

Work Ministry

The Interview

The interview is often defined as:

"A conversation between two people to share information, evaluate the match between a company need and a candidate's background and make decisions about next steps." KEY POINT: it is a data collection process, not selection.

Step 1: Preparing For The Interview

How Do You Create A Great First Impression?

First impressions are lasting impressions. Some of the first impressions are made from the clothing you choose to wear to your interview, your handshake, your eye contact and your posture. The following are some suggestions of Do's and Don'ts for attire and some pointers on your handshake, eye contact and posture. You may find it helpful to practice these when you are preparing for your interview.

Do's

Err on the side of conservative
(simple attire)
Sport coat or blazer
Closed-toed shoes

Don'ts (distractions)

No heavy perfumes, colognes
No jeans, shorts, T-shirts, sandals
No gum or candy
No large jewelry

Rule of Thumb: Dress like those who are one or two levels above the position you are interviewing for.

Create an interview outfit. Use it only for interviews. Keep it clean, pressed and ready to wear. Don't smoke in your interview outfit.

HANDSHAKE: A weak handshake can be interpreted as "It's NOT a pleasure to meet you." Anytime there is an introduction, extend your hand, look the person in the eye and give a firm handshake. It provides a great first impression.

EYE CONTACT: In the U.S., lack of eye contact can be perceived as your having something to hide. When meeting representatives from the company where you are interviewing, and when you are answering questions, be sure to look at the person you are talking to. If there are a few or several people present, be sure to look at each of those present.

POSTURE: When appropriate, mirror the posture of the person with whom you are speaking.

Anything else?: _____

Step 2: Impressing Them At The Start

60-90 Second Introduction (Elevator speech)

Often, the first question asked in an interview is "So, tell me about yourself." Are you prepared to give your 60/90-Second Introduction with confidence? Does it:

1. Highlight your skills and career history?
2. Include an update on why you are making a change?
3. Explain what you hope to attain for your future?

Drawing upon the website information such as the job description be sure to add a few details to your Introduction and customize it for your interview.

KEY WORDS FROM JOB POST, BACKGROUND NOTES

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS, LINKED TO JOB DATA

FUTURE PLANS, LINKED TO JOB POSTING DATA

Step 3: Answering Behavioral Interview Questions

How would you "FIT" in our company?

Behaviorally-based questions are asked in interviews to determine whether or not you would be a great "fit" for the company. The interviewer is looking for how you responded to comparable past challenges and the results of those responses. From this, they will make assumptions as to how you would "behave" in situations within their company.

When answering behaviorally-based questions, create a brief, clear and concise response using the following 3-part response format:

1. What happened? (Issue)
2. How did I respond to the situation? (Action)
3. What was the result of your action? (Result)

Practice using this format to answer the interview questions on the following pages.

1) Tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.

Example: *I was leading a team on a \$15 million project with a strict timeframe. One of the members was not completing his assignments and blaming others for his failures. He was dealing with issues outside the workplace. I sought advice from my boss who recommended that I also talk to a representative from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). My boss, EAP and I met with this person. He agreed that his personal problems were affecting his work and agreed to take a short leave of absence to resolve some of his issues. In the meantime, I enlisted the help of a former employee, turned consultant. She helped us complete my co-worker's part of the project and we were able to make the project deadline which made my boss and the client very happy.*

Your story:

2) Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.

Example: *Well, actually, I thrive on pressure. However, there was one particular time when I was even feeling the pressure. We were bidding on a huge government contract, about \$45 million. Our competitors knew about the bid way before we did so they had already been working on it for over a month. The timeframe in which we had to deliver was unbelievable. But, that is where excellent project planning, project management and great team dynamics come into play. Everyone worked long, hard hours. We kept injecting in incentives and "fun" challenges along the way. We were exhausted when we turned in our bid, but we turned in a great bid, on-time.*

Your story:

3) Tell me about a time you were creative in solving a problem.

Example: *When I took over as Senior Account Manager, there were some initiatives that I felt we needed to implement. However, the budget could not support them. So, I created and led a team whose principle goal was to identify and eliminate areas where training efforts and expenses were being duplicated among the different sectors. We identified common hardware platforms, consolidated sector training and eliminated multiple vendor contracts. We saved over \$20 million in engineering tools, licenses and training. As a result, we were able to implement most of the initiatives.*

Your story:

4) Can you describe one of your strengths and one of your weaknesses?

Strength Example: *I work well with others and can motivate teams to exceed goals. We had a team once that was totally unmotivated, so I thought of...and their production increased as a result.*

Weakness Example 1: *I need to be learning something new all the time. So, I take advantage of training programs and accept new assignments whenever I can.*

Example 2: *I don't know your product line well. However, the same was true when I joined my last company and it only took me a few weeks to feel comfortable with it, so I am confident that the same will hold true for your product.*

Example 3: *I'm a perfectionist. I look for and accept projects that need someone with my "weakness".*

Your story:

Other behaviorally-based interview questions:

Tell me about a time:

1. When you had to deal with an irate customer.

I
A
R

2. You were forced to make an unpopular decision.

I
A
R

3. When you had to adapt to a difficult situation.

I
A
R

4. You were tolerant of an opinion that was different than your own.

I
A
R

5. When you were unable to complete a project on time.

I
A
R

6. When you persuaded team members to do things your way.

I
A
R

7. When you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.

I
A
R

8. When you had to make an important decision with limited facts.

I
A
R

9. When you surmounted a major obstacle.

I
A
R

10. When you lost or won an important contract.

I
A
R

11. When you made a bad decision.

I
A
R

12. When you demonstrated your skills as a team player.

I
A
R

13. You had to persuade people to do something they didn't want to do.

I
A
R

14. Your leadership style (and how you use it).

I
A
R

What Would YOU Like Them To Know About You?

If the interviewer does not ask a question that gives you an opportunity to highlight a relevant skill or accomplishment, you must initiate the discussion. Or, sometimes the interviewer will ask you to explain in detail an accomplishment statement. Be prepared to talk about the items on your resume. Practice explaining in detail your skills, accomplishment statements, training and development courses and any other items of relevance to the position.

Speak about your accomplishments in the form of a story with a beginning, middle and ending. Speak with interest when explaining what you have done and how you have added value to the companies you have worked for.

Example:

Interviewer: *Is there anything that you would like to add?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I just wanted to highlight a few past accomplishments that I feel are relevant and address some of the experience that you are looking for that I have. The first involved a project that I worked on where I _____ . The second accomplishment that I would like to mention concerns a team that I led that is similar to the team that you described earlier. Some of the challenges were similar to those you described. I was very successful in _____ .*

Note three items on your resume that are "musts" for coverage.

1)

2)

3)

Step 4: Asking Questions

What do you value at work?

Before you go to your interview, think about YOUR ideal job/work situation and be prepared ask questions to determine if the position is a good fit for you AND the company.

Review the definitions below and use the scale to assign ratings for each work value according to its degree of importance to you:

1 = unimportant in my choice of position/employer

2 = somewhat important in my choice of position/employer

3 = very important in my choice of position/employer

Place your rating in the appropriate space to the left of each work value.

_____ Independence/Autonomy – doing what you want to do without much direction

_____ Change/Variety – performing varying tasks in a number of different settings

_____ Change/Risk – performing new tasks or working in new programs that challenge the way things have previously been done

_____ Stability/Security – performing regular, predictable tasks in a job you are assured pays you reasonably well

_____ Physical Challenge – performing dangerous or hazardous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities and involve risks

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- _____Mental Challenge – performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity
- _____Pressure/Time Deadlines – performing in a highly critical environment with constant time deadlines
- _____Precision – performing prescribed tasks that leave little or no room for error
- _____Decision Making – making choices about what to do and how to do it
- _____Work Alone – doing assignments by yourself with minimal contact with other people
- _____Public Contact – interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people
- _____Close Friendships – developing strong interpersonal relationships with people at work
- _____Group Memberships – belonging to a group with a common purpose, interest, or mission
- _____Helping Others – assisting others in ways designed to change attitudes or opinions
- _____Supervising Others – being in a position to lead or oversee the work of others
- _____Creativity/Innovativeness – develop new and different ideas, programs, and/or structures
- _____Achievement/Recognition – seek public recognition for your work contributions
- _____Expertise – seek recognition as an acknowledged expert or leader in a particular area

What Questions Will You Ask?

Questions about the Work, opportunity, company

Generally, at the end of the interview, the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. If the interviewer has not talked about the items on your list of preferences/values, it is your responsibility to ask questions about them. You may want to formulate some of questions to bring with you to the interview. Some of the questions may include:

- How do you measure an employee's performance, productivity, and success?
- What do you feel the strengths of the company are?
- Why is this position open?
- What would a typical day be like?

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- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What are the opportunities for career growth and development?
- How many training hours per year does each employee receive?
- Why do YOU like working here?

Based on the preferences/values that you ranked on the previous page, what are three questions that you would like to ask the potential employer?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Notes:

Step 5: Ending the Interview

How do you leave a lasting impression?

The interviewer is responsible for drawing the interview to a close. However, if the position interests you, at the end of the interview it is essential for you to:

1. Restate your interest
2. Summarize the fit
3. Ask about the next step

Restate your interest

Example: *Before we end, I just wanted to say that I'm very interested in this position*

Summarize the fit

Example 1: *. . . and, I truly believe that I have the skills, experience and interest in making a positive contribution to XYZ Company and that XYZ Company is a company that I would like to work for.*

Example 2: *. . . and, I'm certain that with my background and experience in _____, _____, and _____, I could bring a lot to XYZ Company.*

Example 3: *. . . and, I know that the skills and strengths that I bring and what XYZ Company has to offer make this a good fit.*

Ask about the next step

Example 1: *So, could you tell me what the next step is? Will you call me, is there anything else I can provide you . . . ?*

Example 2: *Could you tell me what the next step is and when you expect to make a final decision?*

What would you like to say?

Remember that FIRM handshake!

Have You Checked Your List Twice?

With a partner, practice an abbreviated interview. One person will be the potential employer and the other person will be the candidate. It is assumed that the candidate arrived on-time and is appropriately dressed.

Interviewer:

- Ask role-play questions below
- Using your partners checklist (next page), place a "" where the action was completed

Interviewee:

- Review the checklist before beginning
- Answer behaviorally-based questions using three-part format
- Highlight two accomplishments on resume
- Ask questions
- End interview with three steps

Interview Questions For Role play

Welcome interviewee with an introduction and handshake.

- 1) "I'd like to begin by asking you to tell me a little bit about yourself." (60-90 Second Intro)
- 2) "Tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker"
- 3) "Can you describe one of your strengths and one of your weaknesses."
- 4) "Do you have any questions for me?"

"Well, that concludes our interview. Thank you for coming."

Interview Checklist

First Impression

- Had firm handshake
- Demonstrated good eye contact
- Mirrored posture of interviewer

Answering Questions

- Was prepared to present 60-90-Second Intro
- Was prepared to answer 2 behavioral questions

Formulating Questions

- Was prepared to ask questions
- Talked about skills and accomplishments that were not addressed during the interview

Ending Interview

- Restated interest at end of interview
- Summarized fit
- Asked about next step
- Had firm handshake

Other Considerations

What kind of interview is it?

Screening Interview

Usually an HR representative or outside agency interviews over the telephone or at their office for the purpose of narrowing down the number of candidates using a predetermined set of questions and a structured interview.

Panel or Team Interview

Many companies rely upon teams to perform assignments and meet goals. Each member of a panel may have unique background and skills and ask questions specific to those interests. Respond to each question asked using their names to help you remember each person. Most interviews of this type are structured interviews.

Decision-Maker Interview

An interview with the person who makes the final decision, usually the boss of the position. During this typically unstructured interview, this person wants to know whether you would be an asset to the team and someone s/he would want to work with.

Should You Write A Thank You Letter?

YES!!!!

WHY?????

- It can make a favorable impression.
- It gets closure regarding the next step.
- It can expand on a subject discussed during a previous conversation.
- It can clarify a point or misunderstanding.
- It can restate your interest.

TIPS

- Send thank you letters shortly after your interview.
- Thank you letters may be handwritten, but they must be legible.
- Reinforce the skills or accomplishments you felt were the most important to meeting the needs of the position, the decision-maker and the company.
- Use white space and bullets to make your letter easy to read and get your points across quickly.
- If you interview with a Human Resources individual and a hiring manager, send letters to both. Do not send the same letter.
- If you interview with three or more people, only send letters to the decision-makers and the Human Resources professionals.
- DO NOT mention what you need, what you want, or "what's in it for you." Companies hire you because of "what's in it for them."

What About References?

What do you know about references?

- 1) True False You should use your relatives as references.
- 2) True False After you decide whom you will use as references, go to the people on your list and ask them if you can use their names as references.
- 3) True False You should make a list of two or three people you want to use as references
- 4) True False You should take your references with you on a job interview.

- 5) True False Immediately after the interview, call the people whose names you have used and tell them:
- The name of the company
 - The name of the person who interviewed you
 - The job you have applied for
 - Which of your experience, skills or traits interested the interviewer the most
 - How much money the position pays

Answers:

- 1) **False** – Never use relatives as references. Your list could include former supervisors, clergy, local businessmen and friends who have known you for a long time. Include the person's name, address, phone number and relationship.
- 2) **True** – If they say yes, tell them that you will call or email them when you use their names. Provide each of them with a copy of your resume.
- 3) **False** – Before any interviews, make a list of six or seven people you want to use as references, including your relationship with them. During the interview, when you're asked for references, use the list and pick the names that you think will do you the most good.
- 4) **True** - Take your references with you on the job interview and provide them as needed.
- 5) **False** – Everything is true EXCEPT you do not need to tell your reference how much money the position pays.

Key Point: A potential employer asking for references is a major "buy" signal, an indication of strong interest since the only point to checking references is to confirm a decision to make an offer.

The Data Sheet

Every company has its own application for employment form. Although the forms may look different, they ask for the same basic information. Applications also ask questions not covered on a resume, which makes a data sheet a helpful tool.

The way you fill out the application form is important in making a good first impression. In fact, it can be almost as important as what you say in an interview.

- Fill out a data sheet BEFORE you go to the interview, and take it with you to the interview. Use the data sheet to prepare an application form at the company.
- Include names of former supervisors, locations etc., that may be absent from your resume.
- **Use numbers for the date:** 10/11/01 instead of October 11, 2001
- **Name:** Read directions carefully. Many applications ask for your last name first, then your first name and middle initial.
- **Telephone Number:** Always include your area code.
- **Address:** Always include your zip code.
- **Positions Applied for:** Do not be afraid to mention more than one.
- **Rate of Pay Expected:** Write in one of these phrases: going rate, standard rate, or negotiable, to be discussed during interview.
- **Are there any other experiences, skills or qualifications you feel would fit our organization?** This is your chance to impress a potential employer with special skills that could be used in a number of ways, such as drive forklift, weld in all positions, word processing, etc.
- **List previous positions with the most recent position listed first.** If they ask why you left your job, do not use the term "layoff." Layoff implies a possibility of recall rights which could cause you a problem. You may want to use the following: plant closed, company moved operations.
- **Personal References:** Be sure to list name, title, company, address and daytime telephone numbers for references. Always get permission before using someone as a reference.

Action Plan

What do you need to do to prepare for your first interview?

Are you fully prepared and confident to answer the question, "So, tell me about yourself." If not, what action steps will you take to be prepared and feel confident?

Do you understand how to successfully answer behaviorally-based questions? Do you understand what the interviewer is looking for in your responses? Have you practiced responding to the questions in these focus group materials? What action steps can you take to be better prepared?

Do you know what is on your resume? Can you speak about it without looking at it? Do you know what highlights you want covered in an interview? What action steps can you take to become more familiar with the contents of your resume?

Do you have questions prepared to take with you to an interview? What action steps can you take to prepare yourself for asking questions during an interview?

Do you know how to effectively end an interview? What action steps can you take to be prepared to effectively end an interview?

What other steps can you take to prepare for a successful interview that will prepare you to interview with confidence? Do you have your reference list completed? Do you have a Data Sheet ready to take with you?

You are ready! Go for it!