

# Interviewing

Short of landing a job, the Interview is the principal objective of all our preparation. Without the interview there is no job. Your preparation here is critical. You need to be ready as you may only get a day or two notice. More time than that is needed; you need to be ready when the call comes, the rest is polishing. These topical single pages may be displayed on screen as pdf's, printed or extracted for e-mail attachments.

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# Interviewing Preparation

Adapted from Ashford University

[http://careers.ashford.edu/interview\\_process.php](http://careers.ashford.edu/interview_process.php)

## Prepare your credentials and other paperwork

Create a professional résumé that profiles important education, relevant experience and career highlights. List your job positions, key responsibilities, accomplishments, rewards, recognition, credentials, licensing and education. Ask a former manager or other mentor to review your résumé for content, grammar, format and overall effectiveness. Print out multiple copies of your résumé and keep them in a folder with your other documents.

Anticipate being asked for permission to conduct a background investigation. The permission form may require you to list all of your prior addresses for the past five to seven years, so keep this information with you.

## Anticipate the questions you'll be asked during your interview

Find out as much as you can about the prospect by visiting its website and that of any parent company. Taking the time to learn about the company shows your initiative and real interest in the position. If you have friends or colleagues employed there take the time to ask them about the staff, the corporate culture and general procedures. Prepare answers for standard on-the-job type interview questions.

Develop an answer for one of the most common open-ended questions: "Tell me a little about yourself." This question is designed to evaluate your judgment. This is not the time or the place for a chronological biography or any self-critical remarks. It's your opportunity to reveal key details about yourself that validate why you are the right one for the job. Use this opportunity to point out the unique skills, talents and attitudes you bring, backed up with specific examples. For instance, if you talk about your teamwork or leadership skills, give an example of when you demonstrated these qualities.

Practice answering questions in a way that shows you are a problem-solver. Provide examples from your career—no matter how short—that demonstrate how you've organized projects and workflow and contributed in various ways to make your company more efficient.

Craft answers to negative situations, but frame them in a positive light. Review your experience and write down relevant examples that show how you overcame adversity and gained new insights.

## Practice, practice, practice!

Practice answering all of these questions until you feel comfortable and at ease. Don't just say what you think the interviewer wants to hear; be true to yourself. Otherwise you could be hired under the wrong expectations for a position that's not a good fit. Your goal is to prepare answers that best reflect your skills and personality. Remember to be sincere, professional and show how you've excelled in your career.

Give the job and phone interview tips a test run and stage a mock interview. Ask a colleague, friend or relative who is a manager or familiar with the job interviewing process to do a "mock" interview with you. Have them ask the same thought-provoking questions they would ask their candidates. Even if they don't work in your field, their interviewing experience is still relevant. Don't let them go easy on you; the tougher their questions the less stumped and more prepared you'll be when it comes time for the real interview.

You should also practice greeting your interviewers with a smile and a firm handshake, either with friends or in front of a mirror. Keep at it until you exude the warmth, confidence and professionalism that you want. It may feel strange at first, but it can help you alleviate jitters and appear more polished on the day of the interview.

Don't forget to get plenty of sleep the night before your interview to help you look rested and feel more alert.

# Company Research in Your Job Search

Written by Laura Durhamr

Adapted from : <http://www.daytonmetrolibrary.org/jobs-a-careers/204/6851>

Many libraries subscribe to a very powerful database called Reference USA Business that can help you research individual companies or create a list of businesses contacts in the area you would like to work. Additionally you can find the most current phone and address information for companies your have previously worked for.

Researching a company to prepare for an interview is an essential step in preparing for success. With research you may find useful material for discussion relative to the industry or identify the key competitors that would indicate you are 'in tune'.

Reference USA is a detailed listing of 10.5 million businesses with the ability to search by company name, type of business, geography, business size and other key criteria. Local libraries subscribe to this service. You will need a library card to log in. Inquire about using Reference USA at your local library, if you have a library card you may also be able to use it from home.

To access this database, look for a link to *Research* or *Databases* on the library website home page. From the "Research / Databases" screen, click on the link to Research Databases." From the screen, scroll down to the alphabetical list of subscribed databases to find "Reference USA Business" or use a Search box if available. If you are logged in outside the library, you may need to enter your library card number at this point. On the "Reference USA Available Databases" screen, click on "U.S. Businesses."

When you first enter the Reference USA Business database, you will be in the Quick Search tab. This quick search will allow you to search by a company name, or an executive's first and last name, and is helpful if you are researching a particular company in preparation for an interview. For example try searching for Procter and Gamble in Ohio to see a large company with many locations. You can click on the name of each individual location to see more information about it, such as a management directory, a business profile, and statistics such as number of employees and sales volume. You can also see the corporate tree for company if the location you have selected is part of a larger corporation.

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# The Three Phases of an Interview

Posted By: Deborah Brown-Volkman In: Job Seeker - Interview  
<http://www.businessworkforce.com/articles/article.asp?id=4235>

Getting an interview brings on two emotions. The first is excitement, especially if you will be interviewing for a position you really want. The second is fear; especially if the stakes are high and you really need the job.

An interview is about two parties, you and the prospective employer, getting together to see if there is a match. The process is skewed in the employer's favor, particularly now because job supply is low and demand is high. So, it's important that you use the interview as your chance to stand out and make the best impression possible.

In order to ace an interview, you have put yourself in the shoes of the employer. By understanding their thinking, and the three phases of the interview, you can do well.

## **Phase I: The Invitation.**

If an employer thinks you can do the job, you will be brought in for an interview. Many clients say to me that they hope a perspective employer believes they can do the job. They already do, or you would not have received the invitation to interview with them.

To get to Phase I, make sure your resume matches the bullets in the job description as closely as possible. Employers are looking for a match of skills and abilities. If you have too few qualifications on your resume, you will be seen as being under-qualified. Too many, and you will be seen as overqualified or all over the place. Close matches have the best chance of being brought in.

## **Phase II: The Meeting.**

During the interview, it's all about having your personality shine though. Jobs are won and lost based on personality. The employer is thinking the following: Do I like you? Are you normal? Will you get along with everyone else? Can you get up to speed quickly? And, will you make me look good?

Phase II is your time to show your passion, what makes you unique, to handle objections, convey how committed you are to the job, and how you will make your boss look like a star. Don't overdo it. Quiet confidence will set an employer at ease; arrogance will cost you the job.

## **Phase III: The Follow-Up.**

After an employer interviews several people, the choice in many situations comes down to two candidates. Both can do the job well, and both are very well liked. At this point, it becomes, "Who is the best match?"

If you are hoping that an employer will see why you are the perfect candidate on their own, you have already lost the position. You have to lead them there from the start.

For example, if you are switching industries, tell the interviewer why the industries are similar. If you are going after a different job title, show how your background has prepared you for that role. If you were unable to get this across during Phase II, contact the employer and see if they will have another conversation with you before they make their decision. It never hurts to ask and they might just say yes.

The interview is simply your opportunity to make sure you come across as the best candidate for the job. If you can get through these three phases effectively, the job you want can be yours.

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# The Correct Time to Use Your References

Posted By: Candace Davies In: Job Seeker – Interview  
<http://www.businessworkforce.com/articles/article.asp?id=5214>

Your references are an important tool at your disposal that can be very useful in helping you to secure your ideal job. This is because there isn't a much more effective marketing resource for yourself than your references. Although a strong resume and cover letter are your best chance of initially attracting an employer's interest, your references are so powerful due to the fact that they provide positive information about you from someone other than yourself. This is invaluable information to a potential employer. So, with such a powerful tool in your back pocket, it is important to know when exactly the best time to release this information to an employer is.

Oftentimes, an employer will ask you to supply them with a list of your references prior to offering you a job. They will want to contact your references to make sure the information you've supplied them with is correct, and also to find out what type of worker you are and what your past accomplishments entailed. So, make sure that your references are ready to sing your praises because this is a very important part of the employment process.

Since the main reason an employer should contact your references is to verify information you've provided them with and to delve deeper into what you have to offer, your references are meant to be used after an interview. This means that you should not be handing out your references until asked to at an interview. Your references are your secret weapon, so you should protect them until the moment they're needed.

If you give out your references too freely or even place them on your resume, you may run into trouble with the people you've asked to speak on your behalf. If your references are contacted too often, they could get annoyed or upset and you don't want to upset the very people that are helping you out. As your reference information is somewhat private contact information, you will want to be protective of this, only revealing them at an interview for an employer for whom you really want to work.

Another advantage of holding onto your references until later is that you will be able to select the best people for that particular position or company you are interviewing with. You may have multiple references from a variety of professional experiences where some are more tailored to one position than others. This way, you'll be sure to provide an employer with the most appropriate references. So manage your reference data carefully.

Lastly, if you happen to run into a job ad that asks for your references with your application, simply state that you will be more than willing to provide your excellent references at an interview. Or, you can provide the names of your references but withhold the contact information, stating that you will provide this information at an interview.

Remember that your references contain confidential information and that your references' contact information is not something that you should be handing out to anybody. It is also one of your most powerful marketing tools, so use them with caution and release them at the appropriate moment- at an interview.

# 5 Things To Bring To The Interview

Posted By: Melissa Kennedy On: 5/24/2012 10:15 AM In: Job Seeker – Interview  
<http://www.businessworkforce.com/articles/article.asp?id=1105>

Job interviews are stressful and there is so much great advice available about what to wear, how to act and what questions to ask that it's easy to get overwhelmed. Once you have the right outfit, have done tons of interview prep and are confident about your ability to show yourself in your best light, it's showtime. Before you walk out the door, however, there are a few things you need to make sure that you bring along with you.

Here are 5 things you need to bring to your next interview:

**Interviewer's phone number and the company's number** - It's one of those things you might not think about until you really need it, and by then, it will be too late. Make sure you have the phone number of your interviewer, along with the main number to the company written down. This way, if you have an emergency along the way, you will have a way to contact them to let them know. Not showing up for an interview is a hard thing to recover from. If you were to get stuck in a major traffic jam or some other unavoidable situation, you can call, explain what is going on and discuss rescheduling your interview.

**A list of professional references** - Since you know better than to list your references on your resume, make sure to bring a piece of paper that has your references listed out. This will eliminate any delay if the interviewer asks you to provide references. From the moment you leave the interview, the clock is ticking; any sort of delay on your part will only serve to give the hiring manager more time to find a better applicant. Don't take this chance and be ready to provide the list on the spot.

**Copies of your resume** - Don't assume that the interviewer will have a copy of your resume on hand. Instead, print out a few copies and bring them along with you. If the interviewer wants to go over your resume with you, you'll have your own copy on hand and will be able to answer any questions they might have more easily. Another reason to bring extra copies is that you never know how many people will be interviewing you. If you arrive and find that there is a panel, you can quickly supply additional copies of your resume rather than them having to share.

**A small notebook with questions** - This is something many applicants forget, but it's super important. Bring a nice notepad with you to write down any important information the interviewer might give you. Also, write out a few well thought out question for the interviewer. This way, you'll be sure to ask all of the question you have and it also shows that you are prepared and interested in the job.

**A nice pen** - In the course of your interview, you may need to take notes, fill out an application or other forms. In these moments, not having a pen will make you look unprepared. To prevent this, make sure you bring a nice, professional looking pen with you to the interview. These small details show that you are a professional who pays attention to the little things. This goes a long way toward demonstrating that you have what it takes to do the job.

One of the most sought after qualities that hiring managers are looking for is attention to details. Arriving at the interview with everything you might need is a great way to show why you are a good fit for the job.

## ***Other things to bring are:***

*Verified address of the interview location and associated driving instructions or map.*

*Paper, envelope and stamp for a hand written thank you note.*

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# The Interview

Adapted from Ashford University  
[http://careers.ashford.edu/interview\\_process.php](http://careers.ashford.edu/interview_process.php)

## **Allow plenty of time to get to the job interview.**

Plan to arrive early just in case an accident or something unforeseen might slow you down. This pre-planning will also allow you to arrive at the interview relaxed and prepared. If you're very early, you can use the time to review the interview tips and rehearse your answers to common questions. Punctuality at your first meeting with a potential employer is crucial!

## **Make a great first impression.**

It's that initial impression that stands out in the interviewer's mind when they are evaluating you vs. another candidate. This is why dress, grooming, a clear speaking voice and a winning smile are important.

## **Listen, respond and relax during the job interview.**

It's only natural to be a little nervous, especially during your first job interview. So don't worry if you stumble on your first sentence or don't immediately get your full point across. Look for the opportunity to provide more details and demonstrate your strong points.

Relax, take a couple of deep breaths and maintain a calm, even conversational tone. Listen carefully to each question and respond to what is being asked, not to what you anticipate will be asked. Ask for clarification if needed and be careful not to rush through your answers.

Make eye contact, smile warmly and shake the interviewer's hand. This "connection" can help set the tone and get the interview started on an upbeat note. Maintain frequent eye contact throughout the interview to show your continued interest.

Discuss your professional association memberships and any committee positions which you've held. Mention research you've helped with, volunteer projects, published articles and continuing education.

## **Your turn to ask questions.**

Most interviewers will give you a chance to ask questions, so use this opportunity to show your interest in the position and find out key details about the workflow. Feel free to check your notes, but avoid asking questions about items that are already spelled out in the interview literature you

## **Send a thank you note after the interview.**

Letter writing may be a lost art, but a simple thank you note shows your interest and thoughtfulness, which reinforces a favorable impression. So, if you want the job, say thank you.

## **What if the job's not for you?**

Send a thank you note anyway. It shows good manners and thoughtfulness on your part. Hiring managers will appreciate your courtesy and might even suggest another position at their facility or at another location.

## **What if you don't hear anything from the hiring manager?**

If it has been a few days, call to convey your continued interest and check the status of the interviewing process. Find out when the decision will be made and ask if there is anything else you can provide. This opportunity could supply additional references, paperwork or information.

Follow up the day before the decision is supposed to be made. Be considerate of the hiring manager's time and pressures associated with the pending decision. This warmth and graciousness shows compassion on your part and could turn things in your favor.

# Interviewing Synopsis

Adapted from: Post-Tribune, March 20, 2005 by Doris A. Black

It's the interview that will make or break you. You need to separate yourself from other applicants in order to get noticed and be hired. These tips increase your chances.

1. Make an entrance. Arrive on time and dressed appropriately for the position. From the moment you walk through the door, everyone from the receptionist to potential fellow employees will size you up as you wait for the interview.
2. Know the name of the interviewer and pronounce it correctly. Call the receptionist and ask for the spelling and pronunciation of the interviewer. When introduced, repeat their name. Don't offer to shake hands unless the interviewer offers. Then shake with a firm grip.
3. Know what the company produces or what services they offer. Doing research on the company is crucial to having a good interview. Employers will ask why you want to work for them. Your knowledge of their position in the market or reputation will give a favorable impression. However, you should not flaunt your knowledge, keep it low key.
4. Get the interviewer interested in you. This is your chance to sell your personality. They already know from your resume what skills you have. What they want to find out is what kind of personality you have; will you fit into their company. Enthusiasm is the key no matter what the topic is. Display sincere enthusiasm, be genuine.
5. Answer each question thoughtfully. Every question is asked for a purpose. Don't assume you're having a casual conversation and let your guard down. Every remark you make can be meaningful. Remember, the interview started the moment you walked in the door.
6. Know when to stop talking. When answering a question, do so concisely but fully, then stop talking. When the interviewer says nothing, many interviewees make the mistake of assuming the answer was insufficient, so they ramble on to fill the void. What is said during this time period can play against you. Silence is used by interviewers to see how you handle stress. Just sit quietly, don't fidget and don't look around the room; look directly at the interviewer and wait. The silence won't last long. If you're prepared for the silence, it will pass quickly. Be patient and a warm satisfaction will fill you as you realize you passed the test.
7. Have intelligent questions prepared. Sometime near the end of the interview, you will most likely be asked if you have any questions. Don't say no, even if the interviewer thoroughly went over the position and answered the questions you had before arriving. Show interest in the interviewer by asking them how they like working for the company and what they don't like about it. Getting the interviewer to talk about themselves is a way to get to know their personality, so you can decide whether or not you'd like to work closely with them.
8. Negotiate a salary with care. More people lose the job here than any other place during the interview. Talking money is tricky. If you price yourself too low, they may think you're not as good as you claim to be; if too high, you'll come off as being "full of yourself." If the interviewer asks you how much money you want, you know they're at least interested in hiring you. Don't offer a figure without knowing the job salary range, or you may price yourself out of the job. If you state a minimum figure and their top dollar is less, you can't change your mind and say "I'll take it" or you'll appear to be without convictions. Instead of replying to the money question, answer with another question, "How much are you offering?" If what they offer is less than you want but you really want to work there, try to negotiate for a salary review in three months to your desired level. If you've done well, you'll get the raise.



## Interviewing Questions & Answers

1. **Tell me something about yourself?** This is your opportunity to set the tone for the interview and to share with the employer how you fit into his company and the strengths that make you a valuable asset. Good place to use your 30 second summary
2. **Why did you leave your last position?** Always have a positive answer. Keep it short. Don't change your answer in the middle of the interview. Examples: "The company downsized" or "I enjoyed my company, but I'd like to increase my experience and skills."
3. **Who will give you a good reference?** Prepare in advance a list of three personal and three business/professional references. Check with all references to be sure that they will give you a good reference. Suggest to your references some strengths or experiences you would like them to emphasize if they are called.
4. **What do you know about this company or job?** You must do your homework. Research the company prior to the interview, using the Internet, the public library, or people who have worked for the company. You should know as a minimum the company's products and stated objectives.
5. **How would you evaluate your last supervisor?** Always give a positive answer. Tell what you have learned from working there. Never "bad mouth" the company.
6. **What do you hope to be doing in 5 years?** Keep your stated expectations reasonable. Examples: "I'd like to be working for you in a position of responsibility." "What would be the normal career progression for this position?"
7. **If we called your last employer what would they say about you?** This is a great opportunity to list all of your achievements, even if your boss hates you. Example: "Well, I hope he would tell you about the time I did..." Most companies have a strict policy not to comment on negative performance by a present or past employee.
8. **What are your strengths?** This is the perfect opportunity to reiterate to the employer why he should hire you. List all of your strengths that would be valuable to him and the position you are applying for. Be sure to give specific examples of each strength.
9. **What is your biggest weakness?** Never admit a weakness! Turn a strength into a weakness and then reverse it into a strength. Example: "I am very meticulous in my work. I recognize that others are not. However, I have learned how to work effectively with people who are not so meticulous to insure that we have the best product possible." Another example would be: "Some people might think my age is a problem or that I'm over qualified, but I feel that I bring a lot of maturity and experience to the position and I'm anxious to learn new things."
10. **I've seen several qualified people, why should I hire you?** List your strengths and how it will benefit the company. Stress your desire to work for the company and that you will be able to make a serious positive impact to company operations.
11. **What do you expect as a starting salary?** Never talk salary until after you have received a job offer. Deflect the question by assuring the employer that the real issue is do you feel the company is a good fit for you and does he feel that you are the right person for the job. If the answer is yes, then fair compensation can be negotiated. If he insists on knowing your salary requirements, you can ask "What do you normally pay someone with my experience?" or "What did you pay the last person to fill this position?"
12. **Do you have any questions for me?** An interview is a time for you to evaluate the company. Look for opportunities to ask appropriate questions.

## Interviewing Their Questions

The following are popular behavior based questions you may encounter in an interview. Don't rely on being fast on your feet, develop answers to these questions before the interview.

### ***Tell me about a time when you ...***

1. *Worked effectively under pressure.*
2. *Handled a difficult situation with a co-worker*
3. *Were creative in solving a problem.*
4. *Missed an obvious solution to a problem.*
5. *Were unable to complete a project on time.*
6. *Persuaded team members to do things your way.*
7. *Wrote a report that was well received.*
8. *Anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.*
9. *Had to make an important decision with limited facts.*
10. *Were forced to make an unpopular decision.*
11. *Were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.*
12. *Had to adapt to a difficult situation.*
13. *Were disappointed in your behavior.*
14. *Used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.*
15. *Had to deal with an irate customer.*
16. *Delegated a project effectively.*
17. *Surmounted a major obstacle.*
18. *Set your sights too high (or too low).*
19. *Prioritized the elements of a complicated project.*
20. *Got bogged down in the details of a project.*
21. *Lost (or won) an important contract.*
22. *Made a bad decision.*
23. *Hired (or fired) the wrong person.*
24. *Turned down a good job*

# Interviewing Your Questions

During the interview you may be given the opportunity to ask questions. You should have done sufficient research about the company to ask questions that demonstrate you are familiar with their products or services. This is your chance to have some control of the interview. It will let the interviewer respond rather than probe. Conclude with 'Thank you' or with a personal observation or a query for clarification on a point the interviewer raised.

## **DO NOT ask how much does the job pay!**

Suggestions:

- What happened to the last person who had this job?
- What do you think will be your major areas of growth in the next five years?
- What has the role of marketing (planning, personnel) been in this firm?
- What would you like to do more of (less of) next year (ask this one of the boss)?
- What development task do you think I could lead the department in that would provide training or education beneficial to your objectives?
- What does our company (your department) pride itself in? What sets it off from other functions?
- How do you evaluate performance? What form of positive or corrective feedback do you employ?
- What sort of person do you have difficulty working with? What traits do you t this with your job coach or employment specialist.)

- How are promotions determined? What makes people successful in the company?
- How are decisions made here?
- What do you think is the company's most immediate opportunity to gain in the market?
- What do you think about immediate actions as compared to long-term measures?
- How would you summarize the public's view of your company?
- Can you tell me some of the company's short and long term objectives?
- What are the characteristics that the company considers attractive or unique about itself?
- What industries or outside influences affect the company's growth?
- In what areas does the company excel? What limitations would you like to overcome?
- What are the common denominators that exist in successful employees of the company?

## **And for your closing question ...**

"Is there anything we have discussed that would preclude me from favorable consideration for this position? If so I would like to clarify the concern."

# Interviewing Money Negotiations

Adapted from: How to Respond with Confidence by Kim Lankford

It's the question many job applicants dread: What are your salary requirements? If you're responding to an ad that asks for this information up front, what should you do?

Job postings that ask for salary requirements use the information to weed out potential candidates. "If many people are applying for the job, they're looking for an excuse to filter the resumes," explains Christopher Elmes of human resources consulting firm DBM in New York City.

If you ask for too much, you'll take yourself out of the running. But ask for too little, and you could doom yourself to a salary that's too low. The key is to respond forthrightly to the question without being overly specific. Follow these tips.

## Offer a Salary Range

Instead of giving a specific number, provide a salary range, suggests Mike Worthington of ResumeDoctor.com. Remember it's impossible to give an accurate answer before you know the details of the job's duties and employee benefits. "A lot of factors have to be considered: healthcare coverage, the commute, 401k, child care and vacations," Worthington says. "There are so many factors involved that aren't going to be answered in a job description." You can explain this to the prospective employer while still providing a general idea of what you're expecting in a simple sentence like this: "My salary requirement is in the \$xx to \$xx range, based on the job responsibilities and total compensation package." That way, you still have plenty of room for negotiation after you learn more about the job.

Instead of providing salary requirements in a separate document, Worthington recommends mentioning them in your cover letter. There, they will be next to key bullet points explaining how you can bring value to the company, which helps justify what you're asking.

## Research Your Salary

First, do your research to provide some realistic numbers. See how much similar jobs with your level of experience are paying in that city or town. "Don't respond to an ad without doing your homework and knowing roughly what the position pays and what you could reasonably expect in terms of compensation," says Elmes. "It's getting caught unaware that can get you into trouble."

Worthington says it can't hurt to call the company and ask for salary information. Talking with friends who work for that company also may help. "It's like detective work," he explains. "A lot of it is asking the right questions."

Your bottom end should be slightly higher than your absolute minimum. "That gives you negotiating power and flexibility," says Worthington. Be reasonable on your top end. "Some companies put that question in to see honest and reasoned responses," says Elmes.

## Salary Requirements vs. Salary History

If the employer specifically asks for your salary history rather than salary requirements, you can add that information to your resume at the end of each of your job listings. Be careful about providing these numbers if you're moving to a new city with a different cost of living. Explain this difference in your cover letter or mention you're moving to a more-expensive city and you prefer to discuss salary requirements at an interview.

If they don't ask about your salary at the beginning, don't bring it up. "The last thing you want to do is to talk salary," says Weitzman. "You want them to fall in love with you first. If they want you a lot, they'll be willing to pay you more."

# Getting Past the Telephone Screening Interview

From the book "60 Seconds and You're Hired!" - Robin Ryan

Better know how to get past the telephone screening interview since it's growing in popularity among HR folks.

When an employer calls to say, "We'd like to discuss your qualifications a bit," what they are really saying is, "We want to know more about your exact skills and verify your resume, before we offer you an interview." Human Resources professionals refer to this interview as the Screening Interview. In today's job market this kind of screening process has become very popular and is frequently used.

This initial employer contact is designed to narrow the pool of acceptable candidates, and you don't want to be one who is not scheduled for the in-person interview.

## Telephone Interview

The interviewer hopes they will catch you off guard with their initial call. Employers typically phone in the evenings or on weekends. I've personally conducted a lot of these for employers and I'm amazed at how many people say it is okay to talk when there is obviously TV, loud children, and other distracting events going on around them.

Preparation is the key to success. Remember that if you don't pass this screening, you're sunk.

When you get this type of call, tell the person you are just finishing something and ask if you can call them back in ten minutes. Then prepare yourself. Find a quiet spot, get your resume out and think about the questions the interviewer will ask. The employer's objective is to clarify experience and salary expectations. Mentally rehearse your answers. Have a pen and paper in front of you. Jot down the caller's name and take notes as they ask you questions. Smile, so your voice sounds friendly.

The interviewer's job is to validate an applicant's background (after all, too many people lie on the resume). Employers need to hear that you have the experience needed to do the job. Demonstrate that you do with answers that offer examples of your past performance, and that reiterate your top strengths and key selling points. Be concise -- keep answers less than 60 seconds and, above all, sound interested and enthusiastic about the job. The worst thing you can do is to sound monotonically robotic, uninterested, and dull. This can happen unconsciously if you get nervous, so actively work to sound self-assured and enthused.

The screening interview seeks to weed out the unqualified and overpriced. The disadvantage here is that the human resource person often is not specifically familiar with all the details of the job. They are generalists and seek to validate job experience, not job potential. Be sure to structure answers to demonstrate how you have done the work in the past and how you focus on self-improvement and making contributions to your employer. To move to the next level you must convince this person that you CAN do the job.

## One Major Caution

Be ready for any salary questions. These are tricky. Revealing your financial desires can be used as a measuring stick to screen you out because they can clue the interviewer to your "real" skill level. It's always best to avoid answering any questions on salary until you have been offered the job. If questioned, respond to the interviewer by inquiring, "What is the range this job pays?"

Keep this adage in mind: Whoever mentions money first loses. Don't let it be you.

# Interviewing Job Fairs

From: Monster Technology, Job Fair Success by Kim Isaacs

Attending job fairs is one way to network and find job leads. Job fairs allow you to meet hiring managers from various companies and industries — all housed under one roof for the day. These tips will help you make the best impression, but be aware; you may only get about one minute.

## Research Job Fair Companies

"When meeting candidates, I like to see that they've done their research," says Louis Dennis, a HR representative, who uses job fairs to recruit. "Folks who can sit down with me already knowing something about the company and what they're interested in are very impressive to me."

It's usually possible to obtain a list of employers participating in a job fair. The best-prepared candidates will have spent time researching corporate cultures, missions and open jobs posted on employer Web sites. "If someone can say to me, 'I'm interested in underwriting or claims' and can back up why they're a good fit, I'm immediately going to be impressed," Dennis says.

## Develop Multiple Versions of Your Resume

After you've done your homework, tailor your resumes based on your job objective, and consider multiple versions for the job fair, says Christina MacGill, of Pennsylvania State University.

"Once candidates have done their research on participating companies, they can create a few different resumes targeting these," MacGill advises. "For example, someone ... can research typical job titles and types of responsibilities and then create different versions accordingly."

You should also prepare a general resume without a specific objective. "That way, candidates can be prepared for any situation at a job fair by keeping their options open." MacGill says.

## Cut Through The Clutter

Job Fair resumes must be short. "... at a job fair, where the line can

get eight to-10 deep of people waiting to talk to you, I cringe when I see a resume that's more than a page and a half long,"

"If the resume is cluttered and not easy to read, this is a problem," says MacGill, who coordinates career fairs at Penn State. "Employers get so many resumes at career fairs, and you've got to make sure your resume is easy on the eye, with the main information easy to pick up and quickly scan."

## Bring Supporting Documents

Additional documents that could help support your qualifications will depend on your industry and career goals, but they may include a cover letter, professional portfolio, transcripts (usually for new graduates), reference list, and letters of recommendation and job applications.

Use the information uncovered during your research to guide your cover letter development. You may have found names of HR managers, position openings and job requirements that will help you customize your letters. Write a cover letter to go along with each resume version. The letter should provide an overview of your qualifications that meet the goal the resume specifies.

Supporting documents aren't as important as your resume, and some hiring managers won't be interested in the extra paperwork. Dennis says cover letters aren't necessary at a job fair.

## Follow Up

Request a business card from each hiring manager, and jot down a few notes immediately after each conversation -- this will help refresh your memory when you follow up. Email or mail a thank-you note within 24 hours of the job fair. "When I've met someone promising, I'm looking for them to follow up," says Dennis. "If they do, that's a sign of serious interest." Emailing about once a month should suffice.