

# **TIPS TO HELP YOU PREPARE**

## **FOR A SUCCESSFUL JOB INTERVIEW**

Being granted an interview is in itself a compliment. It suggests that something about your letter of inquiry, resume, telephone call or application caught someone's attention and made you sound like a person worth talking to.

But getting an interview is not the same as getting the job. Many promising candidates have doomed themselves to failure because their face-to-face meeting with a hiring person was not as effective as it might have been.

Since an interview is so very important, you as a job hunter can expect to be nervous. That is only natural. However, careful preparation can help you feel confident of making the best possible impression.

### **PREPARATION**

1. Research the company. Learn something about the employer's business, the company's history, its reputation, products and services, and location(s).

Be prepared to explain your interest in the company to the interviewer. Be prepared to ask at least three good questions concerning the company, its organizations, products or services, or policies.

2. Review your own background in terms of interests, education, experience, and goals.

(See WC86: QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED BY INTERVIEWERS.)

3. Find out where the company's personnel office is located, and be sure to give yourself enough time so that you will arrive at the interview a few minutes early.
4. Look your best. Since you are trying to sell yourself, you should make the best possible impression. Be well-groomed, and wear "business attire." This means tailored clothing—suits or sports coat and slacks for men and suits, matching separates, or plain dresses for women.

**EXCEPTION:** If the job you are seeking involves heavy physical labor or warehouse work, clean khakis or jeans might be more appropriate. For any kind of job interview, do not overdress.

5. Gather the material you will need to complete the company's job application. This includes a record of the dates relating your employment experience and the names of persons who supervised your work; a record of the dates relating to your school experience; and a list of available references including accurate addresses and telephone numbers.

**NOTE:** Professional courtesy requires that you obtain permission to use a person's name as a reference if the person was not an employer.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

Employers are looking for candidates with good personality, self-confidence, well-defined career goals, and the ability to contribute to the company. Educational background, extracurricular activities, related work/volunteer experience, demonstrated ability to handle responsibility or to provide leadership all help convince a potential employer that a candidate is the best person for the job.

1. Be alert and friendly. A passive, indifferent attitude may be interpreted as lack of interest or enthusiasm for the position and/or company.
2. Greet your interviewer with confidence and poise. Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer to indicate a candid, straightforward attitude.
3. Give your interviewer your full attention. Note his name and title and remember them for future reference.
4. Be businesslike in your behavior. Your interviewer will likely use some "small talk" to establish rapport and a pleasant atmosphere. However, your main purpose is to discuss the company and the possibility of employment. Since time for individual interviews is usually limited, remember to stick to the business at hand as much as possible.
5. Let the interviewer direct the conversation, but be prepared to add information on your own initiative.
6. Ask questions about the company and the job to help you evaluate the organizational environment in relation to your needs, aspirations, and aptitudes.
7. Be courteous. This includes expressing appreciation for the opportunity to interview for the position and to learn more about the company from the interviewer.
8. If the interviewer tells you he cannot make a decision immediately, ask him for an indication of how soon he will know. Then ask permission to call back for information if you have not heard from him by the time indicated.

## **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

The few days following an open-ended interview are perhaps the longest in a job seeker's life! Even if the meeting went well, you must remember that there were other candidates who were also interviewing for the position that you want, and the interviewer must try to make the choice that is best for the company.

1. Write a thank-you note to the interviewer. This is where the interviewer's name and title are important to you. Address a brief note to the person with whom you talked thanking him for the opportunity of discussing the job opening with him. Conclude with your desire to hear from him "soon," or promise to telephone him by a certain date. Type the note on plain paper or personalized stationary.

**NOTE:** Some communicators believe that a handwritten note is warmer and therefore more effective. You might consider writing if your handwriting is acceptable.

2. If you have not heard from your interview within the time indicated, telephone the person with whom you talked and ask if a decision has been made. This step is difficult for many people who feel that they may be "pests" if they pursue the job-seeking process beyond the interview. But if several candidates appear to be equally impressive, often it is the initiative shown by the "second-contact" person that helps weigh the balance in one person's favor.

### **HAPPY HUNTING!**

If you spend some time reviewing these suggestions, you should be well equipped to do a successful "sales presentation" with yourself as the available product. But if the first interview does not make you more adept at handling the questions that are part of the interviewing process. And one of these days you'll find yourself landing a job.