

Interview Advice

The Interview Part 1

The Purpose

This is your opportunity to make a favourable impression with the interviewer. It is also your opportunity to determine if this is the right position for you and if you wish to continue with your application for this position. If you get to the interview stage it is certainly worth putting in some time and effort to be as prepared as possible. Given it is a position that would suit you your aim is to get on to a shortlist for the position.

Dressing Appropriately

Make sure that your dress is appropriate. This generally means in a conservative fashion and definitely in a neat, clean and tidy manner. It is important that your dress does not distract the person interviewing you from the skills and experience that you want to get across.

Basic Questions

In the interview there are five basic questions that the person interviewing you will be trying to obtain answers to by the various questions that they ask.

- Why are you here?
- What can you do for the company they are interviewing for? What are your skills and fields of knowledge?
- What kind of person are you? Do you have the right personality/values to fit in with the culture of the company?
- What distinguishes you from other applicants?
- What are you worth, in dollar terms to the company - how much will they have to pay you?

Interviewers are likely to ask you questions based on the resume that you have submitted. These are likely to be a mix of both open and closed answer questions. The interviewer should also allow you the opportunity to ask questions as well. Make sure that you take the opportunity to ask questions to ensure that you can get your knowledge and points across to the interviewer.

The Interview Part 2

A typical interview will run like this:

Stage 1.

Interviewers will explain the format that the interview will take by giving you a brief description of the position.

Typical questions at this stage will be:

- What do you know about this job or company?
- Does this sound interesting to you?

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Stage 2.

Interviewers will then focus on you. They will want to know about your qualifications, work history, successes and failures and inter-personal style.

Typical questions will be:

- Tell me about yourself
- What are your major strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What are your interests outside of work?

Stage 3.

Next they will be looking for your motivation for the job.

Typical questions will be:

- Why do you want the job?
- What do you expect it would be like?
- What was your worst mistake?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Where do you see yourself in five years from now?
- What are your goals in life?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of?

Stage 4.

At this point, interviewers will try to determine your loyalty.

Typical questions will be:

- How did you get on with your previous bosses and colleagues?
- What did you like about the company?
- Why did you leave your last position?
- How much did you make in your last job?

Stage 5.

Interviewers will then try to determine your work ethic.

Typical questions will be:

- What type of work do you like to do best?
- What accomplishment gave you the greatest satisfaction?
- What have you done to improve yourself over the years?
- What hours do you work in your current position?
- How have you handled difficult situations? (They will want to know if you are persistent in the face of obstacles.)

Stage 6.

Interviewers may introduce some hypothetical situations. A typical question may be:

- How would you deal with this situation?

Stage 7.

The interview will probably be closed by asking if you have any further questions.

The Interview Part 3

Questions to ask of the interviewer:

- What has caused this position to become available?
- Why did the previous occupant leave?
- What was good and what would you change, about the person who previously held the position?
- What factors do you feel are most important for success in this position?
- What do you see as the major opportunity areas for this position?
- Describe the personality and working style of the supervisor, boss, chairman or whoever you would be reporting to.
- What are the main duties of the position?
- What is the mission statement of the organisation?
- What has the company done in the past 12 months to achieve its mission, and how successful has it been?
- What is the company's policy on training and development of employees?
- Describe what training has been conducted in the past 12 months.
- What was the performance of the company in the current year compared with the previous year?
- How do you think a current employee would describe the company and why?
- What is the staff turnover in percentage terms of the company?
- Give two examples indicating the culture of the company.

The interviewer should then explain the next step in the selection process to you.

Given that you are a candidate that they are interested in, they are likely to then check your references.

Interview Mistakes

What are the biggest mistakes that people make in interviews?

"The biggest mistake a person makes in an interview is seeing it as the end of the process instead of the beginning of the process."

Not being yourself - it is important to be open and honest.

Not having done any research before the interview.

Negative Factors To Watch For

During the course of an interview, the employer will be evaluating your negative factors as well as your positive attributes.

Listed below are negative factors frequently evaluated during the course of an interview and those which most often lead to rejection:

- Poor personal appearance.
- Overbearing-aggressive-conceited "superiority complex" "know-it-all".
- Inability to express thoughts clearly - poor diction or grammar.
- Lack of planning for career - no purpose or goals.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive and indifferent.
- Lack of confidence - nervousness.
- Over-emphasis on money - interested only in remuneration.
- Evasive - makes excuses for unfavourable factors in record.
- Lack of tact/maturity/courtesy.
- Condemnation of past employers.

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- Failure to look interviewer in the eye.
- Limp, fishy handshake.
- Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.
- Persistent attitude of "what can you do for me?"
- Lack of preparation for interview - failure to get information about the company, resulting in inability to ask intelligent questions.

Personal Pointers

What you need to get across in an interview?

Be yourself - be open and honest.

Be very focused. Have short, succinct answers to questions such as "What do you want to do?", "Where do you want to be in 5 years time?" and other questions we have suggested above.

Do not go to an interview without having done some research. Find out as much about the position as possible. By research, you should think about the position and relate your skills, talent, creativity, past experience and knowledge to the position. Try to point out the major contribution that you could make to the company.

You need to be able to demonstrate that you would "fit" in with the company being interviewed for. Relate your past experience to what is required in the position. Today companies are looking for what they term "job fit".

Be enthusiastic about the type of work that the company is offering.

After the Interview.

It is courteous, to send the interviewer a "thank you" note or make a phone call after the interview. This also acts as another way of you getting your name in front of the interviewer and every little bit helps.

Finally, the whole process can be quite a learning exercise. Make the most of it, enjoy it and best of luck!