

INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

CASCADE CAMPUS CAREER SERVICES, PORTLAND, OR

An interview is a conversation requiring two active participants. The employer needs to explain the organization and the position so you (the person being interviewed) can determine whether you believe it is a good fit. A successful interview will give you a feel for the employer and the nature of the position. Interviewing well requires good listening skills and an understanding of your strengths, values and goals. It is your task in the interview to connect your abilities to the employer's needs. This will require some self-reflection and assessment of the employer's needs. This helps you maintain some control in the interview and for you and the employer to exchange information.

Preparation for the Interview

- Research the organization and the position to determine and present the areas where your skills and goals match the employer.
- Have an agenda, and develop and practice what you will say in an interview. Practice a timed interview in front of a mirror. You will catch yourself talking too much or too little and can adjust your answers accordingly.
- Know your interviewers' names, how to pronounce and spell them correctly, and the length of your interview.
- Do a practice run to the interview site. You are trying to become as familiar with as many things in your control as possible. This will aid your efforts to feel calm and prepared. Arrive 10 minutes early, no more/less.
- Dress in a professional manner, your interview represents your best foot forward. Wear a suit or professional attire for "office type" positions, even though you know you will never wear this for work. Don't worry if your interviewer has jeans on ... he or she already has a job. You want to be remembered for what you said and not what you wore.
- Be prepared: Bring extra copies of your resumes, letters of reference, work samples, a pad of paper and a pen.

During the Interview

- Be aware of your body language, smile, sit upright, and establish eye contact. In a panel interview think of the panelists separately so you do not feel "on stage."
- Try to relax; you'll think better, maintain a conversational tone of voice, and listen carefully. If you are unprepared for a question take a moment to collect your thoughts before answering.
- Answer questions with more than yes or no answers and offer explanations. Support your point with relevant examples from your background. Ask for clarification if you do not understand the question.
- Interviews have predictable stages. Use this to monitor your timing and the points you need to cover.
- Avoid negative or derogatory information. Address employers' concerns and move on to a positive point.
- Discuss salary in a second interview. The employer needs to learn what you will do for the company before he or she will discuss what can be done for you. When speaking about salary, etc., be open and flexible, quote "salary ranges."
- Conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in a position where you can choose from a number of jobs rather than one.

Typical Stages: for 30 minute interview

1. Ice breaker. (3-5 minutes)
2. The employer will tell you about the organization and the position. (5-7 minutes)
3. Present your related background, skills, experience and education. (15-20 minutes)
4. Wrap up, ask questions, and take your last chance to summarize your qualifications and interest. (5 minutes)

- Be honest in your statements, but don't be afraid to present your accomplishments. Have questions prepared for the interview, such as, ... "Describe a typical day" or "what is the next step in the interview process?" The employer will be asking you questions to determine a fit between you and the company's needs.

Employers will be looking for

1. Competency- Experiences, skills, education, training, and background to do the job.
2. Initiative /Motivation- Evidence of energy and involvement.
3. Leadership/Organization-Activities that increased your ability to make good decisions, provide direction and organization.
4. Communication-Development of strong oral and written communication skills. Work in a team setting.

5. Potential-Demonstration of strengths and contributions.

Closing the interview

- State your desire for the position if you are interested. Be informed, ask what the next step in the selection process is. If you are made an offer on the spot, and you want the position, accept it. If you need to think about it, be courteous and tactful and ask for a few days to think about it. Set a definite date.
- Most interviewers need to discuss hiring someone with their team. Don't feel discouraged if you are not getting encouraging signals during the interview. Most employers have set questions they cannot deviate from and are discouraged from showing encouragement to candidates in order to prevent bias and favoritism. Do not let your discouragement show. Close the interview on a positive note.
- Show interest by asking questions. Make your last impression a summary statement of your skills.
- Express thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration of you. Make sure you have the answers to your questions about the organization and the position. Collect business cards for future correspondence.

After the interview

- Send a thank you letter within 24 hours of your appointment. Restate your interest in the position, relevant skills, and any points you forgot to mention.
- If you have not received a response by the scheduled decision time, you may follow up with a phone call to "check on the progress." However, do not make a pest of yourself by calling too soon or too often.

When an offer is made

- Be sure you know the wage, hours, location, responsibilities, and expected starting date of the position being offered.
- Usually you are granted some time to think about your decision. It is all right to ask for a few days to think about it. If you ask for too long, you may be seen as not very interested. If you have an organization you have interviewed with and prefer, advise the interviewer of your offer and the deadline. Find out if he or she will be making you an offer. If the interviewer can not meet the deadline, make your decision and stick with it. Do not renege once you have said yes to the first offer.
- Once you have decided, call to accept, reject, or negotiate the offer. Notify the other organizations you have interviewed with of your acceptance of employment and remove yourself from the process.
- Follow up with a written letter of confirmation of your agreement and keep a copy for your own records.

Five reasons why candidates are not selected

1. Lack of career planning, ill-defined goals, lack of skills
2. Lack of knowledge of the organization or the field
3. No real interest in the organization
4. Interested only in the best dollar offer
5. Unwilling to start at the bottom

Six types of interview questions

- Direct (short answer yes/no)
Are you willing to work overtime?
- Open- Ended (can not be answered by a yes/no)
Tell me about yourself.
- Reaction (test your attitudes)
How do you feel about working as a team player?
- Elaborating (they need more information)
You mentioned that you have good communications skills. Explain what you mean by that.
- Situational (test how you think)
If you were placed into an office as a first-line supervisor where you did not know your subordinates, what would your first action be?
- Stress (test your maturity)
I am not sure you are suitable for this job, what do you think?