

SECRETS TO INTERVIEW SUCCESS

5/2021

Introduction

The interview is one of the most important phases of the job search process. Your resume and cover letters are simply tools to get you to the interview stage of the process. The purpose of the interview is for you and an employer to get acquainted, learn about one another, and explore the possibility of working together. It's important that you convince the employer, using your powers of persuasion and communication skills that you are the right person for the job.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Research is Critical!!!!!!

The applicant who has worked hard to prepare is much more likely to get a call back for a second interview or offer of employment.

Research Yourself

- ◇ Clarify the skills and abilities you have to offer an employer. Think back on your previous experience (work, academic and extracurricular) to determine the skills and abilities used in each.

Research the Position

- ◇ Research the career field/position you are pursuing to convince yourself this is an occupation you would enjoy. Check with the Office of Career Services for a written job description.

Research the Organization

- ◇ Conduct thorough research on the organization, developing a checklist of information based on your research to share with the interviewer during the interview. Incorporating your knowledge of the company into the interview will impress the employer. As you research the company, be sure to note the following:
 - ◇ Names and job titles of key contacts
 - ◇ Whether the company is privately or publicly owned
 - ◇ Products and/or services
 - ◇ Year of incorporation
 - ◇ Number of employees
 - ◇ Principal locations and subsidiaries
 - ◇ Type of customers
 - ◇ Key competitors
 - ◇ Sales and profit trends
 - ◇ Possible future ventures

Glassdoor.com is a good place to research multiple companies in one location

Be Prompt and Prepared

- ◇ Map/drive the route for the interview the day before if you are unfamiliar with the location of the company. [Arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled interview.](#)
- ◇ Plan your interview attire in advance and make sure your clothing is pressed, your shoes shined, and your hair and nails are well groomed.
- ◇ Bring extra copies of your resume, a pen and paper, your list of questions for the interviewer, and samples of your work, if applicable.
- ◇ Notify employer or Office of Career Services 48 hours in advance to cancel an interview.

Virtual Interview

- ◇ Test your equipment
- ◇ Make sure you have a good internet connection
- ◇ Check you lighting
- ◇ Check you background in the room make sure no derogatory images or ect.
- ◇ Use an appropriate virtual background when possible
- ◇ Have a quiet place to take interview with no interruptions
- ◇ Sign-in 15 minutes early

What to Take to the Interview?

- ◇ Professional looking portfolio or briefcase and a pin
- ◇ Extra Resumes (excluding virtual)
- ◇ Example of projects you have handled that are relevant to the position you are applying for in a binder or portfolio.
- ◇ List of questions for the interviewer

PREPARING FOR QUESTIONS

Practice Makes Perfect!!!! You can never be sure what you will be asked during an interview, but certain questions are likely to arise. Anticipate these questions and rehearse your responses to them in advance. Think about how your experiences in work, classes, and activities can relate to the job you're seeking. Do practice interviews with your coordinator in Career Services, friends, family member, by yourself or attend a Mock Interview Workshop.

Whenever possible, answer questions using specific examples to support your response. Think of the acronym STAR (situation or task, action, and result).

STAR Method

Situation or Task:	Describe a task or project for which you had responsibility.
Action:	Talk about the approach you took to deal with the situation.
Results:	Discuss the outcome of your action, making sure to mention accomplishments or improvements made due to your action.

Sample behavioral-based interview questions:

- ◇ Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- ◇ Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- ◇ Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- ◇ Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- ◇ Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- ◇ Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- ◇ Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- ◇ Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- ◇ Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- ◇ What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- ◇ Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- ◇ Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- ◇ Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- ◇ Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- ◇ Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

Skills and Personal Qualities

- ◇ What skills or personal qualities do you possess that will help make you successful in today's job market?
- ◇ Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- ◇ Why are you interested in working for this company?
- ◇ What is your major strengths/weakness?
- ◇ Where do you see yourself in three years?
- ◇ Why have you chosen this particular field?
- ◇ What are your salary requirements?
- ◇ Give me an example of a problem you encountered either in school or at work, and explain how you solved it.
- ◇ Do you have any questions for me?
- ◇ What unique experience or qualifications separate you from other candidates?

HANDLING ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

If you are asked an illegal question during an interview, you have three basic alternatives.

1. You can answer the question

By answering the question, you may actually help your chances of getting the job, particularly if you give the "right" answer. Doing so, however, may convey to the interviewer that you are not familiar

2. You can refuse to answer the question

You do have the right to not answer the illegal question. However, a flat refusal to answer may harm your chances of being hired for a position if the interviewer sees you as an uncooperative or stubborn person.

3. You can examine the intent behind the question

When an interviewer asks an illegal question, they are often trying to find out information about you that is not directly related to the job. It is often easy to infer what the interviewer is really trying to find out from an illegal question. A simple compromise to the problem is to respond to the question as it may apply to the job. For example, if the interviewer asks "are you a US citizen?" you may respond "that question is in violation of the law, but yes, I am authorized to work in the United States." **This third choice shows the interviewer that you are both knowledgeable of the law and able to quickly compromise and solve problems.**

4. Other alternatives

You may feel more comfortable with one of these choices (which are just as valid as the first three) for responding to an illegal interview question:

- ◇ Ignore the question and move on
- ◇ Ask how the question relates to your qualifications or the requirements of the job
- ◇ Walk out

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National Origin/Citizenship	Are you a U.S. Citizen? Where were you/your parents born? What is your native tongue?	Are you authorized to work in the U.S.? What languages do you read/speak/write fluently?
Age	How old are you? When did you graduate? What's your birth date?	Are you over the age of 18?
Marital/Family Status	What's your marital status? With whom do you live? Do you plan to have a family? When? How many kids do you have? What are your child-care arrangements?	Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job? Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary?
Affiliations	What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?	List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job?
Personal	How tall are you? How much do you weigh?	Are you able to lift a 50 pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as this is part of the job?
Disabilities	Do you have any disabilities? Please complete the following medical history. Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? What was the date of your last physical exam? How's your family's health? When did you lose your eyesight? How? Do you need an accommodation to perform the job?	Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job related functions? As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam.
Arrest Record	Have you ever been arrested?	Have you ever been convicted of ?
Military	If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?	In what branch of the armed forces did you serve? What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

DURING THE INTERVIEW

First Impressions Count!

Employers are looking for:

- ◇ An introduction and greeting
- ◇ A firm handshake
- ◇ Eye contact
- ◇ Appearance and dress appropriate to the organization and an interview
- ◇ After you are escorted to the interview room, stand until offered a seat.

Virtual Interview

- ◇ Sign-in 15 minutes early
- ◇ Look into the camera (good eye contact)
- ◇ Make sure microphone and camera is on
- ◇ Don't be looking around the room, it will appear you are distracted
- ◇ Speak clearly and pronounce your words
- ◇ Dress appropriate to the organization and an interview

Do's and Don'ts

- ◇ Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts. **Think before you speak!**
- ◇ Use good diction, e.g.: say, yes instead of yeah.
- ◇ Ask for clarification if you don't understand.
- ◇ Answer the interviewer's questions thoroughly but ask questions throughout the process.
- ◇ Don't slouch. Sit straight in the chair and maintain good posture.
- ◇ Don't chew gum or smoke.
- ◇ Avoid interrupting and don't monopolize the whole conversation.
- ◇ Be honest. Don't try to cover up a mistake. Instead, focus on what you learned from the
- ◇ mistake.
- ◇ Make appropriate eye contact.
- ◇ Be enthusiastic.
- ◇ Don't badmouth your current or previous employer.
- ◇ **If for any reason you cannot make the interview notify the employer or Career Services 48 hours prior to your interview.**

After the Interview

Follow-Up

- ◇ Ask the interviewer for a business card or contact information for a virtual interview
- ◇ Promptly send a thank-you note within 24 hours. Keep it brief, but reiterate your interest in the position if you are, in fact, interested in it. (See sample letter)

Review the Interview Process and Your Performance

- ◇ Jot down key components.
- ◇ Record the name and title of the person with whom you interviewed.
- ◇ List important details you want to remember about the job/company.
- ◇ Assess your own performance and ways to improve it.

Evaluate

- ◇ Determine if the job is right for you.
- ◇ Did the job description match your interests and abilities?
- ◇ Did this seem like a good place to work?
- ◇ Did the organization's culture and values match your own?
- ◇ Always wear a suit with a jacket; no dresses
- ◇ Shoes with conservative heels (2 inch heels)
- ◇ Conservative hosiery at or near skin color (and no runs!)
- ◇ No purses, small or large; carry a briefcase instead
- ◇ If you wear nail polish (not required), use clear or a conservative color
- ◇ Minimal use of makeup (it should not be too noticeable)
- ◇ No more than one ring on each hand
- ◇ One set of earrings only

An Offer During the Visit (Interview)

Don't say, "yes" until you have slept on it. Even if you want the position and do plan to accept it, be gracious in your thanks for the offer, but ask for a little time to consider

5/2021

Sample Thank You Letter

2900 Joy Lane
Anytown, NY 23465

Mr. Garth Ledbetter
Blue Sky Communications, Inc.
5555 W. Highway Terrace
Peace, OH 88888

Dear Mr. Ledbetter,

Thank you for interviewing me yesterday for the marketing position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your marketing plans and strategy for achieving your objectives.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for Blue Sky were strengthened as a result of the interview. During the interview, you stressed the necessity for developing new strategic plans and tracking their success. Now that I have a better idea of what the position entails, I am certain that I could make a significant contribution to your team and to Blue Sky.

I want to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with you and your staff. You provide the kind of opportunity I seek. Please feel free to contact me at 870 575-6800 or doe_j@yahoo.com if I can provide you with any additional information.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

5/2021

ACCEPTANCE LETTER

2005 North Spruce Street Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

June 30, 2013

Mr. Kenneth Stone Division Manager Alltel Communications 1111 West Capitol Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

Dear Mr. Stone:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of employment as a computer specialist for Alltel Communications at the monthly salary of \$_____. The work is exactly what I have prepared to perform and I feel confident that I can make a significant contribution. As we discussed, I will report to work at 8:00 a.m. on July 10, 2005 and will have completed the medical examination and drug testing by the start date. Additionally, I shall complete all employment and insurance forms for the new employee orientation.

I look forward to my future association with Alltel Communications and working with you and your fine team. I appreciate your confidence in me and I am very happy to be joining your staff.

Sincerely,

Mary Doe

REJECTION LETTER

1202 Georgia Street Chicago, Ill 71221

June 30, 2013

Mr. John Brown Sales
Marketing Division
Walgreens
1500 North Shore Drive
Detroit, MI 69807

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for your employment offer for the position of Sales Manager with Walgreens. I valued our discussion about the position responsibilities, as well as the career possibilities within the company.

You have a fine organization and there are many aspects of the position that are very appealing to me. However, I believe it is in our mutual best interests that I decline your kind offer. This has been a difficult decision for me, but I believe it is the appropriate one for my career at this time.

I want to thank you for the consideration and courtesy given to me. It was a pleasure meeting you and your fine staff.

Sincerely,

Sharon Jones