

The Interview

Follow-up with the interview before, during and afterward.



The Interview Process

Company Research

Researching each company you target is an important step in your job search process. The more familiar you are with the organization, the easier it will be for you to determine if this is a company for which you would like to work. In addition, familiarity with the company will allow you to ask pertinent questions during the interview. Your knowledge will reflect favorably on you as it demonstrates your genuine interest in the organization.

There are several sources available to obtain information about a company:

- City directories (*Greater Cincinnati Business and Industry Directory*)
- The company (you may call them and request literature)
- The public library
Newspapers

Articles from business periodicals
(*Cincinnati Business Record*)

Business directories (*Standard and Poor's Register*)

Corporate reports (Annual Report)

The Internet (www.companyname.com or [.org](http://www.companyname.org))

Consider these questions while doing research:

- Who are the company's major competitors?
- Is this a growing company? Are there plans for expansion?
- When was the company founded? By whom?
- Who are the key people in the organization? President? CEO?
- Where are the corporate headquarters?
- What kind of training do new employees receive?
- What is the retention rate of employees?

Know How to Communicate

One survey of employers estimated that over 90% of the people they interview cannot adequately define the skills they have to support their ability to do the job. They may have the necessary skills, but cannot communicate them.

The key to effective communication is knowing what you have to offer and being able to explain it. Practice.

Self-Evaluation

Answer these questions honestly:

- What are your accomplishments? (Have you received any scholarships, awards, etc.?)
- What kinds of skills have you developed? (communication, interpersonal, etc.)
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- Do you like to work as part of a team or independently?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How does your educational background/work experience fit your potential career?

Knowing how to communicate your skills to employers goes beyond knowing yourself. You must be able to give clear examples of your accomplishments, strengths, and skills.

Consider the following examples:

Interviewer: "What is your greatest strength?"

Applicant #1: "I am a quick learner."

Applicant #2: "I am a quick learner. My last job involved studying for and taking a national two-hour exam during the first week of employment. Because it involved a field of study that was new to me, it posed more of a challenge; however, I was able to pass the test on the first try."

Interviewer: "Why did you choose your field of study?"

Applicant #1: "Because I like to work with computers."

Applicant #2: "During my senior year of high school, I took my first computer programming class. Apart from doing well academically, I realized that I looked forward to attending class. I enjoyed the challenge. When it came time to choose a college major, the decision was easy for me."

Which applicant would you hire?

Appearance and Preparation

Your appearance plays a vital role in the interviewing process. Your clothes, posture, voice, and personality are being evaluated and play a part in a successful interview. Some important things to remember:

Dress professionally.

- A navy, gray, or black business suit is best. If you are applying for a less professional or part-time job, dress a level up from how you will dress on the job. A skirt and blouse for women and dress pants, shirt, and tie for men would be acceptable. NEVER wear jeans!
- Pay attention to details -- no sloppy manicures, scuffed shoes, stained suits or missing buttons. Keep jewelry simple and minimal. Shave or trim facial hair.
- Cover tattoos.
- Avoid wearing cologne.
- Make sure your hair is neatly combed and in place.

“Knowing how to communicate your skills to employers goes beyond knowing yourself.”

Carry extra copies of your resume and a list of references in a personal folder or briefcase. Also, bring a pen and paper in case you need to jot down any special information.

Practice good posture.

- Sit up straight, leaning slightly forward.
- Keep your head up.
- Maintain good eye contact but do not stare.

Practice answering questions before the interview; concentrate on your voice.

- Speak clearly and with some volume.
- Don't say "um," "uh," or clear your throat continually.
- Don't speak in a monotone voice; show enthusiasm.

Practice your handshake; make it firm but not too tight or too limp.

33%

...of bosses claimed that they know within the first **90 seconds** of an interview whether **they will hire someone** for the position.

40 min

The average length of an interview.

67%

...of interviewers say the most common nonverbal mistake made at a job interview is **failure to make eye contact.**

** Information based on a survey made by classes and careers with over 2000 employers.*

The Interview

Arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview. This will ensure punctuality and will give you time to compose yourself. Use the restroom if there is one available to make a final appearance check. Turn off cell phone or put it on silent.

Locate the area in which the interview will take place 5 to 10 minutes before your scheduled appointment. While waiting for the interview, be cordial to the receptionist and all others you come in contact with. They may be asked for their impressions of the candidates.



The Interview Structure

Don't think of the interview as an interrogation. It is an interaction where both the interviewer and you are trying to determine whether you meet each other's needs.

The Appraisal

During this phase, the interviewer will make his/her first judgment about you. Your general appearance, voice, and mannerisms are observed. The first questions the interviewer will ask ("Did you have trouble finding a place to park?" "Is it still raining outside?") are designed to put you at ease and to evaluate your facility for ordinary conversation. Research shows that interviewers make their decisions about applicants within the first ten minutes of the interview, so first impressions are important.

“Attitude is very important. Let your enthusiasm for the job come through; in other words, project that you really want to be there.”

Information/Probe

There are a variety of types of questions: education, experience, opinion, behavioral, and competency. They are designed to test your training, philosophy, and experience. The interviewer wants you to explore how your background will fit the needs of the organization. You must try to sell yourself. There may be several interviewers in the room. Make eye contact and use names frequently to help you remember them.

Action

If you have made a favorable impression, the recruiter may "sell the job." If you are borderline or less, he/she will probably discourage further interest.

Closing

In this phase, the interviewer will tell you what the next step will be (i.e. when you can expect to hear from the company). If he/she does not disclose the next step, it is appropriate to ask when you can expect to be contacted. Thank the interviewer for his/her time before leaving and ask for a business card to use in following up. End the interview with enthusiasm. The final impression you must leave with the employer is that you are interested in the position. The interview isn't over until you leave the building. Don't immediately get on your cell phone or chew gum.

“There are a variety of types of questions... The interviewer wants you to explore how your background will fit the needs of the organization.”



Be a Star in your Interview!

The key to a good interview is being concise, complete, and succinct in answering your interview questions. The use of examples can really prove to an employer that you are the right fit for the job. Use the STAR framework to develop your examples in an easy format:

Situation: Describe the situation

Task: What was the task?

Action: What action did you take?

Results: What was the end result of your action?

Situation: Describe the situation that you faced.

Class project, student activity, sophomore year, job, etc.

Example: As a member of the Student Alumni Board...

Task: Goal, problem to be solved, improvement to be made.

Let the behavioral interview question lead this; "Tell me about a time when you solved a problem, resolved a conflict with a co-worker, worked with a difficult customer, etc."

Example: I suggested establishing a mentoring program for students on campus interested in working in fields where our alumni were employed.

Action: Planning and implementation to reach a goal or solve a problem.

Describe what YOU did, not the efforts of the team.

Example: I approached the Communications Committee and presented my idea to the group, and it was accepted. I managed the relationship with the Alumni Office and developed a procedure to recruit alumni and students for this opportunity.

Result: Outcome, influences, changes, etc.

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? Learn?

Example: The program began during the fall of my junior year and in its first year, we had 35 students and alumni paired up. The second year, we grew the program to 67 students and instituted a banquet celebrating new-found relationships.

The Interview Questions

Possible Interview Questions

“Tell me about yourself.”

“How would you describe your ideal job?”

“What are your strengths/weaknesses?”

“How would your professors and/or former employers describe you?”

“What interests you about this position?”

“What would you like to be doing five years from now?”

“Tell me about the best boss you had; the worst.”

“What did you like/dislike about your last job? Why did you leave?”

“Why should I hire you?”

“What do you know about this company? Why do you want to work here?”

“What courses in school did you like best? Least?”

“Do you think your grades are a good indicator of your college achievement?”

“What would you consider to be your most outstanding achievement?”

Behavior-based “Tell me about a time when you...”

...worked effectively under pressure.

...handled a stressful situation.

...were particularly creative in solving a problem.

...set a goal for yourself and how you accomplished it.

...found an error in your work. How did it happen? What did you do about it?”

Behavior-based “Describe a situation where...”

...your work or idea was criticized. How did you react?

...your organizational skills saved the day.

...things didn't turn out as planned. What was the final outcome?

...someone on your team wasn't pulling his/her weight on a project. How did you handle meeting the deadline?

...you had to make a difficult decision.

Sample Questions to ask an Interviewer

Whether your interview is via phone, Skype, or in person, you should ask two or three questions at the end to show your continued interest in the position.

“What are some of the most important functions?”

“To whom will I report? Will I have a chance to meet this person?”

“Are employees given an opportunity for continuing education or job training?”

“What are your expectations of the person who is hired for this job?”

“What are the two or three most important characteristics you are looking for in a candidate to satisfy this position?”

“What are the future goals of the company?”

“Is there a chance I will be asked to relocate or travel?”

“What challenges do you anticipate this person facing?”

“Why is this position vacant? (If a result of termination, ask why a person was terminated.)”

“How would most employees describe this company/organization?”

“What are some of the common characteristics of employees that excel in this environment?”

“How regularly do performance evaluations occur? What model is followed?”

“How would you advise someone to start off on the right foot in this organization?”

“When do you plan to make a decision?”

After the Interview

Thank you letter

Send a thank you letter within 24 hours of the interview. This reinforces how serious and enthusiastic you are about the position. In fact, send one even if you already know you don't want the job; it's a business courtesy to do so. Sending an email note is advisable, but following up with a handwritten note demonstrates further initiative. The tone of this letter should be friendly but business-like.*

Opening paragraph

Thank the interviewer again and emphasize your interest in the position.

Second paragraph

Remind the interviewer why you are a good candidate for this position. Try to remember something specific in the interview (ex. you may have mentioned that you spent one summer at a resort as the manager of a gift shop and gained valuable experience for the management level position for which you are applying).

Closing paragraph

Again, thank the interviewer and state that you look forward to hearing from him/her soon.

**If there was more than one interviewer, it would be best to send a thank you note to each person.*

Contemplating the offer

How to respond to a job offer:

- Express enthusiasm at being chosen.
- Ask for time to think it over (at least 24 hours). Never accept a job on the spot.
- Ask for details: compensation, insurance, paid vacations, etc. to be given to you in writing.

- Evaluate the offer for both personal and professional reasons:

Look at salary and total compensation.

Does the job fit in with your long-term career goals?

What, if anything, are you giving up to take this job?

How many hours will you be working? Does it allow you to take the personal time you need?

- Accept the offer and start negotiating salary or decline the offer.

“Sending an email note is advisable, but following up with a handwritten note demonstrates further initiative.”

How to bounce back from rejection

- Don't be devastated by an interview that does not go well or by one that goes well but does not produce a job offer. This happens to everyone and for all kinds of reasons.
- Call the interviewer and ask for some feedback. Be polite and maintain a professional demeanor. Don't defend yourself when asking for feedback.
- Use this feedback to prepare for your next interview.
- Tell the interviewer that if the chosen candidate does not work out, you would be interested in talking with him/her again about the position.

“Don't be devastated by an interview... Use this feedback to prepare for your next interview.”



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