



Zeta Consulting

Executive Search

37 MUSTS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOB INTERVIEWING

There is no more important hour in the job search than that spent in an interview. Remember, you are there to provide information. The employment interview is more than a recitation of your background and experience. It is a competitive process wherein information is exchanged, impressions formed and conclusions drawn. Your chances of presenting yourself favorably will be enhanced if you follow some simple advice.

You should have a good, clear idea of what you have been successful at and your strengths. You should also be able to talk about your weaknesses and what you are doing to improve them. Confident people who have researched the company score points. Being pleasant and polite, with a clear understanding of what you are best at with specific examples, make the best impression. The best way to separate yourself from the competition is to be prepared!

KNOW:

Company Notes and Directions:

Interviewer(s):

Address:

Date and Time:

Miscellaneous:

- 1. Prepare for the Interview.** Research the company on the Internet. Read annual reports and other material on publicly traded companies. Get an understanding of the company's business.
- 2. Understand the purpose of the interview.** Most employers base hiring decisions on subjective information. Your past experience is usually a good predictor of your future success. It is up to you to help them understand what you have accomplished, how you have done it, and why you have made the choices you have. Rehearse your material in advance. Think of everything you have done that is related to the job you are seeking. Explain the challenges you have met successfully. Begin by explaining the problem, what steps you took to solve it, and the results. Time your responses to make sure they are not too long.
- 3. Stay away from any negative aspect of the industry or previous jobs.** Know your skeletons and move on. Try to communicate the negative situation in a clear, short and concise manner. Also, be careful so as not to sound like a complainer about previous companies and bosses.
- 4. Have a positive attitude.** Blow their socks off and land the offer. An offer won't be made unless the interviewer feels you will accept or are interested.
- 5. Be in a selling mode.** Sell yourself, your experience and your ability to do the job. Enthusiasm and energy are important.

6. **Review your resume thoroughly.** Be able to talk about your experience without looking.
7. **Take a daily planner/portfolio along.** In the planner, write your technical or job related questions. This makes them available to you. Also have it available to take notes. If there are questions that occur during the interview you would like to discuss, jot them down.
8. **Follow their lead.** In other words, mirror their personality. If they talk slow, follow by talking slower. If they are fast paced, pick up speed. However, don't become someone you are not!
9. **Wear proper business attire.** Suit/Business Attire is the right choice in almost all situations. Keep in mind, those first impressions are important. Even though you may be overdressed as far as what you would wear to work at this company, professional courtesy says PROPER BUSINESS ATTIRE for interviews.
10. **Make sure you give a firm handshake and maintain good eye contact.** Include a firm handshake at the conclusion of the interview.
11. **Bring 3-5 copies of your resume.** One for yourself, one for each person on the schedule and 1-2 extras. Bring to light any significant accomplishments or letters of recommendation.
12. **Money-** You should never bring up money until they do. Feel free to discuss what you are currently making. However, if they want to know "what you are looking for? What you will take? Respond with: ***"I realize that every role must have a high range & a low range. Obviously I would like to be at the top of the range, but money will not be the only deciding factor. I'll consider all factors."*** If the interviewer asks again or inquires more, try: ***"I hope you will evaluate my experience and ability to do the job and make me an offer accordingly."*** I will negotiate on your behalf. Clients know offers should come through us—this ensures that there are no misunderstandings or miscommunications. You can also say, ***"I am confident that when we get to the point that you are going to make me an offer, you will make a competitive offer."***
13. **How to answer the question about "strengths and weaknesses".....Stick to professional responses.** Mention a few adjectives that describe you, professionally. Try to pick strengths that apply to the job at hand. Regarding weaknesses, try to show a development area and specific steps that you have taken or are taking to improve in that area or minimize the weakness. Find a way to turn it into a positive.
14. **If you are not interested in the position, do not tell them, tell me later.**
15. **If you are interested in the position, CLEARLY STATE YOUR INTEREST LEVEL.** Ask questions about career path, company organization and growth potential. Mention the company name several times & ask about job duties.
16. **Leave a positive closing statement:** ***"I appreciate the time you've spent with me today and based on what you've shared with me about the company and position, I'm looking forward to becoming part of your team or looking forward to the next step in the process."*** You can also state that "I know I can handle the responsibilities and challenges".
17. **Ask for a business card** and thank them for their time
18. **Immediately following the interview, call me from your cell phone in the car.** My telephone number is 732-290-2260/732-809-9513. If any other information is needed or if you have any follow up questions or would like to address any major concerns or selling points, contact me.

- 19. Send a thank you note (hand written or email)** and try to personalize it to the conversation. Email tends to work well if they could make a quick decision and hand written is preferred for a slow process or as a follow up a few days after an email to keep your name in front of the hiring manager. Make sure you send a note to everybody that you met, thanking them for their time and reiterating your interest, as well as your confidence that you can succeed in the job.

Some examples of things you can include in your thank you note include the following list. Remember to personalize it the best you can to each person you met.

- 1. Thank you for the time you spent with me discussing your opportunity.*
- 2. I like the way you described the position and the company.*
- 3. I know I can handle the responsibilities and challenges that we discussed.*
- 4. Please contact me if you require any further information or have any follow up questions.*
- 5. I am very much looking forward to our next meeting.*
- 6. Address any major concerns/selling points.*
- 7. I look forward to the possibility of joining your team at _____ .*

- 20. Be aware of body language.** Posture, hand gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and head movements are all important. Also, watch the interviewer to see if he/she looks away bored or otherwise distracted. Keep smiling. A smile can make you appear more self-confident and help cover nervousness and insecurity.
- 21. Personal Appearance.** Arrive a little bit early. Try to look your best. Dress in a manner appropriate for the job. Good grooming includes neat, clean hair, coordinated accessories, and minimal jewelry. Skip the cologne or heavy perfume and don't spoil your attractive attire by run down or scuffed shoes. Do not chew gum, but you may try a breath mint in the waiting room before your interview. Take an occasional deep breath letting it out slowly to calm yourself before you arrive for your interview.
- 22. Eating & Drinking.** If you are being interviewed in a restaurant, select something simple. Keep in mind that you are going to be doing a lot of talking and won't do much eating. Select an entrée that is easy to eat so you can concentrate on what you are saying. Do not talk with your mouth full. At lunch do not drink anything alcoholic even if the interviewer does. At dinner, one (and only one) beer or glass of wine is O.K. only if the interviewer is drinking. If the interviewer is not drinking then you don't either.
- 23. Make a good first impression.** Don't forget to practice your handshake, firm but not bone-crushing. If you are interviewing someone from another culture be prepared for a softer handshake and adjust yours accordingly.
- 24. Try and establish rapport.** Most interviewers start with some small talk, which can set the tone for the rest of the meeting. Try and break the ice by commenting on something in the office of interest: art work, sports trophies, plants, the view, the weather, the building, anything about which you can comment pleasantly. If the interviewer does not follow your lead, no harm done, simply let him/her take the next step.
- 25. Humor.** Do not crack jokes or make light of your experiences. If the interviewer injects humor, respond appropriately.
- 26. Be prepared for tough questions.** Prepare answers to the tough questions. Do not be caught off guard.

Prepare your answers to the questions you hope you won't get asked. If you are not sure if you have communicated all of your points, ask.

27. **Do not try and be all things to all people.** Acknowledge negative points honestly. Link your abilities to the company and its needs. Do not talk yourself out of a job. You need to be forthcoming and give information, but you should not talk too long. If you drone on, you will eventually talk yourself into trouble or contradict yourself. **Limit each response to 60 seconds or less.** Show enthusiasm and energy.
28. **Have two ways to answer questions:** the short version and the long. When a question is open ended, use *"Let me give you the short version. If we need to explore some aspect more fully, I would be happy to go into greater depth for you."* Interview responses should be tailored to answer the interviewer's desire to know, without a lot of extraneous rambling or superfluous explanations. Wasting time creates a negative impression.
29. **Questions you need to ask.** Not only do you sell yourself during an interview, you also must find out if the job is a good fit for you. Prepare good, well thought out questions. Focus the questions on the job, the responsibilities it entails, and the opportunities for learning and growth. Do not hesitate to direct the interview back to previous questions on which you would like to elaborate. Before the interview ends you should have asked questions so you know why the job is open, to whom it reports, what happened to the incumbent, and what they want accomplished by the new person.

Possible questions (also see detailed list on the next page):

What is the biggest challenge facing the company or the department right now?

What kind of person will succeed in your organization/department?

What will be the greatest challenge I will face in this role?

30. **Listen.** Ask your questions and shut up and listen, do not interrupt. Talk about aspects of the job that are exciting to you. Never leave an interview without exchanging information. The more you know about each other, the more potential for establishing rapport.
31. **Compliment others.** Remember that you did not accomplish everything on your own. Be generous in your praise and give credit to others.
32. **Do not correct the interviewer,** make him/her feel stupid, or blast a former employer. It does not matter how qualified you are, if you shoot yourself in the foot during the interview or offend the interviewer, you won't get a second chance. Do not put down a prospective employer or a company's products, services or operations. Arrogance and the inability to listen are big knockouts. Do not carry a grudge into an interview. If you are bitter about the loss of your last job or have been looking for a long time, you still need to convey a positive attitude.
33. **Get an Offer.** Approach every interview with the objective of getting an offer. You must emphasize your good points and eliminate or avoid discussion of negatives. Without lying, you must answer all questions with whatever positive comments you can make. Every time you answer a question with a no, you decrease your chances of an offer. It is better to respond with a comment of what it is you know, than referring to

what you do not know.

- 34. Have your references prepared.** Dependable, effective references can be of assistance. Analyze who you will approach. Make sure they are individuals that can comment on your qualifications for the job. Take into consideration the reference's ability to communicate. A reference may think highly of you, but unless they can verbalize it to the employer, the employer may walk away with a different opinion. Once you decide someone would be a good reference, ask them if they would be willing to be a reference. Let your references know in advance when and by whom they will be contacted, the kind of position you are interviewing for and the skills and background needed. Develop a list of at least three to five professional references and have the list available to give to prospective employers when asked for them. Do not give the list out prematurely. References may be checked by either the Search Consultant or the employer.
- 35. Overall have fun.** Enter each interview with the idea of learning something new. Don't close any doors, even if you find during the interview, it is not for you. Keep your enthusiasm up if you are interviewing with multiple people. Do not short change anyone. The last person may be more important than the first. Have multiple questions, so you do not get bored asking the same ones over and over again. Get a good night's sleep and eat appropriately so you don't get low blood sugar. Take your resume and be prepared with all the information you need should you be asked to complete an application.
- 36. Bad interviewers.** Most human resource professionals and personnel recruiters are skilled at interviewing. At times you may run into someone who is not skilled. The toughest interview you may have is with a person who does not ask any questions other than encouraging you to talk about yourself. On the other side, you may encounter someone who asks too many questions that have little relevance to the job. If you run into these types of interviewers, you must make sure that you do not lose the opportunity to sell yourself. Don't lose the chance at a job because you encounter a bad interviewer. Help the interviewer do a better job by taking control of the situation in the nicest possible way. Go into every interview determined that you will sell yourself effectively no matter what questions you are asked and no matter how good or bad the interviewer is.
- 37. Never use foul language** in any form, even if the interviewer does.