Career Development Workshop #3

Developing Strong Interview Skills

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# Developing Strong Interview Skills

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INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

Do your homework:
Come to your interview prepared- have a clear idea about both the job and the company that you are applying to. You can do this by going on the company’s website, reading any materials that the company may produce, or speaking to someone with a similar job.

Dress Professionally & Appropriately:
Do research to find out how people dress in a particular field. When in doubt- dress conservatively. Whatever you choose, make sure you are comfortable.

Remember Basic Courtesies:
Be on time or a few minutes early for your interview. If you are driving to an unfamiliar area, give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview.

Always shake hands with the interviewer when introduced and maintain eye contact. Thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

Know Yourself
You need to know many facts about the employer, and the interviewer needs to know many facts about you in order to make a fair evaluation. Before an interview, know what you have to offer a potential employer.

Be ready to talk about your career objectives, your long and short range goals, and your interests. Study your resume and be familiar with your education and experience. Practice illustrating how your extra-curricular activities are examples of skills in leadership and responsibility.

The most important point to remember when preparing for an interview is that the prospective employer is primarily concerned with hiring someone who will make a valuable contribution to the organization. Be prepared to tell an employer why you should be hired. With many applicants for the same job, it will be up to YOU to convince the interviewer that of all those interviewed, you are the best choice.

Answer Questions:
The key to answering the questions asked is listening to them. Not answering the questions is very insulting to and frustrating for the
interviewer and can hardly be productive for you. Take the time you need to formulate coherent, intelligent answers. Don't agonize over an answer, but do think before you speak.

You may not see the purpose of every question you are asked. Your task, however, is not to judge the interviewer as an interviewer, but to evaluate the job being discussed. Showing impatience or annoyance is not in your best interest.

Being positive in responding to any question is crucial. Even questions asked negatively should be answered on a positive note. Emphasize that which is good about you, your previous employment and schooling. Being positive in responding to any question is crucial.

**Ask Questions:**
Interviewers will always ask if you have any questions. When doing your research, take the time to write down the questions that come up. Always have at least one question ready - this will show your excitement about the position. Some questions to think about:

- What qualities do you look for in an employee?
- What are some long-term goals you have for this position?
- What are some special skills required for this position?

**Communicate Effectively**
Though it is imperative for you to know yourself and the organization with which you are interviewing, if you are unable to communicate your knowledge clearly and concisely, your interview will not be impressive. You must be able to express yourself to the interviewer.

The best way to improve your communication skills is to practice role-playing before the interview. Consider participating in a mock interview through the Career Center or ask a friend, your spouse, or roommate, to help simulate an interview.

Source: Career Planning and Job Search Guides, Conducting an Information Interview
INTERVIEW BODY LANGUAGE; DO'S & DON'TS

DO'S

✓ Smile!
✓ Offer a firm, confident handshake.
✓ If you are offered a choice of where to sit, pick a chair that is a comfortable distance (not too far or too close) to the interviewer.
✓ Sit up straight, keep both feet on the floor and lean slightly forward. This communicates interest and respect for the interviewer.
✓ Make eye contact. If there is more than one interviewer, avoid fixating on just one and ignoring the rest.
✓ Show enthusiasm by nodding and interjecting brief positive sounds—just don't overdo it!
✓ Exhibit patience and understanding if your interviewer is interrupted. If the interruption seems urgent, silently motion your willingness to leave the room.
✓ Make sure your farewell handshake and exit are as confident as your entrance.
✓ Keep smiling until you're completely out of the building!

DON'TS

✓ Adjust your clothing or smooth your hair after meeting the interviewer. This is a sign of nervousness and insecurity. By all means primp, but do so before you enter the room!
✓ Stretch or rub the back of your head or neck. There are signs of boredom!
✓ Touch or rub your nose. This is a sign of dishonesty—and it's gross!
✓ Fold your arms across your chest. This is a sign of hostility and defensiveness.
✓ Cross your legs, jiggle your foot, or drum your fingers. These are signs of impatience.
✓ Slouch or lean back in your chair. This signals disrespect for the interviewer.
✓ Lean towards the door like you want to run away. This is a sign of anxiety and dishonesty.
✓ Avoid eye contact or stare blankly. This is a sign of disinterest.
✓ Wear cologne, perfume, or personal hygiene products with a heavy scent.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Examples of Questions Employers Ask During Interviews

- What are your long range and short range goals and objectives
- When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- Did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?

Examples of Unlawful Questions

Federal, state and city laws prohibit discrimination or making job-related decisions about an application on the basis of age, birthplace, residence, race, disability, gender, marital status, national origin, religion, and sexual orientation. Most EEO (equal employment opportunity) complaints are not caused by acts of conscious or overt discrimination but are frequently caused by a lack of familiarity with the EEO laws or by not understanding their implications. Hopefully you will never be asked any of these questions by a potential employer, but if you are, you are not required to answer them.

- How old are you? What is your date of birth?
- Where did you grow up?
- What is your race? (all inquiries are unlawful)
- Have you ever received Worker's Compensation?
- All inquiries about gender are unlawful.
- Are you married? How many children do you have?
- Where were your parents from? What is your nationality?
- What does your father/relative do for a living? How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Do you need to observe any religious holidays?
- Are you gay/lesbian/bisexual? (varies by state but it is generally prohibited to ask such a question)
Handling Unlawful Questions

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you, the job candidate. An employer's questions—whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process—must be related to the job you're seeking. For the employer, the focus must be: "What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the functions of this job?"

If asked an illegal question, you have three options:

- You can answer the question—you're free to do so, if you wish. However, if you choose to answer an illegal question, remember that you are giving information that isn't related to the job; in fact, you might be giving the "wrong" answer, which could harm your chances of getting the job.
- You can refuse to answer the question, which is well within your rights. Unfortunately, depending on how you phrase your refusal, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational—hardly words an employer would use to describe the "ideal" candidate.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, the interviewer asks, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" or "What country are you from?" You've been asked an illegal question. You could respond, however, with "I am authorized to work in the United States." Similarly, let's say the interviewer asks, "Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?" You might answer, "I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."
A QUESTION OF SALARY

One question you should be ready to answer is on the salary you expect. In an interview, you might be asked to state a monetary figure.

Know what people with your general qualifications are being offered as starting salaries in positions similar to the one for which you are interviewing.

For sample salary information, there are a variety of Websites that you can explore. Examples include www.salary.com and www.payscale.com. These sources can give you some idea of what your salary range should be. By knowing the range beforehand, you can be realistic in your terms.

Candidates whose salary expectations are too high might price themselves right out of a potential job. If you are too low, the interviewer might not consider you an ambitious person, and there is a chance you won’t be given further consideration. Another possibility is that they might hire you at a lower rate and there will be no chance for negotiating a salary figure.

One way to handle salary questions is to give a salary range. Be prepared to back up your salary request with specific information about your education and experience. Generally however, it is recommended that candidates allow employers to first address the issue of salary.
10 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

- Arrive on time.
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner.
- Read company materials while you wait.
- Have a firm handshake.
- Listen.
- Use body language to show interest.
- Smile, nod, and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
- Ask about the next step in the process.
- Thank the interviewer.
- Write a thank-you letter to anyone you have spoken to.

Source:
http://www.jobweb.com/
In addition to thanking the person you talked with, the thank you letter reinforces the fact that you want the job.

✔ **Writing a thank you letter, or note, after a job interview is a must.** In fact, some employers think less of those Interviewees who fail to send a thank you note. Plan to send your thank you letters as soon as possible (usually within two business days) after your interview.

✔ **In general, typed thank you letters are recommended.** Consider the "personality" of the organization and the rapport you felt during your interviews. If your interview was a fairly informal process and/or you achieved an immediate rapport with your interviewer, a handwritten note would be fine.

✔ **Think of your thank you note as follow-up "sales" pitch.** In other words, restate why you want the job, what your qualifications are, how you might make significant contributions, and so on. A thank you letter is also the perfect opportunity to discuss anything of importance that your interviewer neglected to ask or that you neglected to answer as thoroughly, or as well, as you would have liked.

✔ **Remember to proofread:** Check spelling, grammar, typos, etc. If in doubt about the correct names, spellings or titles of your interviewers, call the office to double-check. Your efforts will be worth it!
Additional Sources

The following sources are retrieved from the Ebrary database in the Campus Portal (my.stvincentscollege.edu) under the Library Resource Tab:

101 Smart Questions to Ask on Your Interview (3rd Edition)
Fry, Ron
Publisher: Course PTR/Cengage Learning
Location: Boston, MA, USA
Date Published: 02/2009

Job Interviews For Dummies (3rd Edition)
Kennedy, Joyce Lain
Pages: 338
Publisher: Wiley
Location: Hoboken, NJ, USA
Date Published: 2008

Should I Tell the Truth? : And 99 other questions about interviews and Job-hunting
Yeung, Rob
Pages: 225
Publisher: Marshall Cavendish
Location: Singapore, SGP
Date Published: 12/2007

United States Career Guide
Going Global, Inc. Thompson, Mary Anne
Pages: 99
Publisher: Going Global, Inc.
Location: Mobile, AL, USA
Date Published: 01/2006

United States Country Career Guide
Going Global, Inc. Thompson, Mary Anne
Pages: 85
Publisher: Going Global, Inc.
Location: Mobile, AL, USA
Date Published: 05/2004

You've Got the Interview--Now What? : Fortune 500 Hiring Professionals Tell You How to Get Hired
Greene, Brenda
Pages: 197
Publisher: Dearborn Trade, A Kaplan Professional Company
Location: Chicago, IL, USA
Date Published: 11/2005