

Interview Tips

Everyone is positive when they go on an interview that they will handle themselves with the perfect degree of poise and professionalism. In reality, there are a multitude of errors that even the most confident interviewee can commit which will signify to an interviewer that this person is not to be hired.

The climate of the job market today is one whereby candidates need to exceed the requirements of the open position. No longer is it sufficient to be bright and capable of learning after one is hired. Here are some pointers to maximize your chances of being the one they want to hire.

1. **First and foremost, do your homework.** Research the company you are interviewing with. Do a query on a search engine regarding any press this company has received within the last year.
2. **Study, Study, Study.** This is possibly the most important exam you will take. Careers are made by first getting offered a great job. Anything is possible once you are invited in. Make sure you have a job description. What specifically do they like about your background? If you say you are an expert in something, be prepared to be grilled by the company's expert. If you rely on your resume to sell your background, without the technical depth at your fingertips to back it all up, you will fail. No one is prepared to describe past projects fluidly with depth, without having gone back through the steps you took while you were fully engaged in that project. Review projects, and ask former colleagues or friends in the industry to test you. People often experience strong regret after not having prepared for an interview when they miss questions that they knew they should have answered correctly. Push the interview off if you need more time to prepare. Preparation is everything.
3. **Arrive at the interview on time or better yet, 10-15 minutes early.** There is no excuse to run late. Leave more than enough time to get there early and if you are driving to an unfamiliar location, do a dry run a few days before.
4. **Bring several copies of your resume with you to the interview.** Very often additional people get asked to participate in the interview process and do not have an opportunity to review your resume beforehand. If the hiring manager is having an extremely busy day, they may appreciate not having to locate your resume if it's sitting on a pile on their desk.
5. **Dress in interview attire.** It doesn't matter if the company is always in business casual attire. Wear a suit complete with tie. Women can dress in either pant suits or suits with skirt/jacket. If you work in an environment whereby wearing a suit signifies that someone is going on an interview, a crisp button down shirt with nice slacks is minimally acceptable. A Sports jacket is optimal. Be comfortable and polished.
6. **Never speak ill of your current or past employers.** No matter how comfortable you feel with the person interviewing you, it is essential that you speak in terms of new challenges and desire for long term career growth. The perception exists that if you were to work for the hiring company and things didn't work out, it would be likely that you would speak ill of them. Keep it positive, no matter how strong you feel the rapport is with the person interviewing you.
7. **Do not ask any questions about benefits, vacation, 401k/retirement plans, working at home, flex time, maternity/paternity leave.** These are details best evaluated AFTER an offer has been made. It really doesn't matter what their policies are unless you get invited to work there.
8. **Compensation: This is twofold: Current and Seeking**
Current: This should be a very straightforward issue to discuss. Always be 100% honest regarding your current compensation level. In many cases you will be asked to produce documentation to back up your compensation level. Even if you feel you are grossly underpaid, be honest. If you are offered a job, it is not in the company's best interest to offer you less than your market value because that will simply induce you to quickly change jobs and move to another

company where they will pay you what you deserve. Be prepared to talk in terms of Base Salary, any bonus or incentive compensation etc. Break your total compensation down for them.

Seeking: Sometimes an interviewer will ask you how much you are looking for. The best answer is always to state that you are interested in considering a competitive offer that they feel fairly represents your skill set with respect to other people with similar skills in the firm. You trust them to come up with an offer that is commensurate with your background and the compensation structure they have in place. Mentioning a specific figure is not advisable. If you mention a number that is too high, they will eliminate you as a candidate, and possibly go for their second choice who fits well within their desired compensation range. If you state an offer that is too low, you may sell yourself short and be offered the low end of the salary range for the position. Communicate that you are flexible and confident that the compensation level will be right if you both feel that the position is a strong match.

9. **Try to straddle the line between being confident and humble.** No one wants to hire a know-it-all, and no one wants to hire someone who is self deprecating or desperate for a job, any job.
10. **If you don't know the answer to a question, try to describe some component of a project you worked on that employed similar technology.** Very often, the goal is to see how you think, how articulate you are, and if you can admit that you don't know something but can have a meaningful discussion about something that may be related. If you don't know the answer, don't pretend you do. Chances are they will call your bluff and you will be worse off for having tried to pretend.
11. **Thank you letters or email after the interview is not a bad idea, but it is a case by case decision.** If you do opt to send thank you email/letter, make sure you send a unique letter to each person you interviewed with. It is often an unnecessary step. If things go well you will have ample time to connect with the people you interviewed with. Make sure the correspondence is flawless, and always show a copy to your recruiter before engaging in any communication whatsoever.
12. **Don't skip meals before the interview.** Some companies have been known to keep candidates captive for 4-6 hours without a food break. Make sure you are adequately fueled before the interview.
13. **Sometimes an interviewer will ask you to tell him/her about the last book you read.** This gives them some insight as to what interests you. Have a couple of titles ready and be ready to substantiate the reasons you liked or didn't like about the book.
14. **Stay positive throughout the interview.** Even if one of the people who interviews you mentions that there is a component of the job that you will be extensively involved in which you absolutely detest, stay positive. You have nothing to evaluate until an offer is made. The detail you didn't like can change, position responsibilities can be modified. If you show negativity you will have nothing to evaluate and no chance of seeing what might have or could have been.
15. **Be yourself.** If you are right for the position, you will have secured the job because of your accomplishments and interpersonal skills. You spend a lot of hours at work. Do your best, be prepared, positive and confident. May the best company win.

Top 5 Things to Remember

Ever wonder why you don't get called back after that first interview? What's holding you back from that great job while others are getting hired after shorter job searches?

It could be something you DIDN'T do.

What are the smartest things a candidate can do in an interview? What are the traits of a good candidate? How can you make a good impression? Here are the top five ways to win over your interviewer and get a leg up on the competition.

1. Demonstrate or communicate your experience and skills.

The number one thing a candidate can do in an interview is intelligently and clearly articulate professional experience, capabilities or knowledge. Hiring managers are most impressed when a candidate is able to "think on their feet" during the interview - this demonstrates competency. They're also impressed when a candidate takes an active role in helping a customer or rectifying a situation right on the spot, whether posed by the interviewer or introduced by the candidate.

2. Act professionally.

A candidate who is professional during the selection process will stand out among fellow job seekers. When a candidate communicates intelligently, uses proper grammar, makes eye contact, listens and asks intelligent and relevant questions. This demonstrates how that person will act within the parameters of the position with coworkers and clients. A hiring manager will want to choose a candidate who will represent the company well.

3. Prepare.

Skimming the company's website five minutes before you leave won't help you at all. Simple steps to prepare for the interview include researching the company, market and opportunity, arriving on time and dressing appropriately. Bring extra copies of your resume and work samples, as well as your portfolio. And, don't forget names of references and letters of recommendation. Thorough preparation for an interview can make or break your chances of landing the job. As someone once said - Proper planning prevents piss poor performance.

4. Exhibit enthusiasm.

Go ahead, be an eager beaver. Hiring managers are impressed when a candidate shows enthusiasm for the job and want to hire someone who is gung ho. The candidate who is ready and willing will likely carry those traits into the position. Plus, it demonstrates an eagerness to learn. This doesn't mean you need an overly peppy personality with perma-grin, but zeal for the position, the company and profession will show you'll go the distance.

5. Be honest.

The candidate was honest and showed integrity. A candidate's honesty was important to hiring managers by being sincere and truthful about the past. Be candid and open about past jobs. This doesn't mean you have to churn out all the dirty details of previous employers or supervisors. If you are coming from a bad experience, think of ways to put a positive spin on your previous situation. For example, if you were let go from your last job, be truthful without being negative and highlight your strengths or how you learned from that situation.