



CHAPTER 17

PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEWS:

Before – During – After

What do I need to know before the interview?

Why should I hire you?

The employer's selection process always includes a personal interview that builds upon your resume. Your resume concisely summarizes your background and identifies what you can do. The interview determines motivational characteristics. What *will* you do?

The interview is not the place to restate the resume. Employers can read! You should present your strongest points and expand upon them. Your resume is a written presentation of your credentials while the interview is an oral presentation of what you plan to do with your capabilities.

The employer is interested in what makes you think and react and, more importantly, why you behave as you do. The employer will also want to probe into the major activities listed on your resume so they can appraise the type of qualities not revealed on the piece of paper. The employer knows you have the skills needed to do the job from your resume.

What motivates you? What are your values? What kind of personality do you have? Are your verbal expression abilities consistent with your background? Are you a leader or a follower? What excites you? What are your ambitions? How much thinking have you done about your career plans? What do you have to offer? What are you willing to do?

The answers to these subjective questions come from an evaluation of your past behaviors. What have you accomplished in the past? The past is a good predictor of the future. Most interviewers rely on your description of past situations to predict how you will perform on the future job.





Interview Preparation

The secret to successful interviewing is a sound presentation. All successful salespeople develop personal presentations. You are attempting to sell yourself. How do your skills and past behaviors reveal how you are likely to perform in this new job?

Development of the Presentation

A good presentation requires preparation—much preparation. A good interviewer has been trained to probe until an appreciation of both your strong and weak qualities have been established. The self-assessment phase of career planning starts the most important part of your interview presentation. You already know the product that you are selling quite well. You have tools ready to use when you are asked behavior-based questions.

If you conducted a self-assessment, you should know what conclusions the employer will make. Knowing what the employer will find makes it relatively easy to direct the interview toward your strengths rather than let recruiters focus on your weaknesses. You should never offer explanations and apologies for weak points; you should direct the interview to emphasize your strong points.

The secret to successful interviewing is developing a presentation that allows you to control the interview.

Many employers are not expert interviewers. In this situation, a well-prepared presentation is most important because *many* employers emphasize reasons why not to hire. You should plan to support reasons why you *should* be hired. You need a complete presentation on your total set of job-related competencies.

Preparation Strategies

Why should I hire you? If you don't know the answer to this question, you are *not* the person for the job. Regardless of your background, you can make a strong verbal presentation for a given assignment if you have done adequate advance preparation.

Your planned presentation allows you to control the interview.





Knowing yourself and how you can relate to the employer's needs strengthens your presentation.

Preparation includes homework about *yourself*. It also involves homework about the *employer*.

Annual reports, websites, investment services, faculty, friends, employment brochures, news articles, and personnel of the employers can all help you understand both yourself and the employers.

If you know what the firm is seeking, your presentation can emphasize all your relevant strong points. Figure 17.1 identifies some of the information you should have on the employer prior to the interview. If it is impossible to obtain some of this information before going to the interview (after a massive search), request some of it during the interview.

Information to Have on the Employer

Conduct your research before your interview!

- Relative size of firm in the industry
- Potential growth for the industry
- Annual sales growth
- Array of product line or services
- Current customer base
- Potential new markets, products, or services
- Various price points in product or service line
- Competitive products
- Competitive organizations
- Age of top management
- Organizational structure
- Geographical locations
- Number of plants, stores, or sales outlets
- Short-term profit picture
- Type of training program
- Average time in non-management assignment
- Recent items in the news
- Structure of assets
- Relocation policies
- Percentage of annual earnings growth
- Present price of stock
- Recent trend in stock price
- People you know in the firm
- Formal versus on-the-job training
- Typical career path in your field
- Location of home office
- Name of recruiter and other contacts
- Website URL

What do you know about your potential employer!

Figure 17.1





Develop Your Strategic Marketing Plan

Your interview is an integral component in your career plan, which is analogous to your personal strategic marketing plan. In arriving at the interview stage, you completed a major part of your marketing plan. The typical strategic marketing plan has seven basic elements:

1. Define the product
2. Choose the market
3. Prepare promotional materials
4. Design the selling techniques
5. Deliver the message
6. Negotiate the details
7. Close the deal

The interview process picks up at Step 4. Your focus is now on designing your presentation, executing it in the interview and then negotiating your offer and starting date as you close the deal.

Having this information before the actual interview will enable you to spend a few hours developing a presentation that will interweave your background into what the employer has to offer. Thus, by adequately researching the organization, you will stand a much better chance of creating a positive impression.

Being knowledgeable about the employer prior to the interview leaves you free to explore other possibilities during the interview. If the employer is spending time providing information that you could have found out through research, very little is being said about *why you should be considered* for the job.

The employer is there to evaluate you. It will be your turn to evaluate the employer after getting an invitation for an in-depth interview or receiving an offer. Interest is shown by asking relevant and pertinent questions. Develop a presentation that includes questions requiring specific answers about the organization.

Researching the Organization

Both tactical and strategic plans require preparation. Whatever the event or activity that involves competition, the winners invariably prepare and practice before the event. Given that an interview is a competitive activity, you cannot afford to waltz into it with the notion that your credentials will speak for themselves. All other candidates may have the same basic credentials as you. How can you set yourself apart?

Do your VIPS (values, interests, personal qualities, and skills) match the organizations needs? Do you know what they need? Your skills probably roughly fit or you would not have gotten to the interview stage. How do you present your non-skill credentials to the specific organization?





Organizations feed you massive amounts of information about their finances, markets, future plans, and organizational culture on their websites, especially in this section almost always labeled as **CAREERS**.

But you do not want to rely solely upon the employer's biased information. You must look to the media, publications, rankings, government data, and other third parties. Nearly all of this third-party information is on the web and free. Listed below are some websites that provide information you need to research before your interview.

Are you prepared? If not, it will be clear to your interviewer. This is only a sample of websites that are prepared to help you. They will give you current information but you must dig out what you need and incorporate your research into your interview presentation. Many of these third-party information resources will also link you to the career websites of thousands of potential employers.

Use this list as both a tactical and strategic tool for immediate interview research and long-term career decision-making information. If the fit is there, show your interest by revealing what you know in the interview.

College Journal**www.collegejournal.com**

CollegeJournal is a free site for students who want job-search and career-guidance information. Content comes from The Wall Street Journal as well as from the CollegeJournal.com editorial team. Content is updated daily and includes news, features, and trends that will help you land a job or internship, as well as launch your career and grow it successfully. Working with top companies of all sizes to offer a searchable database of thousands of career opportunities that's updated daily, CollegeJournal posts entry- and executive-track-level general management, sales, marketing, finance and technology positions, and more! See at a glance which companies have job openings by accessing Who's Hiring. In addition, users can research salary data for dozens of occupations. If you're an undergraduate contemplating a graduate business degree, visit the "M.B.A. Center" to take a free practice GMAT and search a database of business schools. Don't miss this truly great site as it provides a wealth of information.

BusinessWeek Online**www.businessweek.com**

In addition to accessing some BusinessWeek articles (subscribers have full access), you may use the BusinessWeek tech buying guide, investigate mutual funds, browse business books & book reviews, and use the BusinessWeek job search engine. Browse the career section to obtain employers specific information that you will need before your interviews.

Fortune**www.fortune.com**

A great magazine for research: At the Fortune 500 index, you can check out information about the companies listed including vital statistics, contact info, web addresses, as well as sections on top performers and industry medians. The Global 500 index, a list detailing the top 500 companies in the world, is a must-see resource for international job seekers. The organization database will prepare you for your interview.

**Forbes Digital Tool****www.forbes.com**

Access articles from Forbes magazine, as well as participate or listen in on-line discussions. The site also includes targeted areas of articles & advice, including a small business center, a mutual fund center, and the Forbes Buyer's Guide. Be sure to check out the companies section that lists and details the 200 Best Small Companies, The Private 500, America's 500 Leading Companies, The Platinum 400, and the International 800. And sign up for free e-mail newsletters. Many company links give you access to the firm's career website.

Job Hunt**www.job-hunt.org**

This is a Meta List of on-line job-search resources and services. There are links to University Placement Offices as well as on-line reference materials designed to aid students in resume preparation and conducting job searches. This is a great "research tool" as you source info to use in your interviews.

Hoovers Online**www.hoovers.com**

Hoovers, "the company that covers companies," offers a website with a lot of useful information to assist the job seeker in his or her search. The Career Center section offers links to over 12,000 company profiles, job openings, job search tools and to a career links section with useful tools like a salary calculator, relocation guides, and job hunting tips.

Wet Feet**www.wetfeet.com**

This site offers a wealth of entry-level job search information. A highlight of this site is an excellent Company Interviews section, which includes pertinent information regarding hiring opportunities (including qualifications requirements), compensation packages, corporate culture (including the advantages AND disadvantages), their recruiting process, what to expect in an interview and much more. Also sign up for the free Career-Watch newsletter covering internships, the undergrad and MBA job market, salary, and industries such as financial services and consulting. And DON'T MISS the spectacular "Insiders Guides."

Vault**www.vault.com**

This site is packed with information. Go to the *Student Center* and you will find invaluable articles, insightful advice AND a networking directory. Other offerings include sample resumes and cover letters for different industries, salary benchmarks, "a day in the life profile," and relocation tools, as well as message Boards that provide students with a forum to seek advice and discuss school life, summer internships, and recruiting. Use *VaultMatch* to post your resume and be contacted by potential employers, or search an extensive free job board that contains thousands of top job openings. Subscribe to targeted e-newsletters with breaking news and exclusive stories in various industries.

Career Mag**www.careermag.com**

This site provides a vast array of resources and interesting articles devoted to the job search and life in the office. Search jobs based on various crite-





ria, post and manage your resume on-line, access information about prospective employers, review a large database containing sorted articles. This is a more general website but by careful browsing, you can find similar websites that may be more specific to your career field.

Monster TRAK**www.monstertrak.com**

MonsterTRAK in partnership with the hundreds of Career Services Offices provides full-time, part-time, temporary and internship opportunities targeted by employers to students and alumni. This cooperation with colleges helps both students at that college and employers focusing on that college and geography to provide a higher level of service to each other. These partnerships make this one of the best resources for recent college students. The parent (monster.com) is often effective for targeted populations.

Purpose of the Interview

The first interview with an employer is normally only an *initial* screening. Applicants can be told “no further interest” at first interviews, but seldom are they hired then.

Human Resource (HR) staff often conduct initial screening interviews and then refer the best applicants to specific department heads who also participate in making the decision to hire or not to hire.

Convincing Presentations

Brief descriptions of past situations reveal your potential.

- Tell a story
- Relate a life episode
- Create an action photo
- Share a class example
- Present a relevant term paper
- Illustrate with examples
- Develop a team illustration
- Use humor for emphasis
- Poke fun at yourself gently
- Show a project result
- Interject values
- Tell an achievement story
- Point to performance numbers
- Quantify your presentation
- Mention mutual acquaintances

Which of your past behaviors will you discuss?

Figure 17.2



The second interview with the manager is not much different from the one with HR. The manager simply sees fewer candidates. Consequently, preparation for subsequent interviews differs very little except for depth.

In the second interview, the interviewer will ask more specific questions about a specific skill level for a technical field like accounting, data processing, or engineering. The same interviewing techniques apply to both interviews. The second interview goes into depth about specific skills.

The initial job interview is one of the most important components of the employment process. The twenty or thirty minutes spent with the interviewer can determine, or at least influence, the future course of your life.

Interviewers are continually amazed at the number of interviewees who drift into job interviews without any apparent preparation and only the vaguest idea of what they are going to say. This suggests the attitude of, "Well, here I am. What do you have for me?" And that is often the end of it.

This phase of the selection process focuses on your capabilities and makes an assessment of how likely you will be at using your skill-set to the highest possible level.

Interview Results

Interviewers often speak with ten to fifteen job applicants each day. They become quite adept at identifying talent. They often have received extensive training in interviewing techniques.

Knowledge of interviewers' objectives will help you understand their role and thus help shape your interviewing behavior.

Although there are no established norms for determining what an employer's success ratio in interviewing should be, a random sample of twenty interviews for an entry-level assignment might reveal the results shown in Figure 17.3.

This implies that an employer must speak with twenty applicants for each hire. Two-thirds of the applicants who receive offers turn them down. Based upon the resume screen, all twenty had skills matching the job description. Why did only three make it past the interview screen when they were clearly qualified based on paper credentials?

How do you improve your interview success rate?

Following the ideas suggested here will definitely improve your interviews. If you get to the interview phase of selection, you are usually technically qualified. Your competition starts here. Are you the "best" qualified among others who are also qualified? What you say in the interview will be used to compare you to other qualified candidates. You are rarely the only "qualified" applicant.

Preparation and then presentation set you apart. Success involves planning. Planning an interview is easy. You will not get an offer from every interview. A plan will significantly improve your chances of success.

Advance preparation and a planned presentation greatly increase your chances for a successful interview.

Typical Employer Interview Results

- 20 Interviews
- 16 Turndowns
- 4 Follow-ups
- 3 Offers
- 1 Acceptance

Figure 17.3

Selling Techniques Produce Offers

The accepted secret to successful interviewing is the ability to sell *yourself*. But often an *indirect* way of getting to the final sale can be more successful than a *frontal* sales assault. The important clue is to be adept at creating a “buying opportunity” during the interview.

Professional sales personnel like to refer to themselves as “problem solvers.” In sales terminology the interview is a “solution sale.” The employer has a problem and is going to make an offer to the person who seems to be the best solution. Solution selling uses concepts that are also applicable in interviewing.

Concept 1: Determine Customer Desires. You cannot sell a customer something until you know what the customer is looking to buy. Your first task is to find out what the interviewer is “looking to buy.” You need more than a job title. You need the individual profile, including specific traits as well as skills.

Proper interview preparation before the sale generates some of this information. The rest of it must come in the early phases of the interview so you can adjust your presentations to fit the customer’s desires.

Concept 2: Make the Sales Pitch and Close. Many job candidates fail to ask for the offer in a professionally accepted manner. You do not bluntly say, “Can I have the job?” but you can say, “I believe this job matches my credentials and I want you to know that I am very interested.”

The close can be awkward. If you ask, “Where do you think I stand in relation to other applicants?” you are not likely to get a definitive answer. But you may receive some clues as to where your qualifications need some enhancements. Another phrase you can use is “What do you see as my major weaknesses for this job?”

Concept 3: Overcome Objections. No applicant is going to be perfect. Hiring is an art that requires compromises. If you can obtain clues as to your interviewer’s reservations about you, you can deal with them directly.

Addressing objections is an empathic process. You try to help the interviewer see your limitations while emphasizing your strengths. Never force an interviewer to defend a statement, especially by asking “why.”

Instead, absorb the objection by repeating the objection and indicating that you understand this reservation. Repeating it psychologically waters it down for both of you. Then insert the key word.

The key word is “however.”

This simple word places the objection on the shelf while you follow with a statement about your unique abilities that another person might not be able to offer.

Dealing with objections in this non-threatening manner keeps the door open instead of closed. As the dialogue continues, more and more obstacles can be removed from the path of an offer. You can repeat the question, “How do you feel about me?” a second or third time to give you a chance to deal openly with objections.

Rather than dealing with objections so openly, you may feel more comfortable approaching the objection from the positive angle. This approach is to minimize objections by maximizing your other qualities that might solve the same problem caused by your limitations.

This sales technique may not always work, but it should enhance your chances. When it does not produce perfect results, you still learn from the interview experience, which should increase your odds for success in future interviews with other organizations.

Successful interviewing requires successful selling. Perhaps learning and applying a few “proven” sales techniques in the interview will work for you.

Interview Evaluation Criterion

How important is the interview? It is the end if not referred further.

If you are successful, you get a chance to continue. If you fail, you are usually through with that employer.

Your cover letter, resume, and contacts helped get you to the *initial* interview. But it is a solo event from that point forward. No one else can “get you a job.” Others help “get you an interview,” but “pull” rarely helps convince an interviewer to hire you if you are not the “best” qualified person.

What criteria do employers use in defining the *best* qualified person? The unenlightened often guess that job-related skills are most important. Wrong!

Everyone interviewed for a given assignment usually has the skills needed to do the job. Otherwise, they would not have gotten through the resume screen. The interview would not be needed if “skills” were the main criteria.

Behaviors. The more important *subjective* factors come into the decision at the time of the initial interview and subsequent follow-up interviews. Interviewers must assess your future performance. Future performance correlates to past performances.

The initial interview is a rigorous screen for these nonqualifiable variables. Your attributes discussed in the interview reign paramount over your basic skill set. Many employers have a difficult time articulating these subjective factors, but they all say, “I know what I am looking for.”

The purpose of the first interview is not to sell you on how great the organization is so that you will say “yes” to their offer. The “sales pitch” comes after you pass the first interview and often after several other screening interviews.

What are the subjective factors? The interviewer’s task is to *predict* how well you will perform in the next three to five years. The subjective factors are really longer-term predictors of success. How will you present your subjective factors?

Figure 17.4 lists some of the most frequently stated factors that employers use in assessing interviewees. What subjective factors do you want to present?

Subjective factors are far more important than skill factors in the employer’s evaluation of you.



Predictors of Success

- Ambition and motivation
- College grades
- Related work experience
- Creativity and intelligence
- Teamwork capabilities
- Initiative and responsibilities
- Good personality (outgoing)
- Job skill match
- Specific courses
- Adaptability
- Leadership ability
- Ability to communicate

Figure 17.4

Behavior Factors. Researchers take pleasure in asking recruiters to rank the most important personal qualities sought. Whether you are reading the most recent evaluation in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Journal of College Placement*, or the *HR Journal*, the web, etc., the results are always a little different. The differences in the ranking of importance vary by type of position sought, industry, and job level.

The important point is that these five factors always appear in the rankings:

- Communicative Abilities
- Realistic Career Goals
- Personality Congruence
- Leadership Characteristics
- Motivational Achievements

If you address these five factors in a positive manner, you will succeed in the interview. Your success can be measured by how effectively you demonstrate your qualities that you know are needed for the position which you are seeking. What situations from your past support these five factors?

Your goal is to *prove congruence* between your attributes and those needed in the job and in potential jobs that later follow after the initial assignment. Interviewers are hiring you for your *potential* performance as much as

they are for your current abilities for the job. Therefore, you need to impart information about your attributes that impact on *both* the initial job as well as those to which you aspire.

Of course, you cannot come out and say:

“I consider myself a great communicator, with solid future career plans. My personality closely matches what you seek, and I have the leadership abilities to excite others to follow me. I am a strongly motivated person who works hard to achieve significant performance levels.”

You would be laughed out of the interview. Yet, recruiters are trying to boil things down to that simple analysis. Leave that impression without an overbearing attitude.

You get your message across by telling *stories*. Your goal is draw upon events in your life that will illustrate your ability to plan, take charge of an activity and, through others, produce a successful outcome.

As you relay the event, your ability to organize your thoughts and articulate your message in an assertive, confident style will become evident. As you get enthused about the event with its peaks and valleys, your personality attributes are also likely to come forth.

If you plan these stories in advance and make a point to illustrate each of the five basic evaluative factors, the message you leave with the interviewer will show you as the exact type of person sought for the job.

What are your best stories? This process of addressing behavioral characteristics is what leads to interviewing success. This is called “behavior-based interviewing.” The next chapter covers this technique in great detail.

Use stories to get your key points across.



Before the Interview

Get the Facts

I am proud of my current employer. How much do you know about us? Prior to the interview, it is important that you adequately research the organization. Find out about the organization's products or services, what its growth has been, and how its prospects look in the future. Where are its plants and offices (or stores) located? To what degree has the organization established itself as a leader in the field?

This information assures points to discuss in the interview besides your own selfish interest of finding employment. The employer expects you to also be enthusiastic. Identify how all of this information relates to your interests and job duties. Figure 17.1 illustrates the type of information you need to have about the employer.

The following websites will lead you this info:

www.fortune.com

www.hoovers.com

www.google.com

www.ajb.org

The web should be your primary source of employer information. Annual reports should be your next source of information when researching the company. Detailed information about a company can be found in an annual report or in a prospectus from a stockbroker both of which are also likely to be on the web.

There is no excuse for going into an interview ill-prepared. Nothing will turn the employer off faster than expressing ignorance about the organization. Some traditional sources of information are listed in Figure 17.5.

College Journal

www.collegejournal.com

CollegeJournal is a free site for students who want job-search and career-guidance information. Content comes from The Wall Street Journal as well as from the CollegeJournal.com editorial team. Content is updated daily and includes news, features, and trends that will help you land a job or internship, as well as launch your career and grow it successfully. Working with top companies of all sizes it offers a searchable database of thousands of career opportunities that's updated daily. CollegeJournal posts entry- and executive-track-level general management, sales, marketing, finance and technology positions, and more! See at a glance which companies have job openings by accessing Who's Hiring. In addition, users can research salary data for dozens of occupations. If you're an undergraduate contemplating a graduate business degree, visit the "M.B.A. Center" to take a free practice GMAT and search a database of business schools. Don't miss this truly great site as it provides a wealth of information.



Throat Slitters

Be cautious about describing previous issues.

What you say in an interview can burn you. Positive statements about your previous employers and academic progress attract attention more readily than negative gripes.

One sure way of slitting your own throat is to speak derogatively about former employers, schools, facilities, or other people. Here are some examples of throat slitting interview comments.

Throat Slitting Interview Comments

The politics were terrible there.
 Morale was very low there.
 My boss was a poor manager.
 There were personality conflicts.
 They suffer from indecision.
 The marketing plan was ill-conceived.
 There was no strategic game plan.
 My co-workers were not strong.
 The classes were too large (too small).
 The program stinks and needs a major overhaul.
 I hated that class (or program).
 The requirements were too tough (too weak).
 The compensation was peanuts.
 That was a sweat shop.
 They really didn't care about the staff.
 It was a no-growth situation.

No one intentionally cuts their own throat, but alibis and excuses often come across as sour grapes. The implication is that if you say comments like that about others, what would you be saying about us if things did not work out?

All of the above statements can be converted to a positive reflection about you with a bit of clever rewording. Never apologize for your past, even if things went awry.

Your best approach is to acknowledge that there were problems and that you attempted to find appropriate solutions. Discuss your positive solutions rather than other's failures to avoid the throat-slitters.

How will you address your previous challenges?

Why This Organization

Tell me why you are interested in our organization? Trace your interest to the employer's overall reputation, the size of the firm, its location, the type of products or services produced, or people you have met. Whatever your reasons, formulate an effective answer to this question.

Be prepared to address *why* you think this particular organization is different from others that you are interviewing. The interviewer takes pride in working for that firm and expects you to also show a similar degree of enthusiasm if you also expect to work there.

Know why the organization is right for you.

Sources of Employer Information

- Websites
- Annual Reports
- Employment Brochures
- Investment Service Publications
- Product Brochures
- Business Periodicals
- People

Figure 17.5

You cannot give a convincing answer if you do not sincerely want the job. Your lackluster attitude will become apparent. If you have not convinced yourself, you will find it impossible to convince others of your sincere interest. Selecting a group where you plan to spend much of your non-sleep life is a very important decision. What are you prepared to say?

Arrive Early

It is preferable to arrive 30 minutes early to review your notes and show your excitement about the interview. Tardiness is inexcusable.

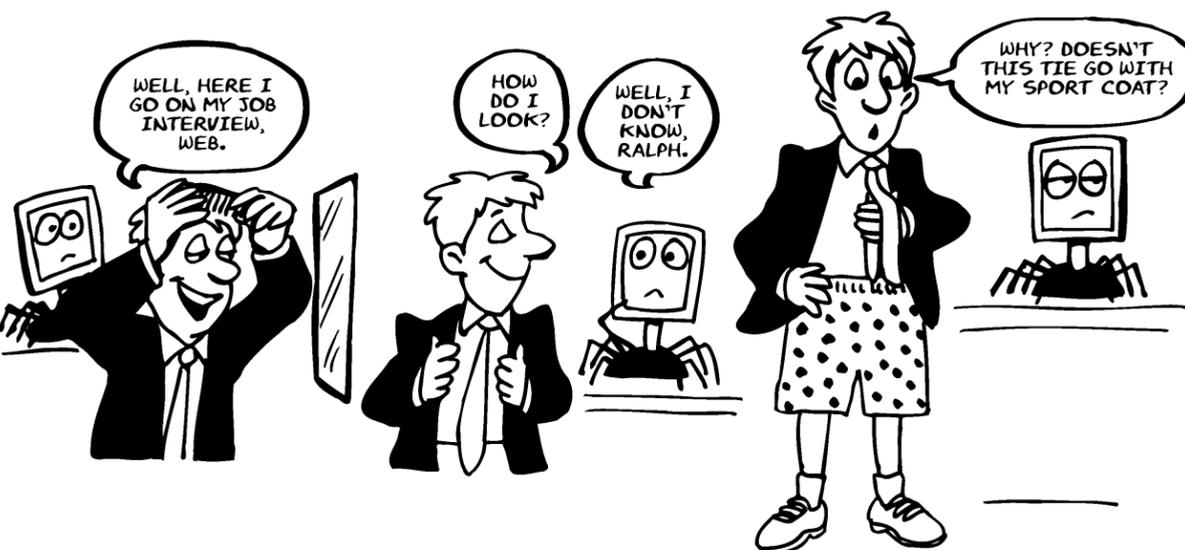
The first impression you create is extremely important and being punctual is the first step toward creating a positive impression. Use the time to get mentally prepared for your organized presentation of your key points. Are you an organized person? How important is this to you?

Professional Dress

The best guideline in personal appearance is to come prepared to the interview in an attire appropriate with the type of position for which you are applying. Thus, you would wear clothes that you would wear on the job.

Try to emulate the dress that you expect the interviewer will be wearing. It is always preferable to be overdressed for the occasion than underdressed.

In many business professions, this means that you will come dressed to the interview in a dark suit, white blouse or shirt, and sensible shoes. This is the standard uniform that is acceptable in the various professional fields. While some areas are more flamboyant than others, it doesn't hurt to dress conservatively. Read a book on dressing for success.



Emulate the interviewer's appearance



Enthusiasm Is Important

Are you really excited? Are you sincerely ready to convince the employer that you are right for the firm? Anticipating questions and outlining your answers beforehand in a well-organized fashion is helpful. Your interview will be more of a formal business atmosphere rather than a casual conversation.

The Rehearsal. It is normal to be nervous and a little anxious prior to each interview. It is a competitive situation. Employers will overlook your initial nervousness and will attempt to put you at ease.

It may help to undergo some “practice” interviews with your friends before the actual interview. If you formulate answers to some questions and actually hear how they sound out loud, you may decide to change some of your responses. The more you interview, the easier it will be for you.

Practicing your interviewing will improve your effectiveness. Practice builds confidence by eliminating much of the uncertainty of the event. Getting psyched up for the interview is no different than what a coach of a championship team attempts to do before a big game.

One excellent method to use in developing your confidence is to role-play the interview with a friend. Professional speakers often use audio tape and videotape to rehearse their presentations. Try one of these techniques.

If you find yourself experiencing problems in the interview due to anxiety, you may wish to videotape your various presentations. It might be helpful to go through these vignettes with a friend or professional counselor who could offer some constructive criticism and positive suggestions.

Talking to yourself also helps. If you are convinced you are the best candidate for the job opening, you will be more convincing to the employer. Confidence will help you develop the psychological state needed to have a successful interview.

Image Checkup

- Minimal cologne
- Business hair style (not trendy)
- Minimize wardrobe color
- Natural look makeup
- Fresh haircut or style
- Slim is in
- Manicured nails
- Quality clothes
- Minimal jewelry

Figure 17.6





Image Tune-Up

Your first appearance impacts the interviewer's evaluation of your interview performance. What image do you wish to project?

First impressions count in the interview evaluation. Some research studies prove that professional interviewers make 90 percent of the selection decisions within the first ten minutes of the interview. Much of that cursory impression must be influenced by how you dress and look.

Standard advice is to dress in a manner that emulates the interviewer. Other sound advice is to dress in a manner that emulates other professionals in your field in their everyday working attire. Still other advice suggests to err on the side of being overdressed for the occasion, but short of formal attire.

Many retail stores cater to the professional business person. Some are oriented to both men and women. You often see the words "professional," "executive," "career," or "corporate" in their advertising. The clerks in these specialty stores can be very helpful, assisting you in putting together an appropriate interview "uniform" and complete business wardrobe for later work situations.

For emulation purposes, you might wish to review the photographs of professional business leaders in magazines like *Business Week*, *Fortune*, and *Forbes*. You are more likely to discover **articles** in magazines like *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Working Woman*. Watch the pictures in the ads for clues on how to dress. Talk to sales professionals in career dress departments of upscale stores.

Newspaper advertisements on professional dress can also be helpful. The major metropolitan papers like the *New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and the *Los Angeles Times* regularly feature ads using professional business attire regularly. The major department store ads often feature models appropriately dressed for the business world.

Fashion trends tend to vary by regions of the country, time of year, and even by occupation group. Your goal should be to focus on new clothes, top-quality materials and tailoring, current styles (but not trendy fashions), and advice of your colleagues.

Keep sex out of the interview. Watch hemlines, necklines, makeup, hair styles, perfume, and jewelry. Whether you are interviewing a male or female, these items can influence the evaluation.

Your goal is to leave the impression of a modern, sophisticated, professionally poised employee. Venturing into casual clothes or trendy looks risks potential damage to your case.

Conduct an image checkup before your interview. First impressions weigh heavily on the final impression. What impression will you leave behind? Use some empathy.

During the Interview

Follow the Lead

Get excited about the interview.

Your nervousness usually disappears once the interview begins. Cues can be taken from the employer. You should shake hands and pronounce the name correctly. If you did not clearly understand the employer's name, ask again.

The interview will begin with small talk destined to set you at ease. It may focus upon your name, the weather, athletics, news, recent activities, etc. The purpose is to establish a warm rapport so that rigid communication barriers can be broken. Be yourself during the two to three minute warm-up.





Power Wardrobes

Men

Dark suit
 Single breasted suit
 Current style suit
 Solid or pinstripe suit
 Conservative tie
 Red or blue tie
 White or blue shirt
 Dark mid-calf socks
 Dark polished shoes

Women

Tailored suit
 Oxford blouse
 Floppy bow tie
 Tailored dress
 Silk blouse
 Knee or lower hemline
 Quality, not fashion
 Neutral hose
 Dark closed-toe pumps

"These vary by trends and regions of the country."

Figure 17.7

Be Prepared for Questions

Questions start soon after the door closes. Questions regarding qualifications, career interest, achievement, grades, activities, and so on will be asked. Expect to hear questions that will help evaluate subjective factors. Be prepared for these questions so you are not caught unaware. Figure 17.8 gives a list of "Twenty Frequently Asked Questions." Prepare thorough answers to each question before your interview.

Rehearse. Each question should be reviewed in depth along with your prepared response. You will not be expected to memorize a response, but you should have a series of points to cover for each question. Create an outline of key points.

It is a good idea to rehearse each of these answers by sitting in front of a mirror and watching your response, including your expressions, mannerisms, and delivery. Observing yourself on videotape is also helpful. How do you come across?

Most interviews follow a simple question and answer routine. Your ability to answer quickly and intelligently is of great importance. If you do not know the answers to any of the questions the employer asks, do not try to fake an answer. Honestly admit that you do not know the answer. This website has more tips: www.jobweb.com.

Empathy. An effective technique in answering questions is to use empathy prior to responding. You should think, "If I were in the employer's place, what would I like to know about myself?" What competency is being evaluated with this question?



Twenty Frequently Asked Questions

1. Tell me about yourself. Expand on your resume.
2. For what position are you applying and why?
3. What are your long-term goals? Where will you be in five years?
4. Why do you feel that you will be successful in . . . ?
5. What supervisory or leadership roles have you held?
6. What examples would you use to illustrate your personality?
7. What have been your most satisfying (disappointing) experiences?
8. What past situations would you use to describe your personal qualities?
9. Give me some examples that support your stated interest in . . .
10. Give two examples of your communication abilities.
11. What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
12. What did you learn from each of your past work experiences?
13. Which geographic location do you prefer? Why?
14. Would you prefer on-the-job training or a formal program? Why?
15. Give two examples of situations that really motivated you. Why?
16. What are your plans for graduate study?
17. Why did you choose your major and other academic pursuits?
18. Explain your academic grade performance levels. What best motivated you?
19. Describe a past situation that shows your leadership.
20. Give me three examples of your organizational abilities.

Figure 17.8

The answer should relate both to your situation and the employer's situation. Give an answer showing the interrelation between the two is most effective. Don't memorize your answers. Avoid sounding like a robot.

Outlining. It helps to outline responses to each anticipated question before the interview. The tricky part is to respond without appearing that the answer was contrived. Don't look insincere.

Watch Your Ethics

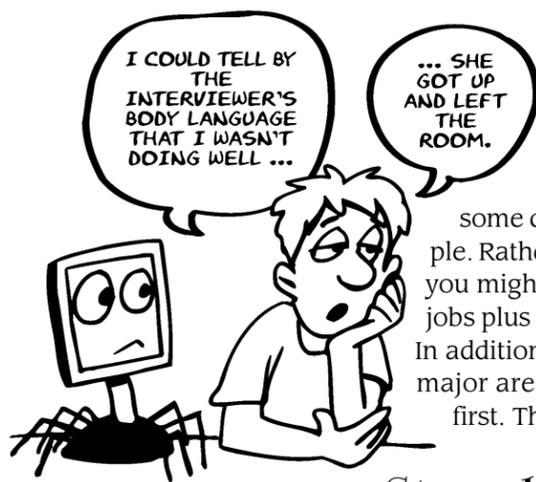
You would not intentionally lie in any interview. It is too easy to verify course, grade, work, activities, and other information. However, it is easy to get lulled into "fluffing" your experiences. Just don't do it.

A great deal of emphasis is being placed on ethics in our society. However tempting it may be to exaggerate the truth, recognize that you live in a small world. Improprieties have a way of being exposed.

Express your confidence by using concrete examples.

Emphasize Your Strong Points

Strong points impress. Emphasize your strengths at every opportunity. *All* your strong points may not come out unless you bring them up. Your answers



must be factual and sincere without conveying conceit. There is a fine line between appearing cocky and appearing confident. Being informative without boasting is possible. It is wiser to err on the boastful side rather than the timid side.

Walking this tightrope is difficult. Success pays handsome dividends. Identify your best qualities with a personal example. Rather than saying, "I am a hard worker and I want to get ahead," you might instead say, "I worked throughout college with part-time jobs plus full-time during the summers to put myself through school. In addition, I took some extra courses to prepare myself better in my major area." The second response is much more effective than the first. The impression you desire is delivered in a humble manner.

Stress Interview Techniques

Most interviews are stress interviews. Almost all interviews contain a certain amount of uncertainty that generates pressure. By its very nature, an interview is a tense, pressure situation that makes you uncomfortable and less confident of your abilities. The "stress interview" is different.

The very intent of the stress interview is to create an intense feeling of pressure. The interviewer's goal is to observe your reactions and performance under stressful conditions. The uncertain conditions may be similar to what you might find on the job after being hired.

Why would an interviewer want to subject you to this technique? The reasons cited most frequently are listed below.

- To destroy canned replies
- To throw you off balance
- To reveal the real you
- To discourage you if possible
- To observe your reaction
- To test your inner strength
- To probe your judgment
- To evaluate emotional maturity
- To force disjointed reasoning
- To incite reaction to criticism
- To intimidate to evaluate poise
- To simulate real job pressures

A stress interview is any interview where the volume has been artificially turned up. The typical reporter type of questioning using probing questions beginning with the following are very common.

- What
- Where
- Why
- How
- When
- Who
- Explain
- Tell

There are literally hundreds of techniques that "stress interviewers" use to turn up the volume. The most common approaches are listed below, but many more are illustrated in Figure 17.9 on "Stress Interview Techniques."

- Focus on negatives
- Challenge replies
- Probing questions
- Use silence
- Belittle credentials
- Interrupt frequently
- Criticize constantly
- Intimidate
- Use body language
- Set time limits

Most stress interviewers use four main strategies during the process. The questions are *planned* in advance and asked of every applicant. The questions





are *targeted* to a specific topic, often an embarrassing topic. The questions follow in a specific *sequence* to add order to the inquiries for validity purposes between applicants. The responses are *layered* on top of each other so greater and greater depth can be built into the replies. Probing deeper into the rationale of previous decisions minimizes lying.

The well-trained interviewer will minimize a preface to their questions. This maximizes the amount of time that you will spend talking. There will be no editorializing, few extraneous comments, and no hints of your performance. The information flow will be maintained and controlled by constantly exerting steady pressure for better and more complete responses from you.

How do you effectively respond to these tactics and to the tough “stress interview questions” listed in Figure 17.10? The simple answer is preparation. The complete answer is nothing more than planned hard work prior to your interviews. Don’t get caught by surprises.

The interviewer wants the best qualified applicant to respond in an aggressive, determined style. Timid replies signal failure. You must confidently answer in an assertive manner with a factual story. Use examples. Buy time to think about a better response. Always turn a negative question into a positive question by repeating the positive question that you intend to answer.

In order to wrestle control back, you must start talking with authority. Be long-winded but with your points clearly mapped-out. Do not ramble or go off on tangents.

You cannot compose your responses “off-the-cuff.” The recruiter realizes that. You cannot afford to deviate from your interview plan. What were the 10 to 15 key points that you wanted to get settled? Stick to your mission even if it means starting off toward right field and swinging back to left field where you perform best.

Your best defense is a strong offense. Your offense should have been planned before the interview. You need to return to your plan if you, at first, let the interviewer lead you astray.

Study both the “Stress Interview Techniques” and “Stress Interview Questions” figures. It is impossible to address every tactic and prepare a response to every question. What you can do is to prepare an approach and prepare responses to the most common form of questions.

Stress interviews are not common, but if you plan for this approach, nothing should deter your progress in a normal probing interview.

Career Mag**www.careermag.com**

This site provides a vast array of resources and interesting articles devoted to the job search and life in the office. Search jobs based on various criteria, post and manage your resume on-line, access information about prospective employers, review a large database containing sorted articles.

Prepare for Stress Interview Techniques

Emphasize Future Goals

One of the favorite questions asked by employers concerns employment desires in five or ten years. The purpose is to determine your ambition, ability



Stress Interview Techniques

Why would an interviewer use a stress interview? Watch for this!

Interviewer: How can I test reactions, evaluate credentials, and observe personal traits? These goals can be met by simulating a stressful interview situation similar to that required on the job.

Purpose: Create stress to observe performance under pressure. Destroy pre-rehearsed responses to typical questions and force a truer, spontaneous answer by inciting a more emotional reply.

Ask a question and cut the response short.
 Demean the answers to interview questions.
 Belittle credentials such as grades (even if great).
 Challenge applicant to support their best (not worst) credentials.
 Put a time limit on a response.
 Discuss the unfavorable odds of getting an offer.
 Discourage the applicant; from position, career choices, firm.
 Why should I hire someone with your meager credentials?
 Sell me this article/book. You have read it, right?
 What is the worst thing you have heard about my employer?
 It's your 30 minutes; let's hear your story.
 How do you react to extremely negative criticism about you?
 Write or read while the applicant is talking.
 Use silence to create awkwardness and ambiguity.
 Give a poker face throughout the interview.
 Avoid eye contact by staring at an object.
 Display nonverbal gestures that imply impatience and disgust.
 Keep applicant on defensive by constantly probing weaknesses.
 Criticize appearance such as clothes, weight, odor, etc.
 Your experience and courses were a waste of time.
 Use comments like "dumb idea," "fruitcake," "wimp," "baby-kisser."
 Prove to me you can earn your salary.
 What a stupid question—why would you ask that?
 Intimidate by showing disrespect.
 Fire questions rapidly without time to respond.
 Ask a demeaning question.
 Keep probing for answers in increasing depth.
 Give expressions of being disgusted and bored.
 Gaze or stare in silence.
 Abruptly interrupt a legitimate reply.
 Frequently interrupt responses.
 Challenge validity of answers.
 Forcefully test technical competence.
 Impune the honesty and integrity of a reply.
 Parrot a reply in a simplistic manner.
 Use negative questions consistently.
 Whipsaw topics and responses.
 Ridicule responses.
 Give curt replies to all questions.
 Give face to face rejection.
 Ask brainteaser questions.
 End abruptly.

Are you prepared to respond to someone who uses these tactics?

Figure 17.9

Stress Interview Questions

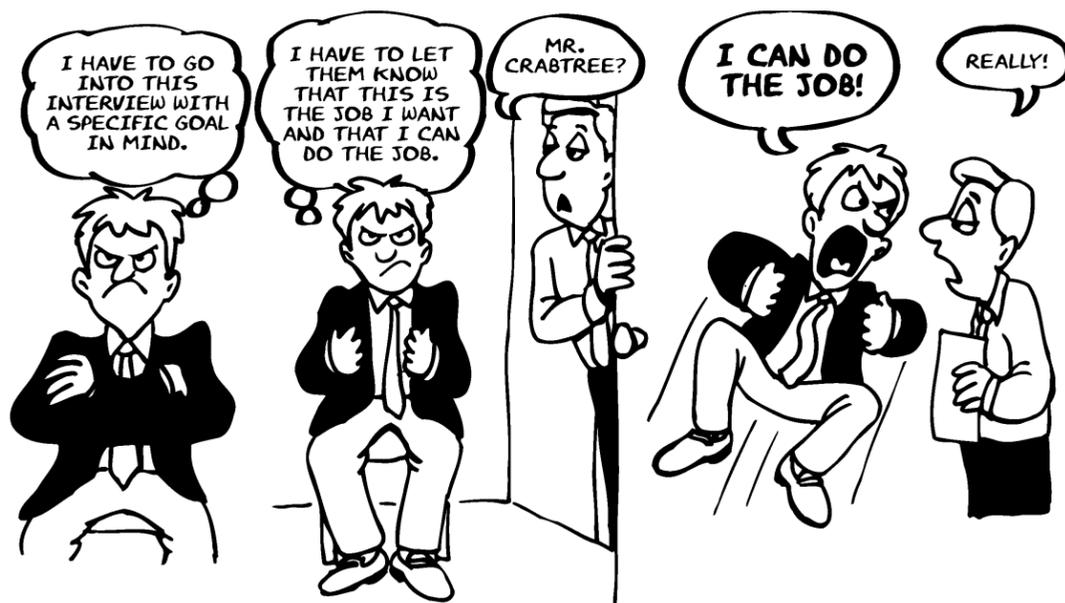
Interviewers use stress questions to provoke a thoughtful, unrehearsed, possibly emotional response to unanticipated questions like these to exert a reasonable degree of pressure in the interview environment to observe job-related personal qualities. Are you ready? Do these questions bring out the competencies, beyond simple qualifications, the interviewer needs to evaluate?

Analyze the position you are seeking.
 Why would you leave your good job?
 What is your work philosophy?
 Why do you think that you are worth this amount?
 How long will we pay you before you add to profits?
 How long will you last with a firm like ours? Why?
 How do you feel about minority groups?
 How did more education change your life?
 What do you think of your last supervisor? Professor?
 Which professors contributed most (or least) to your education?
 Why aren't you employed yet?
 How many other offers do you have?
 Evaluate your latest educational experience.
 Give me a situation where your performance was severely criticized.
 Give me three problems that you have not yet solved.
 How long before you will want your boss's job?
 Give an example of your creative skills.
 What do you think thwarts most innovative ideas?
 Give me a situation where you reprimanded another person.
 How do I know that you have good analytical skills?
 Describe your managerial leadership style.
 What other types of job and specific firms are you interviewing?
 Prove to me that you have top management potential.
 How important is money to you?
 How well do you work in ambiguous situations?
 Describe your ideal work climate.
 How could someone with your demeanor be successful in this field?
 How important are status, prestige, and power to you?
 Give me some examples of your concern for human suffering.
 Justify your salary expectations.
 What are the key reasons for your successes? Failures?
 Describe your ideal, typical work day.
 Use a situation to describe your energy level.

What things do you dislike the most about your job?
 Why haven't you earned more external recognitions?
 What are your best and worst personal qualities?
 Why do you work so well under enormous pressure?
 How do you define challenge in a job?
 What is the difference between opportunity and advancement?
 Describe your three most important motivators.
 What is the most challenging aspect of your life? Why?
 What type of decisions do you find most difficult to make?
 Describe the difference between goal-driven and task-driven.
 How did you handle the toughest boss you ever had?
 How did you recently resolve a difficult problem in your life?
 What kept your accomplishments from being super superior?
 What are you working hardest at to improve?
 What can you do to get better qualified for this job?
 Why were your college grades not in the top 5 percent?
 What job-related tasks do you really dislike?
 Just how unhappy were you with college?
 Just how unhappy were you with your job?
 What type of people really turn you off?
 What have you done that shows initiative?
 Were you ever involved in any controversy?
 Describe the major difficulties that you most encounter with others.
 Why was your performance below your expectations?
 How do you react to intense criticism?
 How do you resolve conflict between other people?
 Describe how you responded to an unethical situation.
 What do you do when the subject of politics comes up?
 What negative things do your references say about you?

The answers to the questions may not be as important as your reaction, mannerisms, and behaviorisms incited by the stress-induced questioning techniques, designed to elicit an evaluation of personal traits. Try to respond to these before you face them.

Figure 17.10



to get ahead, and the soundness of your thinking. Provide an answer that demonstrates you have conducted sound, rational thinking in a realistic work environment.

Express confidence in your career plans.

The number one reason given by recruiters for rejecting otherwise qualified job applicants is "ill-defined career plans." Lack of attention to personal goals is a sign to recruiters of immaturity. How can they expect you to make plans for their organization if you have not done it for your own life?

Never say, "I'll do anything if I have the interest and if I'm given a chance to learn," or "I was hoping that perhaps you could identify some areas for which I am qualified."

These statements will kill you. Why? Employers are not job counselors. They have specific jobs to fill or are looking for people in a specific field of work. Their job is to hire people to fill organizational needs. Some professional recruiters do give sound advice, but when they start giving advice they are probably through considering you for a job.



Your Body Talks

How do you control your body language?

Nonverbal communications influence the outcome of your interviews. *What* you say and *how* you deliver the message are important aspects to develop in your interview presentations. Your body language impacts the final evaluation of all employers.

We all have seen actors, speakers, singers, comedians, and other performers imitate the “stars” and fall flat. It is not only *what* you say but *how* you use your unique features in making your statements.

Body talk includes a variety of things. Some of the items that recruiters mention in their evaluations include the following.

- Smiles
- Laughs
- Nods in agreement
- Eyebrow movement
- Inquisitively scratches head
- Controls voice
- Has a twitch
- Chews gum
- Needs manicure
- Frequent swaying
- Sweaty palms
- Excessive cologne
- Positive poise
- Sleepy appearance
- Optimistic
- Nervous actions
- Puzzled expression
- Mumbling
- Sharp dresser
- Gestures appropriately
- Fidgets nervously
- Wringing hands
- Makes eye contact
- Excessive blinking
- Crosses legs frequently
- Positive expressions
- Non-conforming hairstyle
- Smokes
- Loud clothing
- Poor hygiene
- Strong posture
- Alert and bright
- Pessimistic
- Confident
- Phony appearance
- Cracking, nervous voice

Your body talks. You can tell it what to say with some attention to this form of communication. Nonverbal signs signal both positive and negative messages.

These signals can best be interpreted by role-playing experiences conducted by critical coaches. A less obtrusive approach is to watch your planned presentation on videotape and critique yourself.

Employer attitudes can be changed by proper attention to body talk.

What impression is your body giving?

In reality, career goals are always in a state of revision. This dynamic process presents a moving target but at any given moment you must take the snapshot and state your plans at that specific point in time. You are entitled to change later.

Whenever possible, you should apply for a *specific* job or field of work. Most employers have established specific job openings. The important point

Tell your body
what to say!

is to get into the type of firm that meets your established qualifications and that will allow you to work hard and show your abilities. After you have succeeded on your first assignment, different avenues within the organization may open.

Playing Coy Is Unwise

Playing coy is sure to destroy your employment chances. You may have other irons in the fire, but your interest is in the position available now.

If you are playing hard-to-get, the only person you are fooling is yourself. Playing hard to get will not motivate employers to increase their efforts to hire you. Instead, it will be an immediate turnoff.

No matter how ideally you think that your credentials fit the job, there is usually someone else equally qualified. An egotistical attitude, even if not intended, is a turnoff.

Ask Questions

As appropriate openings develop in the interview, you need to ask concrete questions. Ask questions that may have a bearing on whether or not an offer would be accepted if it was extended.

Avoid questions for which answers could have been obtained in preparing for the interview. Asking a question that could have been looked up does not show much imagination or interest on your part.

Ask questions that relate to the type of position for which you are applying, the geographical location, potential product line growth, etc. Questions should be prefaced with statements that indicate your extensive homework. Show you need additional information for decision purposes. Here is an example of a preface.

"I noticed in the job description printed in your employment brochure that all candidates enter into a rather structured two-year program of on-the-job training and classroom instruction. This implies that most new sales representatives are expected to progress at the same pace. With my prior experience in sales, would it be possible for me to move faster into a marketing management position?"

Planned questions reinforce your interest in the job and organization.





Preface your questions with telling statements that reveal positive facets of your va

The employer sees that you have investigated the firm and its training. The question assumes that an offer will be forthcoming. It shows confidence and ambition. The answer may determine whether or not you are interested in pursuing the position further.

Every question you ask should bring out facets of your interests and knowledge of the organization. Try to ask "telling questions." Figure 17.11 offers some of the typical subjects around which such questions are frequently constructed.

If you preface your question with a brief statement about yourself or something you read about the firm, you let the employer know that you have prepared for the interview and that the answer is important to your future decision.

Have several questions in mind before reporting to the interview. Make certain that they are pertinent to your employment decision.

Maintain Enthusiasm

Professional composure even under stress reveals great poise and maturity.

If the impression develops that the interview is not going well and that rejection is likely, you must still keep your enthusiasm high. Nothing is lost by continuing the appearance of confidence. You can often recover. The last few minutes of an interview can change things.

Remaining confident and determined will make a good impression on the interviewer. Few employers want to hire individuals who get discouraged easily, particularly in a brief interview. Some recruiters even try to discourage applicants to test their tolerance.



If the recruiter makes it quite evident that your interests and qualifications do not match what is available, use him or her as a sounding board to help you improve future interviews.

Discussing your problems, interests, and ideas with interviewers may assist you in obtaining helpful suggestions. You should consider, however, that the interviewer's context may be quite limited and not nearly as helpful as that of a professional counselor. All information obtained from employers, counselors, and other professional personnel must be analyzed only after several sources of input.

Nothing is lost by continuing the appearance of confidence and much could be gained. The last few minutes of the interview may change things drastically. Remaining confident and determined will make a positive impression.



Frequent Interviewer Questions

Which questions are relevant for you to ask?

How much travel is normally expected?
 Do employees normally work many hours of overtime?
 Can I progress at my own pace or is it structured?
 How frequently do you relocate professional employees?
 What is the average age of your first-level supervisors?

Is the sales growth in the new product line sustainable?
 How much contact and exposure to management is there?
 At what level is an employee placed in the "exempt" status?
 Is it possible to move through the training program faster?
 When does the training program begin? Only in June?

About how many individuals go through your program each year?
 What is the housing market for young married couples in . . . ?
 How much freedom is given and discipline required of the new people?
 Would I have to cut my hair and trim my mustache?
 Does the firm recommend any night courses the first year?

How often are performance reviews given?
 Is it possible to transfer from one division to another?
 How much decision-making authority is given after one year?
 Have any new product lines been announced recently?
 How soon after graduation would I expect to report for work?

How much input does the new person have on geographic location?
 In your firm, is this position more analytical or more people-oriented?
 In promotion, are employees ever transferred between functional fields?
 Does the firm provide employee discounts?
 Are cars provided to traveling personnel?

Is the city difficult to adjust to compared to this community?
 What is the average age of top management?
 What is the normal routine of a . . . like?
 Is public transportation adequate?
 What is the average time it takes to get to . . . level in the career path?

Preface every question with revealing statements!

Figure 17.11

Close Confidently

If the interview has been successful, it is possible to reverse this success and talk yourself *out* of the job in the closing minutes.

During your close sum up your interests briefly. Let the interviewer know *without* a doubt that you are still very interested in the position.

As the conversation closes, make certain that you understand the *next response* required. Most recruiters will say that they will be in touch, one way



or the other, within two weeks. Some interviewers, however, say that if further interest in you develops, they will contact you within three or four weeks. Therefore, if you do not receive a letter by then, it means the employer is not interested in you.

In some cases, the recruiter will close the conversation by giving you an assignment, an application form or by requesting a transcript. That means that the next contact must be made by you. You must take the next initiative. Get the facts right before leaving.

Your summation during the close often puts words in the mind of the interviewers. Your own words may be written on the evaluation form! Practice your closing.

After the Interview

Make Notes

After leaving the interview, jot down your immediate impression of the interview. Also get the interviewer's name, title, telephone number, e-mail, and address. You should also record the type of position the major responsibilities and duties of the job. Do you think that you are still a candidate?

Make notes of any follow-up that was requested. If you obtain an invitation to follow up with further interviews, with your notes, you will be in a better position to recall events that transpired in the initial interview. If you have not made a record of facts immediately following each interview, it is possible for your memory alone to fail you.

Your attention to closing details makes follow-up plans more definitive.



How Do You Sound?

What you say in the interview clearly impacts the selection decision, but *how* you say it also influences the message delivered. You can *say* the right words but *come across* in an unintended manner.

How you project your voice influences your evaluation after the interview.

Voice control techniques can redirect your interview efforts. The act of exercising control over your voice implies that you recognize the potential influence and that you know how to manipulate the proper variables. There are at least eight aspects of your voice that you can control.

Pitch: Does your voice sound squeaky? Is there a mumbling sound when you get nervous?

Tone: Does your voice sound bright, upbeat, and friendly? Do you sound rushed in trying to get your thoughts out before you forget them? Do you come across as patient, slow, and thoughtful?

Modulation: Is your voice a monotone or do you vary from high and lows to emphasize key points?

Volume: Do you sound very loud when you are under pressure? Do you talk so softly that others find it difficult to hear you?

Intensity: Do you come across as under a great deal of stress and pressure or as a timid person?

Quality: Is your voice unique enough so that when you are heard from a distance people automatically know you?

Nasality: Do you sound like you are talking through your nose?

Pauses: Are you good at managing the silence (or lack of it) in your speech?

The most common complaints by interviewers are:

"Talks too softly"	"Heavy accent"
"Sounds cocky"	"Mumbles"
"Too serious sounding"	"Uses uh . . ."
"Uses y'know"	"Uses junk words"
"Cannot understand"	"Rambles"
"Sounds hissy"	"Blasting voice"
"Too nasal"	"Poor grammar"
"Monotone"	"Too authoritarian"
"Sounds downbeat"	"Too much silence"
"Won't talk"	"Timid and shy"

If you understand what to look for, it is not difficult to positively influence your ability to project your thoughts in an assertive, bright, friendly, and smiling manner.

Spend some time analyzing "how" you say things in addition to planning "what" you say in the interview. Review your presentations several times with a recorder before delivering them in a live interview.

Critique yourself each time. Make your voice work in concert with your thoughts. Listen to your audio-tape.

Do you sound like someone that you want to hire?

No Answer

If the employer seemed interested or indicated further contact and you do not hear from them within a reasonable time frame, recontact the interviewer. A reasonable time period is about two to four weeks unless the employer indicated otherwise. Express your continued interest in the organization and indicate that further interest from them would be appreciated.



A subtle approach to this delicate situation is to tell them that you are calling, e-mailing, or writing for another purpose. Tell them that you would like to add additional information if needed.

Include any new information that may have developed and that might have a bearing on employment. It never hurts to tell people how much you appreciated their interest in you.

At the end, request a response. Let them know that your level of interest is high. Little is to be lost at this point. This might secure a favorable response. Don't become a nuisance. Just keep your resume and interests in the foreground in the event that a job requiring your qualifications opens. Walk that fine line.

Before becoming too angry at a slow response from a particular employer, remember that many people are interviewed in a very short time period. It takes time to stay on top of this massive flow of communications.

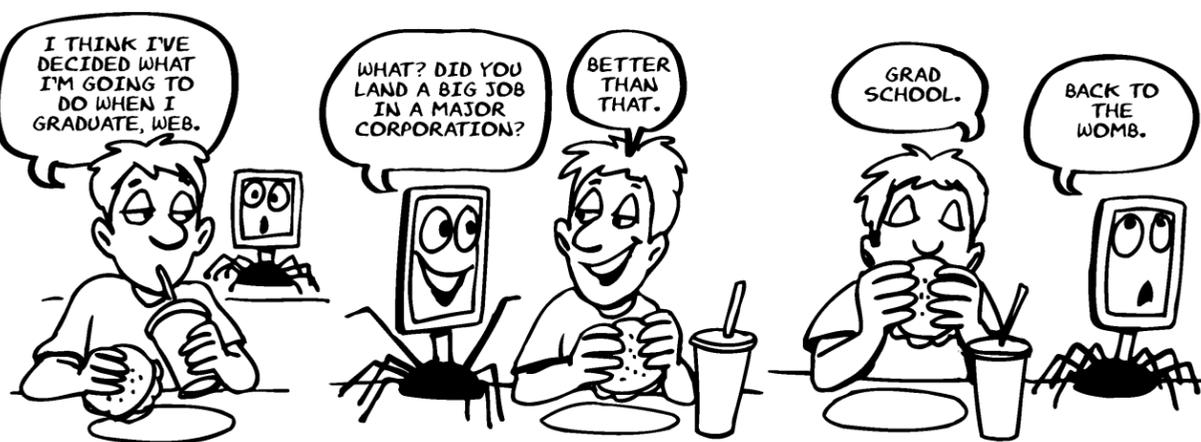
Also recognize that you may be the number two choice. The employer may be waiting on an answer from number one before getting back to you. Pushing for a premature answer too aggressively could cause you to lose an important opportunity. It is okay to be a back-up.

No Interest

If you receive a "turndown," try not to read too much into it. It simply says: "You are not for us, but thanks for your time."

Some employers may reply indicating that they will keep your name on file if anything opens up. If this is the case, it would be beneficial for you to contact the employer at a later date. Refresh their memory and reiterate your interest. Unless you stay on top of this opportunity by being the *assertive responder*, the odds for no response are high. Keep reminding!

If an outright turndown is not received and the employer indicates that their economic situation may soon improve or that they may be interested later, there is still a possibility that you might land a job with them. Keep in touch. Cultivate this small degree of interest.



Persistent follow-up can turn marginal interview performances around.



The Final Sales Pitch

Thank you letters are not necessary for every initial interview you take, but where things went especially well for you and the interviewer, they can have a major impact. Thank you letters are your final sales pitch.

The final sales pitch starts with a recount of the situation (where, when, position) and how well that you felt the interview went. The first paragraph shows a sincere appreciation for being selected for an interview and for the courtesy and time granted by the interviewer. Try to make it sound personal.

Your enthusiasm for the organization and job must radiate as you tell what points covered impressed you most. Acknowledge where the uniqueness of the organization's program most reflected your interest.

Another paragraph provides supporting evidence and documentation of the solidness of the match between the opportunity and your credentials. In addition to your restatement of the items covered in the interview, include some new information. You could, for example, enclose some recommendation letters, a regrouped unofficial transcript, or a school or work project that supports your claim for the match between both parties.

As you begin your close, your desire to work for the employer and your high interest levels need to illustrate your excitement about joining the work team. Point out some work of excellence on your part that was performed under pressure that relates to the qualities that you feel the work group would be seeking in you.

In your close, express your desire for the job. **Ask for the job.** Close the sale. Indicate your outstanding commitments: where you are (job notice, graduation, etc.), when you expect to make a job decision, and how much you appreciated the opportunity for the interview consideration.

Your final sales pitch should be upbeat, confident, positive, and assertive. It adds the icing to the cake. It will not turn bad interviews around, but it can turn lukewarm evaluations into positive ones.

Do not do this via e-mail unless the employer specifically requested e-mail communications.

Employers rarely give you reasons for your rejection. They found another candidate with stronger credentials. Leave the rejection behind you.

Do not press the employer for a justification or reason for your turndown. You are not likely to get the truth. Seek advice from others, not from employers. Legalities hamper a sincere response.

Base Hit. You did your interview preparation, had an excellent interview, and received a positive "further interest" letter. Don't break out the champagne yet. This is merely a base hit; it is not a home run.





The normal procedure is for an employer to then extend you an invitation to visit their facilities for interviewing with others in your stated area of specialization.

If there are any expenses to be incurred for the second interview, the employer normally pays them. If this is not completely defined in the invitation, clarify this point by telephone. Local employers, and about 10 percent of other employers, do not pay any of your expenses incurred at the second interview.

Your home run letter comes when you are extended a firm job offer in writing!

Solicit Feedback

Problems can arise during the interviewing process. The best person to answer these questions is a trusted career advisor.

Many college career offices and search firms have an interviewing feedback process. Request this service.

Counselors will not normally identify the comments of specific employers. Even employers expressing continued interest often give considerable criticism, hoping that applicants' faults can be corrected before their secondary interviews.

Employers hesitate to give positive or negative feedback. They want to see all candidates before making even tentative decisions. If an employer were to express interest and for some reason the position is eliminated or filled by a better candidate, the interviewer would be embarrassed.

In other words, a career counselor can provide some anonymous, constructive criticism. It will only be constructive, however, if you use it.

Consult a career counselor for advice, not the employer.