



THE INTERVIEW

Interview Preparation

Once you have been scheduled to interview with a prospective employer, it is important that you are well prepared. Good preparation instills confidence and boosts your ability to conduct an impressive interview and eventually receive an offer.

We've come to the strategy of selling yourself. You may be a master in your chosen profession and brilliant in your job performance, however, if your interview technique is perceived to be less than dazzling, the position will more than likely go to someone with stronger interviewing skills.

Get The Facts

Learning more about the interviewing company will help you prepare your strengths and achievements effectively and increase the odds that the job will be yours.

It's no surprise that people are pleased when you're aware of who they are and what they do. That is another reason why it is smart to prepare yourself with specifics about the interviewing company. Know the nature of their business, office locations, all their divisions and number of employees. If the company is publicly-held, check their Dun & Bradstreet listing or Moody's Directory at the local library. These reference resources, and others, such as web sites and product literature, can provide comprehensive background information.

Make a list of questions you'll ask during the interview. Remember, the interview is an exchange between you and the interviewer. Be prepared to answer and ask pertinent questions. Through this interrogatory process, you'll discover whether the position provides the opportunities for advancement you require.

Some probing questions you may ask include:

- What are the position's primary responsibilities?
- Why is the position available? (Newly created, vacated, termination)
- What type of learning curve is expected?
- Who will be training you in the new position? How long?
- What talents are you looking for in the person you hire for this position?
- Who else will you interview with?
- When do they need someone on board?
- How soon do they expect to make a decision?

The Right Answers

During the interview, you will be asked a wide variety of questions. Be prepared for some surprises and maybe some curve balls.

Anticipate the following:

- What are your professional goals?
- What do you know about our company? Our targeted industry?
- What is your major weakness?
- What has been your favorite responsibility in previous positions?
- Tell me about your last boss - how was he/she to work for?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Why should we hire you?

The Tricky Questions

If your resume reflects a lot of “job-hopping,” you will probably be asked about it. A positive explanation is both plausible and appropriate. Stress the attractive/beneficial aspects of each move. Better opportunity. Higher salary. Office closer to home. Flexible time was offered. Keep the focus on your seizing an opportunity, without appearing to lack loyalty or dedication.

You may be asked about the “worst” position or boss you’ve had. It’s always best to phrase your answers positively. For instance, if a previous supervisor tended not to follow through or delegate well, you should emphasize that you learned to get the information you needed to accomplish the task.

You may be asked about your ability to deal with stress and conflict. Answer that during any long term working situation, conflicts inevitably occur, but good communications can resolve problems to everyone’s satisfaction. Explain that stress can be part of everyday life in a work environment. Mention practical ways that you alleviate stress through exercise, hobbies, etc.

We know we don’t live in a perfect world, but when it comes to interviewing, the fewer negatives the better. If you’ve had an unpleasant boss in the past or the company’s work environment was difficult, it is best left unsaid or neutralized.

Also, try to avoid salary discussions during the first interview. Your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant will coach you on the difficult salary questions throughout the interview process.

The Interview

Once your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant has secured you an interview, it is up to you to sell yourself to the prospective employer. As a result of your diligent preparation and rehearsal, you should feel very confident and prepared for your interview presentation.

The following are just a few things to keep in mind before and during the interview:

- Your physical appearance is as important, initially, as your interviewing skills and credentials. Dress attractively, but conservatively.
- Men should wear a well-tailored, solid colored suite, preferably dark blue or gray, solid neutral shirt, a striped or solid colored tie, dark, well-polished shoes, solid black or navy socks.
- Women should wear a business suit or tailored dress with a jacket, medium-heeled, closed pumps and hose in a neutral color. Avoid frivolous jewelry and have your hair done in a conservative style.
- Be punctual. Arriving five or ten minutes early is fine, but no earlier. It appears to be putting pressure on your interviewer. If you may be late, even if it's only five minutes, be sure to call with an explanation. If it's feasible, make a test run to the location prior to your interview. Check out the parking facilities, correct entrance to the office, etc.
- If you complete an application before the interview, remember that salary shouldn't be discussed until after an offer is made or is imminent. Leave that section blank.
- When the interviewer greets you, offer a smile, a firm handshake (not a knuckle-breaker), and look him/her straight in the eye. Making eye-contact establishes your confidence.
- Elaborate. Your resume is the "sales tool" that got you the interview. The interview is your opportunity to expand upon your resumes information and sell yourself. Say enough to get your point across without over answering. Draw parallels from your experience which match their needs.
- Don't inquire about benefits (vacation time, benefit plans, bonuses, etc.) on the first interview. You should concentrate your discussion on the position's responsibilities and future growth potential. The interviewer will mention benefits when he/she feels the time is appropriate.
- If you're offered the position and it meets your expectations, accept it! If you are ambivalent, don't refuse the offer outright. Extend your thanks enthusiastically and ask for some time to consider. This will give you time to think about it and discuss any concerns with your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant. Your consultant can negotiate on your behalf on conditions that might prevent you from accepting the offer.
- If you're not offered the position at the interview, be realistic. Frequently, other key people must be consulted before an offer is extended or the hiring official may want to discuss your candidacy further with your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant. Also, other candidates may be scheduled for interviews, and the hiring official may want to complete that process before making a decision.

Following Up

After the interview, follow up immediately with a letter, fax or e-mail to the interviewer(s). Whether you have been offered the position or are still under consideration, this serves to strengthen your position in terms of professionalism.

The letter should convey thanks for the opportunity to interview, plus emphasize your enthusiasm for the position and the company. Include any thoughts about the position's responsibilities and what additional contributions you can make to the organization that may not have been discussed in the interview.

Close your correspondence by stating that you look forward to further discussion about the opportunity. If a second interview was discussed, mention that you will follow up with a phone call within a couple of days to schedule that meeting.

In addition to composing your "thank you" letter, it is very important to contact your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant. He/she has been doing most of the legwork for you up until the interview stage. Immediately after the interview, call your consultant to provide comprehensive feedback on how the interview went. This will help your consultant to strategize a follow up approach with the hiring official.

Your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant will coordinate the hiring process by arranging any subsequent interviews, salary negotiations, relocation requirements and reference checks, establishing a starting date, and resolving any open points in terms of questions on either side of the process.

Work closely with your Vaughan & Company Executive Search, Inc. consultant, follow the advice given and the procedures suggested. These strategies can be your key to a more successful and satisfying professional future.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

Date

Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms.:

Thank you for your time on ___(Date of Interview)____. I appreciated the opportunity in discussing the ___(Job Title)___ position and would like you to know that my eagerness to work for your organization has grown considerably as a result of our conversation.

The open and direct nature in which you held our interview was refreshing and informative. The perspectives you shared on the _____(Company Name)_____ organization have solidified my resolve to be a part of your team.

I have a commitment to getting the job done in a way that surpasses expectations and I know that I could make significant contributions to ___(Company Name)____ .

Once again, thank you for your time and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name