

Interviewing

Before you interview for a position, learn as much as possible about the position and the employer. If you found the position through a search consultant (recruiter), he or she should be able to provide that information for you. If not, conduct research on the Web, visit the library, and tap into industry contacts.

Questions To Ask

After you have studied the company, make a list of questions to ask the employer:

- Why is this position open? (Did the previous person get promoted or terminated or did the person resign?) Or is this a new position?
- What training programs are available to the person in this position?
- What are the main duties, responsibilities and goals for this position?
- What obstacles must be overcome for the person in this position to succeed?
- How will my performance be evaluated?
- What opportunities are there for growth from this position? What types of positions can people move up to from this position?
- What growth do you anticipate for your firm in the next 12 months, 2 years, and why?

Questions You May Be Asked

Your recruiter should be able to give you a good idea of the hiring authority's personality, his or her typical interview demeanor, and a few important questions that the employer is likely to ask:

- **Tell me about yourself.**
Keep your answer in the professional realm only. Review your past positions, education and other strengths. Bring out experiences and successes in your background that relate to the position you are being interviewed for.
- **Why are you interested in this position?**
Relate how you feel your qualifications match the job requirements. Also, express your desire to work for the employer and why..
- **What are the most significant accomplishments in your career?**
Identify recent accomplishments that relate to the position and its requirements. It is very important that they relate to the position you are being considered for.
- **Describe a situation in which your work was criticized.**
Focus on how you resolved the situation and became a better person because of the experience. Show that pride did not get in the way, that

you are a team player, that you accepted the criticism and turned it into a positive result for you and your company.

- **What do you know about our organization?**
Talk about the key information you learned about, read about, where you went to find the information. Showing the initiative to go the "extra mile" to know about the company shows a high level of interest in the company as well as the position.
- **How would you describe your personality?**
Be honest. Talk about how your personality has helped you succeed in your jobs.
- **How do you perform under pressure?**
Give examples of situations like this and what the outcome was.
- **What have you done to improve yourself over the past year?**
(Courses, getting a mentor relationship started, doing civic work, working out, etc.).
- **What did you like least about your last position?**
Don't whine or be too wordy. Be factual, calm, direct. Don't bad mouth your old or current boss, but you can point out philosophy differences or style differences.
- **Are you leaving (did you leave) your present (last) company?**
- **What is your ideal working environment?**
- **How would your co-workers describe you?**
- **What do you think of your boss?**
If they have been a good boss, tell them why. If you've experienced a bad boss, be diplomatic and watch your choice of words, but be honest.
- **Have you ever fired anyone?**
- **What was the situation and how did you handle it?**
Be truthful.
- **Are you creative?**
- **What are your goals in your career?**
Think about this one – be honest but realistic.
- **Where do you see yourself in two years?**
- **Why should we hire you?**
Relate your answer back to the position you are being interviewed for. Explain why/how you would have an impact on their business without being boastful or arrogant.
- **What kind of salary are you looking for?**
Talk to our search consultant about this – much depends on the information we can share with you before the interview.
- **What other types of jobs/companies are you considering?**
Sharing the types of positions and scope of responsibility is a good thing to share. Avoid giving names of companies you are interviewing with.

Interviewing “Do’s”

- Arrive 15 minutes early. Tardiness is never excusable. Be friendly to the receptionist and thank him/her when you leave the building.
- Clarify questions. If you don’t understand it, it’s important to ask the interviewer what information they are asking for. Answer the interviewer's questions as specifically as possible. Relate your skills and background to the position requirements throughout the interview.
- Give your qualifications. Focus on accomplishments that are most pertinent to the job.
- Be professional. Smile, make eye contact, and maintain good posture. Bring out your personality. People like to hire individuals that have positive attitudes.
- Anticipate tough questions. Prepare to turn perceived weaknesses into strengths.
- Dress appropriately. Make your first impression a professional one. Make sure shoes are shined, dress is conservative. Ask your search consultant about the company’s dress code. Some companies dress business casual and prefer candidates to dress at that level. When in doubt, dress in business suit attire.
- Ask questions. An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation. If you catch yourself doing most of the talking, stop and ask a question to the hiring manager.
- Listen. Concentrate not only on the interviewer's words, but also on the tone of voice and body language. Once you understand how the interviewer thinks, pattern your answers accordingly and you will be able to establish a better rapport.

Interviewing “Don’ts”

- Don't answer vague questions. Ask the interviewer to clarify fuzzy questions.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer. If you don't listen, the interviewer won't either.
- Don't be disrespectful. Don't smoke, chew gum or place anything on the interviewer's desk. If you are invited to lunch, avoid alcohol. Order a soft drink, ice tea, water.
- Don't be overly familiar, even if the interviewer is.
- Don't wear heavy perfume or cologne. The interviewer may not share your tastes.
- Don't ramble. Lengthy answers may make you sound apologetic or indecisive.
- Don't lie. Answer questions truthfully. This is important.

- Don't express bitterness. Avoid derogatory remarks about present or former employers. Take the high road.

Closing the Interview

Job candidates often second-guess themselves after interviews. By asking good questions and closing strongly, you can reduce post-interview doubts. If you feel that the interview went well and you want to take the next step, express your interest to the interviewer.

Try an approach like the following: "After learning more about your company, the position and responsibilities, I believe that I have the qualities and credentials you are looking for. Are there any issues or concerns that would lead you to believe otherwise?"

This is an effective closing question because it opens the door for the hiring authority to be honest with you about his or her feelings. If concerns do exist, you may be able to create an opportunity to overcome them, and have one final chance to dispel the concerns, sell your strengths and end the interview on a positive note.

A few things to remember during the closing process

- Don't be discouraged if an offer is not made or a specific salary is not discussed. The interviewer may want to communicate with colleagues or conduct other scheduled interviews before making a decision.
- Make sure that you have thoroughly answered these questions during the interview: "Why are you interested in our company?" and "What can you offer?" Express appreciation for the interviewer's time and consideration.
- Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can write a thank you letter or send an e-mail as soon as possible.
- Ask for a timeline to find out when you will be hearing from them about the next step in the process. It demonstrates that you feel follow-up is important.

Follow-up

After your interview, follow-up is critical. When you get in your car, immediately write down key issues uncovered in the interview. Think of the qualifications the employer is looking for and match your strengths to them. A "thank you" letter (or e-mail) should be written no later than 24 hours after the interview. Be sure to call your search consultant to discuss your interview and your next steps, as well. They know the client and will be very helpful to you in determining your next actions.