

Interviewing for Success

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Introduction

If you're like most of us, the thought of going on a job interview is enough to make you break out in a mild sweat. Employment interviewing can be an intimidating experience if you don't know what to expect. Preparation is the key to reducing anxiety, so don't take the "wing it" approach or you'll be sweating through a lot more interviews.

A job search is analogous to a sales campaign and an employment interview is the time to make your sales pitch! Think of yourself as the product and be prepared to be a sales expert. What distinguishes you from the competition? Why should the employer hire you? What do you have to offer that's different from the other candidates? By knowing your "product" inside and out, you'll be able to convince an employer to hire you and overcome objections skillfully.

The interview is a two-way process: you are there to present your information in an honest, straightforward manner and to evaluate potential job opportunities. The employer is assessing you as a candidate, trying to predict future performance, in addition to "selling" you on their organization and job opportunity. You are both on a fact finding mission, and you both play two roles: as participant and observer.

What are employers looking for in an interview? They are evaluating candidates on many different criteria: tangible and intangible. Technical knowledge and ability, past performance, successes and accomplishments, problem solving and creative talents are all tangible evidence. Personal qualities, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, self-confidence, interpersonal skills and enthusiasm are all more subjective. Interviewers are trying to determine basically three major points: 1) Do you have the skills/background to do the job? 2) Are you willing to do the job? 3) Will you fit into the organizational culture?

With all this in mind, we strongly urge you to use this guide and follow the Boy Scout motto "Be Prepared!" Successful interviewing is a skill one can develop through preparation and practice!

Good Luck!!

Preparation...Analyze Yourself and the Position

Before you can successfully “sell” yourself to a potential employer, you must do a thorough self-assessment. You need to identify your skills and what you have to offer before you can convince someone that you are the ideal candidate.

Review the list of skills and personal characteristics on the next two pages and highlight those which apply to you. Complete the statements on page 5 to help you organize your thoughts. When doing your skills analysis focus on:

Work Content Skills – those which relate specifically to being able to do a certain job. These skills are gained through work, education, and personal experience.

Self-Management Skills – those personal characteristics related to your personality and to how you work within an organization or perform tasks.

Transferable Skills – those general skills that can be applied to a wide variety of settings and have been developed naturally or through education, training and experience.

Keep the following in mind as you analyze yourself and the position.

- Take time to identify your skills, strengths, and past experiences as they relate to the position you are seeking.
- Try to get a detailed job description. If one is not available, research similar positions or speak with a career counselor to help you find more information.
- Reflect back on your activities, accomplishments and achievements. Think about the skills you used in these activities/accomplishments as they relate to each job description.
- Identify what makes you stand apart from the competition!
- Evaluate your educational experience and what skills you’ve developed as a student.
- Use the following personal characteristics and action verb list to help you think about yourself. How would you describe yourself? What skill/functional areas are your strongest? How do they relate to the position you are seeking?

Top Ten Qualities Employers Seek in Job Candidates

Communication	Teamwork	Technical
Work Experience	Leadership	Interpersonal
Motivation/Initiative	Academic Record	Analytical
Honesty/Integrity/Ethics		

Preparation...Personal Characteristics & Skill/Function Verbs

The following word lists are extremely helpful when thinking about what you have to offer an employer. Skill/Function verbs can describe your work experience as well as communicate your transferable skills and strengths. Personal characteristics can help you describe qualities necessary for performance.

Personal Characteristics

accurate	exceptional	quick
active listener	flexible	reliable
adept	goal oriented	responsive
anticipatory	good listener	responsible
aware	humorous	respectful
creative	initiative	successful
competent	innovative	sensitive
decisive	instrumental	strong
dedicated	independent	sophisticated
deft	integrity	self-motivated
dependable	leader	self-confident
diplomatic	motivated	tactful
discreet	objective	team player
driven	optimistic	trained
dynamic	perceptive	unique
effective	planner	versatile
empathic	problem solver	willing

Skills/Function Verbs

Communication/Public Relations

explain	summarize
listen	edit
persuade	demonstrate
sell	make public presentations
speak	converse
teach	read
write	define
use humor	group facilitation

Organization/Management

set priorities	implement
plan, forecast	manage
prepare	coordinate
time management	establish procedures
budget	design
organize	develop

Leadership

decide	confront
delegate	facilitate
initiate	redesign
supervise	reengineer
motivate	mediate
persuade	resolve
debate	influence
collaborate	

Interpersonal/Human Relations

active listening	counsel
cooperate	advocate
interview	empathize
negotiate	communicate
care for	provide

Problem Solving/Analytical

compile	reason
investigate	abstract
observe	evaluate
research	reflect
locate	sense
assess	ask
trouble shooting	question
obtain	analyze
review	clarify
	diagnose

Teaching/Creating

entertain	illustrate
create	encourage
design	enable
display	tutor
innovate	facilitate
train	dramatize

Maintenance/Data Management

compile	allocate
budget	bid
develop reports	estimate
compute	project
organize records	attend to detail
reconcile	cost analysis
systematize	account
calculate	forecast
record keeping	meet deadlines

Preparation... Writing about Strengths

Complete the following questions to organize your thoughts.

My top three skill/function areas are:

I can demonstrate these skills with these three examples:

My top three personal qualities are:

These three examples show how I've demonstrated them.

Preparation...Types of Interviews

There are several different types and formats of interviews you may encounter during your job search. You may find that several aspects of these interviews are combined.

You may first encounter a “screening” interview where you meet with a human resource professional to determine if you meet the basic qualifications and could be recommended for an interview with a hiring manager. Most campus interviews are screening interviews. While a one-on-one interview is the most common, you may encounter a panel or group interview where there are two or more interviewers. Be sure to maintain eye contact with each person and address them by name. Try to address all interviewers as you ask and answer questions.

Telephone Interviews have also become more common as a screening tool. Be sure to pay attention to your verbal communication and have your resume at hand. If possible, schedule the conversation at a convenient time and in a quiet location. Be aware that any communication with a potential employer is being evaluated.

There are 5 Basic Styles of interviews: **Structured/Traditional, Behavioral, Non-Directive, Stress, and Case.**

- **The Structured/Traditional** interview is the most common. The discussion is generally directed by the interviewer, with a question and answer format similar to the outline on page 20. The interviewer speaks approximately 25% of the time.
- **Behavioral Interviewing** has become very popular. This approach is built on the premise that past behavior will likely predict future behavior. Questions are targeted to reveal details of past performance with specific examples. The line of questioning probes your approach to situations and the results of your efforts. Employers are generally looking for critical areas such as problem solving, decision making and leadership. The STAR technique is the key to answering Behavioral type questions. Refer to page 16 for an explanation of the STAR format and page 18 for a list of Behavioral Questions.
- **The Non-Directive** interview is very unstructured and more like a conversation where the interviewer is less likely to ask specific questions. The interviewer asks open ended questions like “tell me about yourself” and expects the candidate to direct most of the conversation. This type of interview clearly illustrates how well you prepared for the interview as you have the floor for 75% of the time.
- **The High Stress** interview is designed to see how well you handle stress, your confidence level, and how composed you remain in a tense situation. While this is not a very common interview style, you may encounter some aggressive interviewers.
- **Case Style** interviewing is now commonly used by management consulting firms, particularly at the graduate level. In this method, an employer presents a fictional business problem and expects a response that shows your thought process. You will be evaluated on your ability to analyze, formulate and present a business plan.

Preparation...The Campus Interview

Campus Recruiting at Pace takes place twice a year; in the Fall and in the Spring, for graduating students. Many companies send their representatives annually to interview candidates of all majors for projected positions.

What To Expect

Many companies hold “Information Sessions” the night before interviewing. Be sure to attend as it will enhance your interview and increase your chances for a job offer. If no Information Session is held by the company, be sure to research the company and the industry (see page 12). Typically, on the day of the campus interview, you should arrive at the Career Services office 10 minutes prior to your scheduled interview. You should check with a secretary and then be directed to a waiting area where you sign in. Other students might be waiting in the room as well as representatives from the interviewing companies. These employee representatives who are called “Greeters” or “Warm Up People,” might be recent Pace Alums currently working for that company. Their role is to make you feel at ease and answer any preliminary questions. Be friendly and always maintain a poised, professional demeanor (even if you know them personally!).

The interviewer will come to the waiting area to meet you and escort you to the assigned interview room. While walking to the room expect to engage in some informal conversation (some topics might be: the weather, a current event, sports, the campus). The interview itself can last approximately 20-30 minutes and is usually with a Human Resource Representative or an actual Department/Division Representative. Try to get a more detailed description of the job during the interview and as much information about the organization as possible. Make sure you ask for the interviewer’s business card before you leave the room.

Application Forms

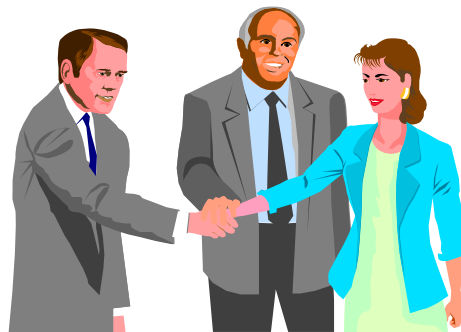
You might be asked to complete an employment application form prior to or at the interview. Ask Career Services if there is an application form to fill out for any company you have been selected to interview with and allow plenty of time to complete it (see the sample application on page 10). Keep these tips in mind when completing an application.

- Be Careful* Follow instructions carefully to convey the message that you would behave as carefully as an employee. Your application may be viewed as a sample of your work.
- Be Neat* Print or write clearly using a blue or black pen.
- Be Prepared* Fill out a sample application form ahead of time to bring with you for use in filling out any subsequent forms.
- Be Complete* Answer every question. If a question does not apply write “Does Not Apply”. If you want to discuss at the interview write “Will Discuss at Interview”. Remember you do not have to answer any illegal questions (see page 22).

- Be Correct* Pay attention to your spelling, grammar and punctuation. Proofread your application.
- Be Accurate* Make sure all information is correct. Check employment dates, telephone numbers and addresses for accuracy.
- Be Truthful* Never exaggerate or lie about information on an application form.
- Be Prudent* Be sure to contact references listed ahead of time in order to enlist them in your job search efforts.

Interview Feedback

After you have had two campus interviews you may ask a Career Counselor to review the Interview Feedback Forms that are completed by the campus interviewers. These forms are useful to evaluate your performance at the interview and to focus on areas that may need improvement (see sample on next page).



Preparation...*Finding Information on the Internet*

One of the quickest and most effective ways to research companies, organizations, or industries is via the **INTERNET**. Many companies have a home page that you can locate easily if you know the Internet address (URL). You may ask the company for its web site address or try using the company name to get into the home page directly:

www. (insert company name).com/org

- Keep in mind that a home page is designed by the company and will only tell you what the company wants you to know.
- You may also use a search engine such as **Yahoo, Alta Vista, Lycos, Excite or Web Crawler** to locate company or industry information. While you may access a lot of information this way, use key words to narrow down your search so it will be manageable.

Pace students may access many of these sites and others directly through the **Co-op & Career Services Pace Home Page at:**

www.pace.edu/COOPCS

- Select “Co-op & Career Services”
- Click on “Employer Web Sites” to link directly to the home pages of hundreds of organizations that use Pace Co-op/Career Services (alphabetical listing by company name).

OR

Select “Job Search Resources” and click on “Researching Companies” for links to several sites that contain company information.

You may also access the Pace Library by selecting “Libraries” while you’re in the Pace Home Page or you may go there directly:

http://library.pace.edu

Once you are in the Pace Library site:

- Select “**Databases.**” This will provide you with an option to either choose a database or a subject area. Some electronic databases have remote access and others may be used only in the library.
- Check out: **General Business File, Disclosure, ABI-Inform, American Business Disc, Worldscope**, and other databases according to interest.
- Select “**Internet Resources**” and choose subject area “Company/Industry”. This will link you to companies on the web, annual reports, industry/trade associations and journals, and tools for company/industry research.

Preparation...Researching a Potential Employer

Researching a potential employer is a crucial step in the interview process. Interviewers commonly ask “What do you know about our company?” or “Why are you interested in working for us?” If you possess little knowledge of the organization, you’ll come across as a weak candidate.

Be warned: Don’t try to research an organization the day before an interview!! While the world wide web has revolutionized the information gathering process, you may need to dig further. Don’t put this off, begin as soon as you find out you have an interview.

Why Research the Employer?

- To gain an idea of products and services, size of company, locations and annual sales.
- To understand their philosophy, organizational structure, competition, type of training programs, and potential growth and recent developments.
- To be able to formulate questions based on your research.
- To impress the interviewer with your sincere interest in the company.

Where Can I Find Information?

- Annual reports (for publicly held companies) available in the Career Resource Centers or contact the company directly.
- Employment Brochures
- Directories (Moody’s, Standard & Poors, Dunn & Bradstreet, etc.) in the reference section of the Pace or Public Library.
- Periodicals/Newspapers – look for current articles in the NY Times, Wall St. Journal, Forbes, etc.
- Ask a reference librarian to assist you!
- The Internet (see instructions on page 11)

How Can I Use the Information During the Interview?

Being informed about an employer does not mean you’ll ace an interview unless you can successfully use the information to ask pertinent, intelligent questions. Artfully weaving the information into the interview is a skill you need to develop and practice. Merely spouting facts about the company will not impress an interviewer.

Using information you have gathered to answer questions should be done with subtlety. If you know the company is international, you could say that you feel comfortable communicating in a second language. If you know the employer wants to expand its market share, stress how you increased sales or fundraising activities.

Use the information to also ask questions and expand on what you’ve read. For example, if you’ve read in their literature that after 6-12 months promotions are made based on “demonstrated ability,” you could ask the interviewer to expand on methods used to evaluate employees or what would distinguish top employees during that time period.

Preparation...Your Wardrobe and Grooming

Initial impressions count, so be sure to have interview attire that is professional and comfortable! Quality clothing along with an appropriate, neat hairstyle will combine to make a professional image. Dressing like you already have the job is demonstration of self-confidence.

IMAGE TIPS FOR WOMEN

- ➔ **SUIT OR DRESS:** A conservative colored suit is always appropriate, but a tailored dress may also be worn. Avoid floral prints. The skirt should be around the knee with no high slit. Be sure that the skirt is not too tight and that you are comfortable sitting down in it. Today, many professional women wear pant suits but we advise against it on the first interview.
- ➔ **BLOUSE:** A business-like blouse that looks neat under the suit and is flattering. White or pastels are always good but a different color is also acceptable if it is professional. Make sure that it is freshly pressed and has a conservative neckline.
- ➔ **SHOES:** Mid-heel pumps in black, brown or navy. Don't wear light color shoes, sandals, or very high or narrow heels. Make sure that your shoes are well polished and in good repair.
- ➔ **HOSE:** Neutral color hose is always safe, but hose that blends with the hemline is also acceptable. No textures, patterns or opaques. Carry an extra pair of hose in a briefcase or pocketbook in case you spring a run on the way to the interview.
- ➔ **ACCESSORIES:** Conservative jewelry and simple style earrings, avoiding big hoops and bangles. Your pocketbook should be leather and in good condition. You may want to use a professional looking briefcase instead of a pocketbook and carry a smart looking portfolio in which you will keep extra copies of your resume, a note pad and a business-like pen. If you smoke, do not have cigarettes visible in your briefcase or pocketbook.
- ➔ **GROOMING:** Fingernails clean and not too long. Polish is fine as long as it is conservative. Hair clean and well groomed. Make-up should be natural and conservative especially with eye shadow and liner. Do not wear a heavy cologne. Make sure that your clothes are spotless. Check for lint and dandruff before your interview. Avoid strong smelling foods and freshen your breath before your interview. Do not smoke for several hours prior to the interview if possible.



Preparation...*Your Wardrobe and Grooming*

IMAGE TIPS FOR MEN

- ➔ **SUIT:** Single breasted suit of gray, black, navy or pinstripe. Fabric should be wool or wool blend. Sleeves should end at wrist bone.
- ➔ **SHIRT:** Long sleeved, button down or spread collar of white or light blue. Collar should fit perfectly and one inch of cuff should show beyond suit. Fabric should be cotton or cotton blend and should be well ironed.
- ➔ **TIES:** Conservative stripe or small pattern preferably of silk. No bright colors.
- ➔ **SHOES:** Laced oxfords black, brown or cordovan. Tassel slip-ons are acceptable. Make sure your shoes are shined and in good repair!
- ➔ **SOCKS:** Solid and dark to match the shoes and high enough to cover the calf.
- ➔ **ACCESSORIES:** The only jewelry that should be worn is a conservative watch and perhaps a conservative ring if that is what is usually worn. A good leather belt to match your shoes or you could wear suspenders, but not both. Carry a professional looking portfolio in which you can keep extra resumes and a note pad. Buy a professional looking pen. If you smoke, do not have cigarettes visible in your pocket or portfolio.
- ➔ **GROOMING:** Make sure your hair is neat, your nails are clean and everything is polished and professional. Make sure that your clothes are spotless. Check for lint and dandruff before your interview. Avoid strong smelling foods and freshen your breath before an interview. Do not wear strong smelling after shave or cologne. Avoid smoking for several hours prior to the interview, if possible.



Practice...Interview Techniques

Once you've outlined what it is you wish to convey to potential employers during an interview and stories you wish to tell, you need to practice. Find a friend, stand in front of a mirror, work with a Career Counselor and attend an Interviewing Workshop sponsored by Career Services. Practice what you want to say and how you want to say it. Your answers should communicate strengths, purpose and enthusiasm. Have a plan to cover major points about your:

◆EDUCATION◆WORK EXPERIENCE◆ACCOMPLISHMENTS◆ACTIVITIES◆GOALS

Be prepared to cover all these topics during the interview!

Practice Your Communication Skills

- ◆ Check your tone of voice.
- ◆ Avoid “um” and “uh” and phrases like “okay” and “you know”.
- ◆ Use correct grammar and a strong vocabulary.
- ◆ Check your non-verbal communication: posture, facial expressions, eye contact and nervous mannerisms.

Practice Talking About Yourself

- ◆ Get comfortable with you as the main topic! For some people who are naturally shy or less inclined to talk about themselves, this will take practice. But, if you don't sell yourself – who will? Stating the facts is not boasting!
- ◆ Practice stating your selling points, with emphasis and enthusiasm.
- ◆ Practice relaxation techniques.

Practice Interviewing Techniques

- ◆ Practice the STAR method outlined on the next page.
- ◆ Practice restating complex questions and clarifying before answering.
- ◆ Practice pausing before answering.
- ◆ Practice answers to questions on the following pages and study questions you may want to ask.
- ◆ Practice emphasizing positive aspects of your experience. Learn how to avoid any negative comments.
- ◆ Practice overcoming objections and anticipating concerns the employer may have about your qualifications.
- ◆ Set up a mock interview with a Career Services Counselor. Have it videotaped and play it back to analyze.

Practice...Forming Answers to Questions

You may encounter various types of questions in a job interview, but all of them are geared toward getting to know you and understanding your knowledge and experience as it relates to the position. Carefully outline what you want employers to know about you, then prepare stories based on the following format called the **STAR** method!

STAR stands for: **ST** (situation/task)

A (action – what you did!)

R (results – the outcome of your effort!)

An example of how to use the STAR method:

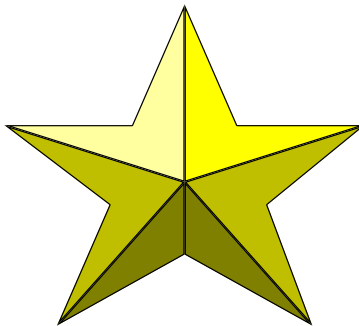
QUESTION: “Give me an example of how you utilized your organizational skills.”

ST (Situation) - This past semester I was involved in the Homecoming Weekend at Pace. My assignment was to publicize the event.

Action - I made a list of all the student organizations, newspapers and radio stations to contact and made all the calls to request publicity spots. I delegated the creation of posters and flyers to the art major on the committee.

Results - At the end of the weekend, we totaled a 65% increase in attendees from the previous year.

The STAR method proved goal setting and organizational skills through a concrete story. This approach can be used for all kinds of answers to interview questions. Practice creating STAR stories highlighting your transferable skills and using the sample questions on the next page.



Practice...*Commonly Asked Questions*

Practice answers to these commonly asked questions.

- ***Tell me about yourself.*** This is a very open ended question and you should use it to make a brief statement about your education and professional background, why you're interested in the position and how you are qualified for it.
- ***Why did you choose this major/career?*** Indicate a particular skill or interest. Tell a story about it.
- ***What courses/subjects did you like best or least?*** Talk about the courses in your major and the ones in which you performed best.
- ***What are your long and short term career goals?*** You need not be specific but you must show a knowledge of career paths and opportunities in the industry.
- ***What do you consider your greatest strength?*** Pick one that relates to the position and give an example using the STAR method.
- ***What do you consider your greatest weakness?*** Choose a weakness not related to the position, but indicate that you are working to strengthen it. Avoid personal weaknesses by focusing more on a technical skill or area of knowledge. You could also discuss a negative which the interviewer already knows or one which you have clearly improved upon and was a former weakness.
- ***What motivates you?*** Tell a story about your accomplishments and what was personally satisfying.
- ***Why should we hire you?*** Use this question to review the major key points of your interview outline. Stress your strengths.
- ***Why do you want to work for our company?*** Show your knowledge of the company, what you've learned at the interview and discuss your personal goals and values.
- ***What have been your most significant achievements?*** Tell a STAR story!
- ***What qualities do you possess that make you think you'd be successful in this job/industry?*** Use your research to back up the personal qualities that make you the best candidate.
- ***What do you do in your free time?*** Talk about a hobby, sport or special interest, but don't fake it.
- ***In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?*** Reiterate contributions made in the past and relate them to this organization.

Practice...Behavioral Questions

Practice answers to behavioral based questions. Remember, these are the questions looking for past behavior.

- *Describe a situation where you had to coordinate the activities of other people.*
- *Describe a time when you successfully balanced several competing priorities.*
- *Tell me about a time when you worked the hardest and had the greatest sense of achievement.*
- *How do you go about organizing your work and scheduling your time?*
- *Give me an example of a goal you set and how you achieved it.*
- *Describe a successful project you completed which required long hours.*
- *Describe a time when you had to work with someone who was uncooperative.*
- *What is the greatest decision you've had to make within the last 6 months?*
- *Describe a time when you had to adapt to a variety of people or situations.*
- *Give me an example of where you had difficulty in a course and what steps you took to remedy it.*
- *Give me an example of a time where you took on a leadership role.*
- *Tell me about a time you had to handle a difficult situation with a co-worker.*
- *What did you do in your last position to contribute toward team success?*

Answer all of these types of questions using the STAR method. Think back on your classroom, work and other experience to find examples demonstrating various skills. Remember to give factual responses that show results.

Practice...Asking Intelligent Questions

Interviewers expect candidates to ask questions. In fact, candidates who do not ask questions are often eliminated from consideration. Remember, you are evaluating the employer and need to have as much information as possible in order to make your decision. Make sure questions indicate that you have researched the company, the position and the industry. Be sure not to ask questions already explained by the interviewer, in company literature or at the information session. Here are twenty possible questions. Think about them and ask those that are appropriate.

- *Could you describe more fully the duties and responsibilities of the position?*
- *Is this a newly created position or are you filling a vacancy?*
- *How are new hires trained and developed?*
- *How many employees in the department and will I be working as part of a team?*
- *Who would be my immediate supervisor?*
- *What is the management style of the organization? The department? The supervisor?*
- *What new projects or initiatives are planned for the near future?*
- *What major projects could I expect within the first six months/year on the job?*
- *How would you describe the work environment?*
- *Could you describe the career paths of people in this job/department?*
- *What are the opportunities for advancement or professional growth?*
- *How and when will my performance be evaluated?*
- *What do you see as the strengths of the department/division?*
- *What are the priorities of the organization over the next year?*
- *What is the greatest challenge currently facing the department/organization?*
- *Could you describe a typical day for someone in this position?*
- *What does it take to be highly successful in this organization?*
- *What percentage of employees pursue advanced degrees?*
- *What skills are most valuable in performing this job?*
- *How are important decisions made in this department?*

At the Interview...*The Interview Format*

In reality, the interview process begins with the telephone! Your initial verbal communication will make a lasting impression, hopefully a positive one. Be sure to have a professional message on your answering machine and conduct all phone calls to set up appointments using a clear voice and giving the impression that you're an organized person!

There are five basic stages of all employment interviews. Awareness of these stages will enable you to prepare for the entire interview and know what to expect.

STAGE 1: ARRIVAL

Always arrive at the interview location 10-15 minutes early to allow time for you to relax and gather your thoughts. This time will enable you to observe the organization and lower your stress level. Greet the receptionist in a friendly manner and be aware that you might have been in the elevator with the person who is about to meet with you! Don't eat, smoke or chew gum while waiting and refuse a cup of coffee if offered one.

STAGE 2: BREAKING THE ICE

First impressions count and this is the moment you will be sized up. Your dress, confidence and communication skills will have an important initial impact on the interviewer. This is the time in which the interviewer is trying to establish rapport and put you at ease. A firm handshake is crucial. It says "I am confident and in control." Establish eye contact and smile.

Expect some "chit-chat" for a minute or so about the weather, directions, etc. Whatever you do, be positive!! Even if your car broke down and you got lost on the way, come across as relaxed and confident!

Be sure to use the interviewer's name and convey that you are very pleased to be there.

Assume and maintain a posture that shows energy, alertness and confidence. Be aware of your nervous habits and non-verbal communication signals. Be aware of facial gestures. Use them to show interest, head nodding to show understanding and voice inflections to show enthusiasm.

STAGE 3: INFORMATION EXCHANGE

This is the core of the interview where you will be asked questions designed to determine whether or not you possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively perform the job. It is your time to verbalize your ability to do the job by telling stories and giving examples of your qualifications using the STAR technique. All that you have practiced comes into play here. Offer examples and stories to illustrate points about your background.

STAGE 4: EXPANDING THE FOCUS

In this part of the interview you want to zero in on more detailed information about yourself and broaden your descriptions of how your experience can translate to their position. This is the “sales pitch” part of the interview where you focus on exactly what the employer has told you they are looking for, stressing your qualifications. You may show interest and enthusiasm for the position and start to get excited about the job! Make sure that your questions have been answered and try and bring back into discussion comments made by the interviewer earlier on. This shows you were truly listening and that you were able to remember the information.

STAGE 5: THE WRAP UP

This part of the interview allows you to ask additional questions and make your final comments about wanting the job. Emphatically state your interest, don't assume that the interviewer is aware of your enthusiasm. Ask about the next step in the interview process and the length of time before notification regarding decisions or second interviews. Thank the interviewer, shake hands and state that you enjoyed the meeting. Be sure to get a business card! Say a cheery goodbye to the secretary on your way out. The opinions of office staff are often valued in the assessment of candidates.



At the Interview...*Illegal Interview Questions*

At any point during the job search process you may be confronted with pre-employment questions you are not required to answer by law. **Keep in mind that all questions should be job-related, specifically in reference to how your qualifications relate to the job responsibilities.** Deciding how to respond to an illegal question is not easy and may depend on a variety of factors. In all cases, try to respond positively about your qualifications for the position!

Employers may not ask questions about:

- **Age**
How old are you? When were you born? When did you graduate from high school/college?
- **Marital Status**
Are you married?...Do you intend to get married soon? Do you have children? Are you a single parent?...Do you have reliable child care?...Are you pregnant? Do you plan on having children soon?...Can you travel?
- **Religious Preference**
What is your religious affiliation?...What church/synagogue etc. are you a member of?...What do you do on Sundays/Friday nights?...Is there any day of the week you are unable to work?...Are you a member of any religious group?
- **Ethnic Origin**
What country were you born in?...What's your nationality?...Where are your parents from?...What languages do your parents speak?...Are you bilingual? What language do you speak at home?...What is your racial/ethnic group?
- **Sexual Preference**
What's your sexual orientation?...Are you a member of any gay/lesbian groups?...Do you date members of the same or opposite sex?
- **Disability**
Do you have any disabilities?...What health problems do you have?...Have you ever been denied health insurance?...Do you take any prescription medication?...Are you physically fit?
- **Arrest Record**
Have you ever been arrested?...What kinds of law suits have you been involved in?...How many times were you arrested and for what?
- **Affiliations**
To what clubs or organizations do you belong?
- **Personal**
What is your maiden name?...How long have you lived at your current address?...How much do you weigh?...Would you submit a photograph?... Do you own a car, home, etc...? What is your credit history?

These are by no means all the questions you may encounter, but should give you a good idea of what might be considered discriminatory.

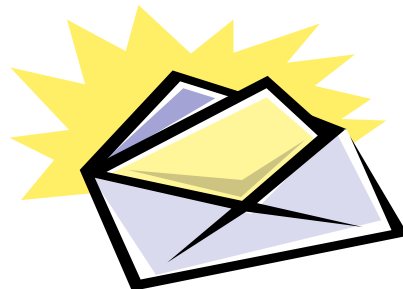
At the Interview...Tips for Success

Throughout all of the various stages of the interview itself there are several points to keep in mind and remember:

- Stay alert, focused and listen to what is being said to you. Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Maintain eye contact and try to smile.
- Avoid yes/no and brief answers.
- Don't be afraid to stop and think about an answer to a question. You may even paraphrase a question before answering. Employers will have an impression of you as a thoughtful individual, one who will think before acting!
- Interviewers don't expect you to have all the answers; it's okay to admit you don't know.
- Always remain positive, never volunteer negative information. Avoid negative words and phrases like "No, I haven't" or "No, I can't". Try to put all answers and statements in a positive form.
- Don't lapse into casual conversation or let your guard down. Remain professional and focused on your goal stressing your qualifications for the job!!
- Don't initiate the salary question and don't discuss it until you've proved your value as a candidate.
- Take some initiative during the interview, but do not try to control it. If the conversation starts to move away from the job itself, try to focus it back to you as a candidate.
- Employers want to hire people who are competent, bright, friendly, likable, enthusiastic, and honest. Try to project those qualities.
- Ask intelligent, well thought out questions showing you are serious about the job.
- Maintain a conversational flow with the interviewer by asking questions, probing and expanding the depth of the discussion. Build on areas of interest based on the interviewer's reactions.
- Include specific, quantifiable details in your examples and stories, repeating your strengths, skills and assets.
- Keep your answers concise and to the point. Don't ramble. Structure your answers using the STAR format (see page 16) always giving examples.

After the Interview...Recap and Follow Up

- **Analyze** your performance after each interview. Ask yourself: Was I prepared? Did I keep the interviewer's attention? Which questions gave me difficulty? Did I cover my outline of "selling points?" Did I learn enough about the job and employer? What areas do I need to better prepare for the next interview? Where could I have elaborated more? In addition, assess whether or not you would want the job. Ask yourself if there are any points you want to clarify. Think about what potential concerns the interviewer may have about you .
- Write a **letter** of appreciation within 24 hours. Be sure to reiterate your interest in the position. Make it as personal as possible so that the interviewer will remember you. Include any documents or information requested. Restate points which you may not have communicated effectively. If you interviewed with more than one person, write to each one. Request your thanks be conveyed to others involved in the interview process. The letter doesn't have to be long, but an immediate correspondence shows you are sincerely interested in the position. See sample on Page 25.
- **Review** the interview with a Career Counselor and discuss areas of concern. Practice interviewing or set up a mock interview for constructive feedback! Review feedback forms if part of Campus Recruiting.
- **Follow-up** with the employer if you have not heard within two weeks regarding your status as a candidate, unless you were given a specific time frame during the interview.
- If you **receive** a rejection letter, follow-up with a note expressing interest in future positions for which you may qualify. If you are comfortable, ask for feedback on your interview or why you were not selected as a candidate.



Sample Format...Thank You Letter

Date

Your Address
City, State, Zip Code

Name
Title
Organization
Street Address or P.O. Box #
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms.:

1st Paragraph: Thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration. You may also express how much you enjoyed the meeting and learning more of the position at his/her firm.

2nd Paragraph: Sum up some important qualifications you possess which make you a good candidate for the position. For example, "I believe my organizational abilities would make me particularly effective in this position." Be enthusiastic and sincere with your comments. The notes you jotted down after your interview will help you formulate comments for this second paragraph.

3rd Paragraph: Thank the employer once again for his/her interest in you as a candidate. You may also write something to the effect of "I look forward to learning of your decision" or "I am excited about the possibility of working for your organization."

Sincerely,

Your Name

Second Interviews

A second interview is usually held as part of the hiring process. This is a final step before a job offer or rejection. Since the first interview is generally a screening interview, you can expect that the second interview will be conducted by the supervisors for whom you will be working. The second interview is where jobs are won or lost!! Even though an invitation for a second interview is a positive reflection of your first interview, it is not a guarantee of a job offer.

Second interviews offer both parties a better chance to make informed choices. The employer can make a more in-depth analysis of you as a candidate, and you have a chance to see the work environment, meet staff members and gain useful insight into the company's culture.

What to Expect:

The interview day may include multiple interviews, information sessions, tours, meals and other activities. The actual interview may include some combination of one-on-one, behavior based and group interview formats. Be prepared to answer some questions repeatedly throughout the day.

The second interview is usually longer, sometimes lasting a half to a whole day and is conducted at the employer site. Your day could include a mealtime meeting. See the next page for tips on dining etiquette.

Before leaving, find out how long you can expect to wait before hearing about an employment decision. Don't be afraid to convey your enthusiasm about a job if you feel that there is a good fit and that you are eager to join their team. If you receive a verbal job offer at the end of your interview day, you may accept it or request a defined time frame in which to make a decision.

Words of Wisdom:

- No matter how relaxed you are, maintain your professional demeanor at all times.
- Take extra copies of your resume and your reference list with you. Be sure to obtain prior permission from those you list as references.
- Be ready to accommodate different styles of interviewing with various people you will meet – not all of them will be skilled interviewers.
- Keep your antennae out. If the company has brought you back, they are serious about you. Is this the kind of place you would like to work ?

Successful Dining Etiquette

As part of the interview process you may be invited to lunch or dinner with an employer. Increasing numbers of employers are making use of mealtime interviews. Why? Meetings showcase your social behavior allowing the interviewer to evaluate your image, poise and personality. These observations can lend insight into how you will behave towards others in the workplace and/or with prospective clients. Here are a few tips for dining your way to success.

- Dress as you would for a formal interview.
- Be prepared to engage in a casual conversation, usually “pleasant small talk” such as the weather, recent news events, sports or travel.
- Rehearse your resume in order to stress pertinent aspects of your background during the meal.
- Do not order alcoholic beverages during a mealtime meeting. Alcoholic beverages can negatively affect your alertness and ability to be articulate, especially if your stress level is high. We recommend ordering a club soda (“with a twist”) regardless of what your host orders.
- Avoid smoking, even if your companion lights up. If you are adverse to smoking and your companion chooses to sit in a smoking section then you must grin and bear it. In the case of extreme allergies you might “diplomatically” request a non-smoking table.
- When ordering use your host as a guide and stay in the moderate price range.
- Be alert to the following:
 - ✧ Always place your napkin in your lap and leave it there throughout the meal.
 - ✧ Cut the lettuce in a salad to avoid showers of dressing.
 - ✧ Avoid foods with strange flavors, smells or those which are sloppy to eat.
 - ✧ Downplay any dietary preferences such as vegetarianism, allergies, etc.
 - ✧ Always let your host pick up the bill, even if it is placed in front of you.
 - ✧ Familiarize yourself with proper dining manners. A good book to refer to is “Corporate Protocol: A Brief Case for Business Etiquette” by Valerie Grant-Sokolosky 1988, Harrison House

Good Luck and Bon Appetit!



Evaluating Job Offers

Congratulations! You have a job offer, or perhaps, several job offers! Evaluating job offers is a part of the job search that often receives little attention. Since it is important that you make a decision which most closely suits your personal and career goals, you need to ask yourself some important questions:

How does this job fit into my long-term career plans??

Does this job take me in a direction I want to go??

In addition to these questions, here are some important factors to consider:

- **Job Content**
The job content is most important to your happiness. Therefore, be sure that you fully understand the nature of the job. Is the job interesting to you? Are you proud of the products or services of the employer? Will you develop marketable skills?
- **Your Manager/ Supervisor**
Don't minimize this factor when asking yourself if you can get along with this person. Is there chemistry and will this person serve as a valuable mentor? Will this person be someone who will be interested in your growth? Ideally you want a manager who encourages your professional development.
- **Salary and Benefits**
Is the salary offered competitive? See page 29 for negotiating salary information. How are individual salary increases determined (job performance, job level, length of service, etc.)? When and how are salary reviews/promotions handled? Salary is not the only compensation to consider. Evaluate company benefits such as vacation time, medical benefits, retirement plans, tuition reimbursement, etc.
- **Co-workers**
All organizations are made up of individuals who contribute to the working environment or corporate culture. Try to get a sense of co-worker personalities and work styles. Will you get along with your peers?
- **Time Commitment**
What would a typical work week be like (hours required, meetings out of office, travel, assignments, etc.)? Factor this information in with your other life responsibilities in order to evaluate whether the job will be a good fit.
- **Location**
How long is the commute? Do you like the location where you'll be working and living?
- **Culture**
Is the organization flexible or rigid? Does the culture of the organization fit in with your values? Will there be any flexibility during emergencies?

You may discuss all of these factors with a Career Services Counselor before you make your final decision.

Negotiating Salaries

Much is at stake when negotiating a compensation package. Prepare your strategy beforehand and approach the negotiation process with a positive attitude, seeking a satisfying conclusion for both you and the employer. Follow these key points to prepare:

- **Assess Your Financial Needs** – Estimate how much money you need to survive keeping in mind that approximately 28% is taken from your gross salary for taxes. What is your current salary? What is your ideal salary?
- **Homework**- Research typical salary ranges in your field for your amount of experience and geographic location. Salary information is available from a variety of sources including the Career Resource Library in the Career Services offices, the NYS Bureau of Labor Statistics, and various sites on the World Wide Web and Career Services Homepage.
- **Benefits** – Your base salary is just the starting point when negotiating. Benefits can add thousands of dollars to the final compensation package . In addition to your base salary you may also receive bonuses, increases, stock options, commissions, company car, pensions and signing bonuses. Other benefits may include health insurance, retirement or 401k plans, paid vacation/sick and personal time, tuition and relocation assistance.
- **Responsibilities** – Consider promotions, performance reviews, accelerated reviews and expanding the responsibilities of the position when mapping out your final strategy.
- **Discussing Dollars** – Your best strategy, once an offer has been quoted, is to take your time to consider it. The initial offer is typically the lowest salary. Your goal is to aim for the top of your estimated salary range, but be prepared to compromise. Some employers may have set pay structures with little room to negotiate. Prepare your statements in a positive manner, using neutral words or phrases like “The offer seems a bit ‘conservative’ or ‘disappointing’, although the position is attractive” or: “Given the responsibilities of the job and my qualifications, I would expect the salary to be more in the range of \$ _____”.

Be prepared to propose other forms of compensation or reward as mentioned above. Non-salary benefits may have tax exemptions and prove valuable. Be careful not to over negotiate, but asking for greater compensation is an expected part of the acceptance process. Knowing your bottom line and planning your strategy will pay off. Remember, the salary you negotiate today will influence your future earnings.

Your Final Decision

In an ideal world, all job offers would occur at the same time and decisions would be easy. Since this rarely happens, we suggest some guidelines concerning an ethical approach to accepting or declining offers.

- Most employers will establish a deadline date by which you need to inform them of your decision. You may want to tell the employer that you have other interviews, and would like additional time to consider their offer. Some employers will be understanding. Others may try to apply pressure. You may have to negotiate a later deadline. Make sure you have a date in mind and ask the employer to agree. Then, you must adhere to that agreed upon time limit with no exceptions and communicate your decision on that date.
- Accepting a job offer is a serious commitment. Once you accept, it is considered proper business ethics to discontinue all job search activities. In fact, you should inform employers that you have accepted an offer and are no longer eligible for consideration. It is unacceptable to reverse your decision. Once all negotiation has ended and you've agreed upon an offer, obtain written confirmation. Asking for an offer in writing prevents a possible future misunderstanding. Write your own acceptance letter spelling out your understanding of the agreement.
- If you receive an offer that does not interest you, decline as soon as possible. This enables the employer to offer the job to another candidate. Make sure you do so in a positive, polite way. In the future you might be interested in this company, so close the door gently. You could say "At this time, your offer does not meet my needs but thank you for considering me."

Ethical standards are important throughout your entire job search and professional life. Remember, integrity goes a long way!!

