviewer to describe the position and the duties to you early in the interview process. This way, you may be able to apply your background, skills and accomplishments to the position.
- Establish rapport with the interviewer. People want to hire those they feel most comfortable with. Smile when answering questions. Don't frown, period.
 - Establish eye-to-eye contact with person(s) conducting the interview)
 - Smile, don't frown. No one wants to work with a negative person.
 - Use anecdotal responses wherever possible. Something like, "that's a good question. In my current position I had to respond to a similar issue and here's the way I planned and executed the solution:" Then tell them how you did it.
- Make sure that your good points come across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner. Stress achievements. For example: processes developed, savings achieved, systems installed, etc.
- If you have any hesitations or concerns about the company or the position, hold them for me. I will qualify them for you.
- Don't say in response to a question, "No, I haven't." Do say: "I have done something similar and I was successful at it." OR "That sounds interesting, and I'm sure I can do an excellent job at it."
- Respond to questions being asked as they relate to the position, or the company's needs. If asked about your background, be specific and only talk about those aspects that relate to the particular position in question.
- If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, do not let your discouragement show. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in you may seem to discourage you as a way of testing your reaction.
- Avoid discussing salary at the first interview. If pressed, respond: "I would seriously consider any reasonable offer you care to make."
- Make sure you talk about why you are interested in this position and what you can offer the company.

➤ **CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**

The closing phase is the most important part of the interview for making a lasting impression that can place you above other competitors for the same position.

- Let the interviewer know how excited you are about the position
 - Find out what the next step is.
 - Make a statement that indicates that you can do the job, and that you would like to receive an offer.
 - Finally, as you are preparing to leave, tell the employer how much you would enjoy working with him or her personally.
- ✓ At this point, you should expect to be dismissed or taken to another interviewer. All interviews should be handled in the same fashion. You must convince all parties in the interview process that you are the right person for the job.
- ✓ The candidate that shows the most enthusiasm for the job, the opportunity and the company is usually the one that gets the offer.



TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Be prepared to encounter most of the following “tough questions” in your interview

☉ **“Why do you want to work here?”**

To answer this question, you must have researched the company. You should reply with the company’s attributes as you see them. Cap your answer concerning your belief that this can provide you with a stable and happy work environment—the interviewer’s company has that reputation—and that such an atmosphere would encourage your best work.

☉ **“What kind of experience do you have for this job?”**

This is a perfect opportunity to sell yourself, but before you do, be sure you know what is most critical to the interviewer. The interviewer is not just looking for a competent engineer, or COO or accountant; he/she is looking for someone who can contribute quickly to the current projects. When interviewing, companies invariably give everyone a broad picture of the job, but the person they hire will be a problem solver, someone who can contribute to specific projects in the first six months. Only by asking will you identify the areas of your interviewer’s greatest urgency and therefore interest.

If you do not know the projects you will be involved within the first six months, you must ask. Level-headedness and analytical ability are respected, and you will naturally answer the question more appropriately.

☉ **“What did you like/dislike about your last job?”**

Most interviews start with a preamble by the interviewer about his company. Pay attention: this information will help you answer the question. In fact, any statement the interviewer makes about the job or corporation can be used to your advantage. Use this to highlight all the positives of your last job. Criticizing a prior employer is a warning flag that you could be a problem employee. Keep your answers short and positive.

☉ **Why are you leaving your present position?**

If your current company is not meeting your expectations, you can often explain this in a positive way. “I need to be challenged to develop my potential further. I’m interested in additional responsibility and new opportunity, which unfortunately are limited at (name of current employer) because of (company size/limited product line/company restructuring or downsizing). The reputation and market focus of (name of prospective employer) offers many opportunities for someone with my training and experience. It’s the ideal environment I’ve been seeking.”

☉ **“How long would you stay with the company?”**

The interviewer might be thinking of offering you a job. But, employers are aware that the marketplace is such that new hires often do not stay with the company more than two years. Your reply might be: “I would really like to settle down with this company. As long as I am growing professionally, there is no reason for me to make a move.”

☉ **“Have you done the best work you are capable of doing?”**

Say “yes” and the interviewer will think you’re a has-been. As with all these questions, personalize your work history and include the essence of this reply: “I’m proud of my professional achievements to date, but I believe the best is yet to come. I am always motivated to give my best efforts, and in any job there are always opportunities to contribute when one is alert.”

☉ **“How long would it take you to contribute to our company?”**

Again, be sure to qualify the question: In what area does the interviewer need rapid contributions? You are best advised to answer this question with a question: “That is an excellent question. To help me answer, what do you anticipate my responsibilities will be during the first six or seven months?” You give yourself time to think while the interviewer concentrates on images of you working for the company. When your time comes to answer, start with: “Let’s say I started on Monday the 17th. It will take me a few weeks to settle down and learn the ropes. I’ll be earning my keep very quickly, but making a real contribution...[hesitant pause]...Do you have a special project in mind you will want me to get involved with?” This response could



lead directly to a job offer, but if not, you already have the interviewer thinking of you as an employee.

☉ **“What would you like to be doing five years from now?”**

The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded and a true professional and team player. As far as promotion, that depends on finding a manager with whom you can grow. Of course, you will ask what opportunities exist within the company before being any more specific: “From what I know and what you have told me about the growth here, it seems operations is where you need the effort and where I could contribute most toward the company’s goals.”

☉ **“What are your biggest accomplishments?”**

Keep your answers job-related; several achievements should spring to mind. Do not exaggerate contributions to major projects. You might begin your reply with: “Although I feel my biggest accomplishments are ahead of me, I am proud of my involvement with...I made my contribution as part of that team and learned a lot in the process. We did it with hard work, concentration, and an eye for the bottom line.”

☉ **“Can you work under pressure?”**

You might be tempted to give a simple yes or no answer, but don’t. It reveals nothing and you lose the opportunity to sell your skills and value profiles. Actually, this common question comes from an unskilled interviewer, because it is closed-ended. As such, it does not give you the chance to elaborate. Whenever you are asked one of these, provide a brief yet comprehensive answer and seize the opportunity to sell yourself. For example, you could say: “Yes, I usually find it stimulating. However, I believe in planning and time management to reduce panic deadlines within my area of responsibility.”

☉ **“How much money do you want?”**

This is a knockout question: give the wrong answer, and you will immediately be eliminated. It is always a temptation to ask for the moon knowing you can come down, but that is a poor approach. Companies have salary ranges for every job, so giving an ill-considered answer can reduce your job-offer chances to zero. The solution? Try: “I’m making \$... . I’m interested in this opportunity and I will seriously consider any reasonable offer you care to make me.”

☉ **“What are you looking for in your next job?”**

Avoid saying what you want the company to give you. You must say what you want in terms of what *you* can give to your employer. The key word in the following example is “contribution”: “My experience at the XYZ Corporation has shown me I have a talent for motivating people. This is demonstrated by my team’s absenteeism dropping 20%, turnover steadying at 4 percent, and production increasing 12%. I am looking for an opportunity to continue that kind of contribution, and a company and supervisor who will help me develop in a professional manner.”

☉ **“Describe a difficult problem you’ve had to deal with.”**

This is a favorite tough question. It is designed to probe your professional profile; specifically, you’re analytical skills: “Well, I always follow a five-step format with a difficult problem. One, I stand back and examine the problem. Two, I recognize the problem as the symptom of other, perhaps hidden, factors. Three, I make a list of possible solutions to the problem. Four, I weigh both the consequences and cost of each solution, and determine the best solution. And five, I go to my boss, outline the problem, make my recommendation, and ask for my supervisor’s advice and approval.” Then give an example of a problem and your solution.

☉ **“What would your references say?”**

You have nothing to lose by being positive. If you demonstrate how well you and your boss get along, the interviewer does not have to ask, “What do you dislike about your current manager?”

The higher up the corporate ladder you climb, the more likely it is that references will be checked. It is a good idea to ask past employers to give you a letter of recommendation. This way you know what is being

said and it reduces the chances the company will have to check references. However, if your references are going to be checked by the company, be aware that they must *by law* have your written permission. This permission is usually included in the application form you sign.

QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK:

- How long have you been at (Company)?
- What do you like about the firm?
- If successful in obtaining this position, what will I be evaluated on during the first six months? Any beyond?
- (If there was a former incumbent)- What did the former incumbent NOT do in this position that I need to do?
- What is the primary point of focus for this position? What single thing is the most important goal to be successful in this position? Or are there several?
- How solid is management behind this position?

FOR SENIOR LEVEL (PM, DIR, SR DIR,..)

- What are the Firm's objectives for 2010? 2011? 2012?
- What are the business challenges you see for the same time frame?
- What is senior management's vision for this position?
- How do you determine if customers are receiving value for services? In other words, what are your follow up procedures for clients?
- For those customers who have expressed concern over "value-received," is there documentation to support the complaint? Has any re-training occurred with staff to correct the problem? This may not be an appropriate time, but is there a percentage of problems that you can discuss?
- What principles or beliefs have influenced your management style? Are there any management styles the Firm has embraced? Any practices?
- How are employee suggestions/innovations received?
- What new markets are going to be considered for the firm?

FINALLY, you need to develop some questions and have them ready.

All the Best!!

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