

Succeeding in a Job Interview

A SUCCESSFUL JOB INTERVIEW is a two-way discussion in which the employer representative describes the job opening and the associated job duties and the job candidate describes his competence in the same areas. It is an opportunity for both the employer and the candidate to assess one another.



Objectives:



1. Explain the purpose of a job interview.
2. Explain some tips for making a good impression in a job interview.
3. Describe what an applicant can learn from being denied a job opening.

Key Terms:



cues
denial

impromptu response
job interview

personable
promptness

Job Interviews

A **job interview** is a personal conference that allows the employer to assess the job applicant and the applicant to assess the prospective employer. From the employer's and job applicant's standpoint, there are several reasons to actively participate in an interview.

EMPLOYERS

Employers use interviews for many reasons. Interviews allow them to determine a candidate's particular qualifications or personality traits. Interviews assist in making a judgment regarding the applicant's qualities and allow employers the opportunity to verbally explain the job and its duties to the applicants.

Communication and Appearance

Interviews enable prospective employers to make a judgment on the candidate's verbal communication skills as well as the candidate's overall professional appearance. During an interview, a potential employer has the opportunity to clarify points contained in the applicant's résumé, letter of application, and/or job application.

Problem Solving and Critical Thinking Skills

Interviews are also the environment in which a prospective employer may choose to assess the candidate's ability to think quickly and to solve a problem. This is accomplished by asking questions in which the applicant must provide an **impromptu response**—an answer that is given without prior preparation.

APPLICANTS

The applicants can use the job interview for many reasons as well. The prospective job candidate may use the interview to determine the specific duties of the job, especially if the job description was brief or not included in a posting.

Self-Promotion

The interview will also allow the job candidate to explain to the employer why he or she would be an asset to the organization. To outline benefits to the employer, it is important to relate specific education, training, or work experience to the particular job opening.

Questions and Enthusiasm

An applicant may use the job interview to ask about the job environment, including the job's permanency and expected work hours. Finally, it is especially important for the job candidate to use the interview to convey enthusiasm, confidence, and an interest in the available position.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Interview Preparation

An interview question bank and mock job interviews are available at: <http://www.job-interview.net>. Review the interview question bank and select 10 to 15 questions. Draft your answers and write them out in a notebook. Review the suggested answers if listed. Then practice answering the questions out loud. It helps to look in a mirror while doing this activity. The expression on your face is always important. Review and practice the mock interview material as well. Soon you'll be walking into an interview with confidence and dry palms.

Making a Good Impression

It is critical to make a good impression during the job interview because the job interview is often the only opportunity an employer will have to see and observe the applicant. It is true that a person has one chance to make a positive and lasting first impression. There are several ways to make a good impression on an employer during an interview.

RESEARCH

Before the interview and even before the application to the employer, it is critical to know the employer. Therefore, it is crucial to study the employer before the interview. The applicant should learn about the business product or service, its history, the founders, and its performance. All, or most, of this information is generally available on the employer's Web site, if there is one. Knowledge of the company demonstrates interest in the available job.



FIGURE 1. First impressions are everything.

PRACTICE

Most people are more relaxed during interviews if they practice answering some possible questions a day or two before the actual interview. Writing out response and then saying them aloud can help reduce anxiety. In addition, it can be helpful for someone to ask the applicant some impromptu questions.

It is important for the applicant to think of two or three questions to ask the employer. For example, some people ask if there are many candidates for the position or if the position is newly created. Other people ask to whom the position may report or some other appropriate question. Many great job interview books and resources are available in your high school career center, library, and online.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

It is essential to dress appropriately. Clothing and grooming should be appropriate for the nature of the job. Candidates should be neat and well-groomed. Be prepared. Bring a pen, notebook, and several copies of your cover letter and résumé. It is also important to know your Social Security number.

PROMPT

Promptness refers to arriving on time. Being on time gives the employer an indication of how prompt an applicant will be if he or she receives the job. It is also a sign that the applicant recognizes there are rules in place and knows how to adhere to the prevailing authority.

PERSONABLE

It is important to be **personable** (friendly and amiable) by demonstrating good manners, speaking clearly, and being confident. The applicant should smile and display a friendly manner.

RESPECTFUL

It is necessary to be respectful of the interview stop time if the employer has mentioned how much time is allotted or available. **Cues** (indirect indications or hints) can be taken from the interviewer. Yet the applicant must always express thanks for the opportunity to meet with the employer and ask when the employer plans to make a decision.

FOLLOW UP

It is best to follow up in writing by sending a written letter of thanks to the person who conducted the interview. Candidates should also use the letter as a second opportunity to sell themselves for the position.

Denial

A **denial** is a notice from the employer that the applicant has not been chosen for the job. It means you have been denied the opportunity to work somewhere and the position was given to another individual or re-posted. When you are denied employment, and it will happen sometime in your life, it is important to carefully examine the potential reasons why the denial occurred. These reasons can be classified into two broad categories.

Things the candidate can control—these include factors that the applicant brings to or has brought to the interview. This could be your education, experience, professionalism, and ability to market yourself. All of these areas can be improved with time and the proper education and training.



FIGURE 2. Always dress appropriately for the type of job you are seeking.

There are also things beyond your control—these include factors the applicant cannot change. These may include required duties, salary range limitations, job location, timing and difficult or unprepared interviewers.

Denial is always hard to accept, even from jobs that you may not have really wanted. But remember that much can be learned from denial if you are open to self examination and discovery.

Summary:



A successful job interview is a two-way discussion in which the employer representative describes the job opening and the associated job duties and the candidate describes his competence in the same areas. It is a vital opportunity for both the employer and the candidate to assess one another and to make favorable impressions on one another. It is critical that you make the most positive impression possible during the interview and if denied the job opportunity, go back and review if the denial was due to items within or beyond your control.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is an impromptu response?
2. What can you do to make a positive impression on the employer?
3. Why is promptness important?
4. Why is being personable important?
5. What can you learn from a denied job opportunity?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Visit your high school career center and ask the career counselor to help you practice a mock interview. Set up an appointment for the interview. Discuss with the counselor a potential job and employer in mind. Do your homework and research. Then practice the interview. Start by arriving on time. As you are interviewed by the counselor, take notes so you can improve your interview strategy and confidence.

Web Links:



Job Interview Resources

<http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org>

Interviewing skills

<http://www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/ResumesInterviews.aspx>