



Interview Tips and Advice

Introduction

The interview process can seem to be the most intimidating part of securing a new job. Understanding what makes you a strong candidate and being able to convey that to a potential employer will make your quest more viable. Most candidates spend time preparing for skill based questions but are never prepared for the “interview traps” that may come up. Here are a few tips that highlight these areas that you should look out for in a typical interview.

An interview is Not a Cross-examination

Most candidates expect an interview to be a cross examination by the employer asking question after question about his/her skills. This is not accurate. An interview is a business conversation in which both people ask and respond to questions. Candidates who expect the cross examination don't ask questions and are never truly able to communicate their suitability for the job.

Making a Weakness Seem Positive

In most interviews the dreaded question, "What are your weaknesses?" always comes up. Standard interview protocol dictates that you highlight a weakness like "I'm a workaholic." and turn it into a positive. Interviewers are not usually impressed by this type of answer because they have probably heard the same answer many times before. Instead, if you are asked this question, highlight a skill that you wish to improve upon and describe what you are doing to enhance your skill in this area. An example would be "I am always working on improving my presentation skills to be a more effective presenter. I recently enrolled in a public speaking program, which I find very helpful." Interviewers typically don't care what your weaknesses are. They want to see how you handle the question and what your answer indicates about you.

Always Ask Intelligent Questions

At the end of each interview the interviewer typically asks if you have any questions. The worst thing to say is that you have no questions. Having no questions prepared indicates you are either not interested or not prepared. It is important to prepare a few intelligent questions about the job, the company and the industry that you can ask the employer. You may also want to ask the interviewer about his/hers career background as it gives you insight into your potential employer. Interviewers are more impressed by the questions you ask than the selling points about your suitability that you try to make.

Know Yourself

Candidates instinctively prepare for an interview by researching the company. Most candidates do not examine themselves by taking into account their experience, knowledge and skills. Creating a list of your skills prepares you to immediately respond to any questions about your experience. You must be prepared to confidently discuss any part of your background. This list of skills will help you in immediately remembering the experiences you would otherwise have forgotten during the interview.

Dress to Impress

The old adage of a lasting first impression rings true when you meet a potential employer. The first judgment an interviewer makes is going to be based on how you look and what you are wearing. That's why it's always important to dress professionally for a job interview, even if the work environment is casual. You'll want that first impression to be not just a good one, but, a great one. The candidate dressed in a suit and tie is going to make a much better impression than the candidate dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.

Etiquette

We live in a technology savvy world and staying connected is important. But a ringing cell phone is not appropriate for an interview. Turn it off or even leave it in your car before you enter the company.

End on a High Note

Always end your interview on a high note by expressing your appreciation for the interviewer's time and your interest in the position. Be sure to send a thank-you note to reinforce your interest and ability to stand out in the role. A carefully created message will help your candidacy and leave a positive impression with the employer long after you've left. You must be able to demonstrate solid soft skills, a strong work ethic and a personality that is compatible with the corporate culture of the organization.

Whether you have one week or one day before your interview, with a little preparation and practice, you can outshine the competition. You will be remembered for the accuracy of your resume, the strength of your presentation and your ability to convey both your soft skills and technical skills. Remember the more your interview is the better you get at it. Listen carefully to your recruiter's advice when an interview is being scheduled as they usually have key information about the process.