

# 10 The Interview

Be aware that not every interview is the kind of interview at which an employer will decide whether you are the person he or she wants to fill an open position. There are at least three distinct kinds of interviews. First, information gathering interviews, as covered in the previous chapter, may be used by you and other job seekers to find out information about companies that are of interest to you. A second kind of interview, the initial employment interview or screening interview, is used to determine the general eligibility of any given applicant for the position which is offered. In this interview, the employer is looking over a number of potential applicants. Your resume has been the factor that won this interview. The third kind of interview is the one, or several, that follow the initial screening interview. The employer's time is valuable, and if you obtain this type of interview, you have already gone some distance toward obtaining the desired position. The focus of this third kind of interview, or interviews, is to determine your ability to perform the functions of the specific job, your ability to fit into the company scheme, and your real interest in the position. During these interviews, the employee is usually reviewed by others with whom he will work — perhaps peers, other department heads, or personnel officers. At some final point the "decision maker" will hopefully inform you that you have already been selected as the most appropriate applicant for the position.

Numerous books have been written on the subject of job interviewing. Covered in these books are forms of interviews and ways to approach the interview. Whatever is said, it will bring you to some basic issues: how do you show that you have the qualifications for the job, and how do you make a favorable impression on the interviewer? It is important to mention here that you may have the perfect resume and have conducted yourself well in an interview yet you may not get the job. Interviewing is a very subjective process. It is important to go into the interview knowing full well that you are well qualified for the position and with the intention of *being yourself*. Try not to be too disappointed if you are not



picked for the first job for which you interview.

You may have to go through the process several times — just as a salesperson may have to make several calls in order to get one good prospect. It will be important for you to keep your self-esteem on a high level. Each interview will bring you closer to the employment situation that is right for you. As with many things, interviewing techniques will be refined with practice. What you can do is make sure that you go into an interview situation adequately prepared.

## **Preparation for the Interview**

### **Informational Preparation**

If you have done your homework, you will have researched the company or organization to which you are applying. Remember, libraries have the standard reference books such as those listed in chapter 9.

### **Psychological Preparation**

It will be important for you to put yourself in the right frame of mind before the interview. In order for you to feel self-confident you have to firmly believe that you are the best person for the job. You must also convey to the employer that you believe in yourself and that you have valuable skills and talents that will be useful for the job. It is normal to experience some nervousness. Being well prepared is your best ally to counteract the nervousness.

### **Physical Preparation**

So much has been written on "how to dress" for an interview that it hardly seems necessary to devote much space to this topic. However, first impressions are important because they become lasting impressions. Many times an interviewer's opinion is set as soon as the applicant walks into the room. Don't leave this final step to chance — it could mean the difference between your getting the job or not getting it. This is especially true if there are a number of highly qualified applicants being interviewed for the same position — as is the case in today's tight job market. Dress neatly and conservatively — avoid the current "fad." Men should wear business suits and women should wear conservative dresses or skirted suits. Men should avoid wearing "flashy" ties and women should avoid excesses in jewelry and make-up. Make sure that the clothes you are wearing are clean and well pressed. Most interviewers assume that new or recent college graduates have limited wardrobes, but neatness and cleanliness can always overcome a limited wardrobe.

## **Typical Interview Format**

### **Phase 1: The Opening**

The first few minutes are usually devoted to establishing some rapport and opening lines of communication. This phase usually sets the tone of the interview.



**Phase 2:  
Information Exchange**

The interviewer will then move from the casual exchange to a more specific level of conversation. There will be some direct questioning about your background and qualifications. Sometimes you are asked to respond to an open-ended question, such as "Tell me about yourself." This part of the interview gives you a chance to answer some "where," "why" and "when" questions about your background. Now is the time to describe some extracurricular activities or work experiences that do not appear on your resume. This is also your chance to elaborate upon your strong points and maximize whatever you have to offer. Be careful that you do not monopolize the conversation when doing this. During this time the interviewer will usually present some information about the organization. Here is your chance to ask questions such as "What type of orientation and training may be a part of the job?", "What are some of the career paths within the company?"

**Phase 3:  
Discussion of Company  
Openings**

Part three begins when the interviewer feels that your skills and interests have been identified and you can see how you fit into the organization. You might want to clarify your job objective at this time. The interviewer's description of company operations and activities would help you remember some questions you had in mind. Wait on questions about salary. Let the interviewer bring up the subject of money and fringe benefits — perhaps they are to be covered in a later interview.

**Phase 4:  
Summing Up Time**

If the interviewer is interested in you, he or she will probably be more specific about the job he or she has in mind for you. However, sometimes this is difficult to determine. Find out the next step. Will there be another interview? When? How soon could you expect to hear from them? After the interview say "Thank you," shake hands, and leave promptly. If requests are made for credentials, samples, transcripts, etc., be sure to follow up with these as soon as possible.

**Phase 5:  
The Interview Follow-Up**

After the interview, write a brief follow-up letter. This letter should serve one or more of the following purposes:

- a. To thank the interviewer for the time and courtesy extended to you
- b. To let the interviewer know you are still interested in the position
- c. To remind the interviewer of the special qualifications you may have for this position
- d. To return the application form that the interviewer may have given you to take home to complete
- e. To provide any additional data requested by the interviewer that you may not have had available at the time of the interview.

Refer to page 113 for a sample thank-you letter.



## Questions Most Asked During an Interview

Clear thinking is the hallmark of the prepared employee, and you can significantly improve your chances of thinking clearly in the interview process if you have already thought carefully through answers to those questions which almost always come up during an interview, but which many prospective employees never prepare for. Take the time to very carefully review these questions for yourself — write out answers to the major questions and go over those answers until you are clear in both your thought and your verbal expression of those thoughts. You may save yourself a critical tense moment in an important interview by calmly and clearly answering such questions before you even go.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. In what type of position are you most interested?
3. Are you looking for a permanent or a temporary job?
4. Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?
5. What are your career goals?
6. What jobs have you held? How were they obtained and why did you leave?
7. What do you know about our company?
8. What interests you about our product or service?
9. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
10. What would you do if . . . ? (Imagined situations that test a person's knowledge of the job.)
11. What are your ideas on salary?
12. Do you like routine work?
13. What jobs have you enjoyed most? Least? Why?
14. What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
15. What kind of boss do you prefer?
16. Are you willing to go where the company sends you?
17. What are your special abilities?
18. What kind of work interests you?
19. Why should we hire *you* for this job rather than anyone else?
20. What are your long-term career objectives?
21. What are your major strengths? Weaknesses?
22. How would you describe yourself?
23. Why are you looking for a change in employment?
24. Do you intend to further your education?
25. Can you get recommendations from previous employers?



## Personal Review

This is a self-help exercise designed to aid you in organizing your thoughts in preparation for a successful interview. Take some time to write out your answers to the following questions. Be able to describe your skills and talents and how you have employed these skills.

1. Why do you think you would like to work for our company? *(What knowledge do you have of this particular company? Do some research for this question.)*

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2. What is your experience background? *(What jobs have you held? How were they obtained?)*

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3. Why did you leave your last job? *(Be ready with an answer that is clear and to the point, such as "I left to return to college full-time," or "The position was phased out," etc.)*

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4. What are your own personal skills and abilities? *(Use specific examples of how you used these skills.)*

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5. What are your strengths? *(Where did you acquire them? What evidence is there that you have them?)*

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6. What are your weaknesses? (This is tricky! It is possible to answer a negative question in a positive way. For example: "I feel that perhaps I am too critical of myself. I try to be perfect.")

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7. What is your educational background? (Be able to list specific classes, seminars, and other training you may have had.)

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8. What are your career goals? (What do you want to be doing at age 25? At 35? Include both short term and long term goals.)

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9. Do you have anything else that you would like to tell me about yourself? (Do you have any additional information that the interviewer should be aware of? Example: If you are bilingual, mention it.)

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10. Do you have any questions to ask me? (Be prepared with questions for the interviewer. For example: What are the opportunities for advancement? What type of training is provided?)

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## Do's and Don'ts

1. DO find out the exact time and place of the interview.
2. DO some research on the company interviewing you.
3. DO be neat in appearance.
4. DO be clear about your job objective.
5. DO bring a copy of your resume and other supporting data.
6. DO give the appearance of energy and self-confidence.
7. DO relax!

1. DON'T chew gum.
2. DON'T smoke without permission.
3. DON'T go on talking and talking.
4. DON'T take a seat until you have been offered one.
5. DON'T bring up the subject of salary.
6. DON'T be afraid to ask questions.
7. DON'T take notes during the interview.
8. DON'T slip into reminiscences about mutual friends or old school or home town ties. You may divulge information that would be best left unsaid.