



## **WHAT TO TAKE TO THE INTERVIEW**

### **Positive, Confident Attitude**

*I have yet to have an employer ask me to send someone who is withdrawn, egotistical, negative, bitter, lethargic or abrasive!! You have to sell yourself before they will "buy" your capabilities!*

### **Resume**

Take three 'crisp', clean, unfolded copies. You may not need them, but.....

### **References**

List only people who can reflect on your professional activity. These usually will have been provided to me in advance. Make certain they are the same, or that I am aware of who you provide.

- Have at least four easily contactable people.
- Use former (or present!) managers who are familiar with your work.
- Include their company as well as home and work phone numbers.
- Always consult with references for their approval and availability.

### **Other Items**

- Folder, pad and pen(s).
- Thoroughly prepared, written questions.
- Directions to the interview location.
- Company's phone number.
- Performance results that may not be in the resume and any letters of recommendation you may have. Never discuss or show proprietary information.
- Copy of last W-2. Do not volunteer it; take it 'just in case'.
- In general take all information that might be needed to complete an 'application'. You most often will not be asked to, but if you have all the info, you are ready.
- Expense receipts, mileage, etc. You may be able to submit it while there.
- Complete list of manufacturing functions, systems and equipment you have utilized.
- Knowledge of who to ask for!
- Do NOT take cell phones or pagers!
- **My number to give immediate feedback after the interview.**

## **APPEARANCE**

Unless otherwise advised, conservative business attire is appropriate. Conservative is always preferred. Avoid extra jewelry and colognes/fragrances.

## **ARRIVAL AT THE INTERVIEW**

- Arrive fifteen minutes before the interview. Get there early and wait for the proper timing!
- If asked, complete an application. Complete it in full and leave no blanks. Do not write "see resume" as a response to any application question. Respond to "expected salary" questions as "open", and to "current salary" questions truthfully. List references if requested. My name should be your response to any "referred by" questions.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

### **First impressions are (almost) everything!**

- Shake hands firmly and maintain eye contact with the interviewer. *This is a sales effort.*
- Maintain a high energy level. Be alive!
- Try to avoid drinks (spills!) but don't be discourteous about it. No smoking.!
- It is great if a subject of mutual interest arises, but do not fake knowledge.
- Most importantly, be yourself.

### **TYPICAL EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

At this point, the Company is looking for reasons to hire you, not disqualify you. Give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible, use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way.

- Describe previous jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions.
- Include *short* stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved. Avoid 'rambling on!'
- Answer questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position.
- Keep responses concise and avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs.
- In the interview and/or plant tour, look for areas of familiarity to you and get across that you know about it (equipment, systems, etc.)
- Look for opportunities to compliment the company! It could be their facilities, their equipment, processes, etc.

*Tell me about yourself.*

- This means "Tell me about your qualifications", not you personally. Prepare a one to two minute discussion of your qualifications. Start with education and discuss your experience. Describe your performance (in raises, promotions, innovative designs, sales volume, increased profits, etc.)

*What are your greatest strengths?*

- Do not let modesty 'sell you short', but stick with reality. Show loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, that you are a fast-learner. Technical skills, politeness, and promptness.....expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid generalizations such as "I like people".

*What are your greatest weaknesses?*

- Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all of your imperfections. (Do not state "not being able to go to work on Mondays", or "coming in late", etc.). Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, (i.e., "Sometimes work too hard to make sure things are done accurately").

*What do you do in your spare time?*

- Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies .

*Why should I hire you for this position?*

- Be positive and sell! Bringing strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.
- Explain you're how your qualifications "fit" the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why it's work that you enjoy.

*Why do you want to work for our firm?*

- The response should be for the opportunity. Compliments about the company would help.

*Where do you hope to be in five years?*

- Use conservative growth projections that clearly show that their investment in you will pay. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in the position.. Show a desire for promotions.

*What interests you most about this position?*

- Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two-word answer such as, “the challenge” or “the opportunity”, should cause them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

*How long do you plan to be with this company?*

- Many employers still look for a till-death-do-us-part attitude, but they can be equally attracted to the candidate with ambition and candor. “As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field”, is a reasonable response.

*What are your career goals?*

Your answer should reflect specific time frames:

- Short term – “I want to be the best in my current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This, in itself, will assure my commitment to the firm and raise me to the next level of responsibility and promotion. I see myself wanting to stay technical but learn the necessary skills to lead people and projects.”
- Long term – “After proving my abilities, I see myself in a firm with the possibility of moving into a level of management that allows me to keep my skills sharp.”

*What are you doing to achieve your goals?*

- “I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you see from my resume, by taking company educational courses, when offered, and college courses. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep me informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations in my field.”

*Why did you leave your previous employer?*

- Before the interview have a solid answer ready for each job change. Having a written summary is helpful. If downsized, give specifics. If recruited away, say so. If for family reasons, O.K., If you were fired, be up front about it. Your background will probably be verified.
- NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition.

*What did you like most about your previous job?*

*What did you like least about your previous job?*

- An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position.

*Why are you looking for another job?*

- Again, be positive. "I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at \_\_\_\_\_ Corporation. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth and challenge. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career.

*What do you think your employer's obligations are to you?*

- Interviewers listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic, company atmosphere, with the opportunity to advance. This shows motivation and staying power.

*Are you applying for any other jobs?*

- Be honest about this.
- If you are actively seeking a change, show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a well-defined, focused objective.
- ***Don't give an indication that you are just shopping.***

*What types of decisions are most difficult for you?*

- Again, be truthful and admit not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice as you can to make the best decision possible.

*What causes you to lose your temper?*

- Most people have a low boiling point on some particular issue. If you do, pick one safe and reasonable. People who are late to meetings, blame shifting, broken appointments and office "back-stabbing" are suitable responses. Be careful to point out that while certain things may be annoying, you do maintain your composure and professionalism!

*What are your greatest accomplishments?*

- Be ready with one or two examples that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A special project that you pioneered at your previous job, cutting department expenses, increasing productivity or receiving frequent promotions are a few examples. ***Document this information.***

*How do you feel about a younger male/female boss?*

- A question like this usually means that your boss will either be younger or of the opposite sex or both. If you show any concern, you will probably not be hired. Explain that their age or sex is of no importance to you; you are interested only in their capability and what you can learn from them.

*What type of salary do you have in mind?*

- Do not state a starting figure. A suitable reply: "I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me the best candidate for this position, you will extend me your best and most fair offer."

*What is your current salary?*

- Answer truthfully and include all income such as bonuses. Cite your last W-2 and any increases since then. If a raise is due a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect.

*Are you willing to relocate?*

- Be ready to reassure them that not only you, but all family members are ready to go. Be prepared to discuss any factors that may complicate or delay a move. Think about this in advance!!!

*When could you start? (Immediately or with 2 weeks notice?!!!!) Have a 'can start not later than' date.*

*Please describe yourself using three adjectives.*

*If you could improve anything about the way your present manager goes about his/her work, what would you improve?*

*Describe the best manager you ever worked for. What made him/her the best?*

*Who was the least effective manager you've ever worked for? What made him/her the least effective?*

*What do you especially enjoy about your work?*

*How are you held accountable; that is, how is your job measured? How have you performed against those measurable objectives?*

*Based on your understanding of the position we are interviewing for, what else do you need to make to a decision regarding this position?*

*If you were to accept a new position, how do you envision spending your first sixty days on the job?*

*What do you envision as your top priorities?*

*If we were to speak to your current manager, what would he/she say is the area in which you could use the most improvement? Do you agree with your manager?*

*If you could change or improve one thing about yourself, what would it be?*

*How organized are you? Do you use a system to organize yourself? Please describe.*

*Are you seeking a job or a career?*

*What are your feelings about dedication and commitment?*

*How do you accept failure and what do you do about it?*

*When you succeed at your job, what forms of recognition would you feel are most important to you?*

*Describe a typical day in your current position.*

***Answer a question to the best of your ability and then relax. If there is a period of silence before the interviewer asks the next question, stay calm. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and maintain poise.***

## **YOUR TURN!**

*The interview should be a two-way exchange. Ask questions...but in a conversational manner, not interrogation! This shows your interest in the company and the position, and enables you to gather the right information to make an intelligent decision afterwards.*

Some questions are appropriate to ask each interviewer, (what do you enjoy most about this company?, how long have you been with the company? questions about the area, etc.) while some should be restricted to the managers directly involved in the decision, (what is the first priority for the position?, why is the job open?, is there any additional information about me you would need?, etc).

- Don't cross-examine the employer.
- Ask questions requiring an explanation. Questions which can be answered with a "yes" or "no" are conversation stoppers.
- Don't interrupt when the employer is answering YOUR question.
- Ask job-relevant questions: responsibilities, the company, products, services, people.
- Ask about your potential peers, subordinates, and superiors.
- Take notes.

Make sure to get a complete understanding of what you would be expected to do. **This is without doubt the most important information to be exchanged in the interview.**

- *What are the responsibilities for the position?*
- *What projects would I be involved in now? In the future?*
- *What is the most critical objective for the new person?*
- *What are the longer-term objectives?*

**LISTEN!** *The first two or three things the interviewer mentions are probably the most important right now, even if not the principal items on the job description. Address your capabilities to those needs/desires.*

Encourage the interviewer to explain why this job can't be done by a current employee. The answer may give you a job description! You may discover that nobody in this organization would accept it or that the present staff, while competent, simply do not have the background for a new function...**OR**, you might learn that the company is looking for a 'fresh view', or someone with more career potential. *Why is this position open? Is there a reason it is not being filled by a present employee/*

*If I perform well, what are the possible advancement opportunities?*

*What became of the last couple of people who held this position?*

*How many people have held this job in the last five years?*

*Were they promoted or did they leave the company?*

If the turnover has been high, you might wonder if the job might leave something to be desired.

Or it could mean that you could expect to be promoted quickly.

*What are examples of the best results produced by people in this job?*

Here you may discover you are overqualified, or not up to it. It also will give you a glimpse of the company's management style.

- *What are the most difficult aspects of the position?*
- *Describe a typical day on the job?*
- *What is the projected department's/company's growth in the next 2 years?*
- *What is the philosophy on training and development here?*
- *Has there been downsizing within the company? How is it handled?*

- *Who would I be working for and with?*
- *What is the person doing who formerly held this position?*
- *When would you need me to start?*

## **INTERVIEW CONCLUSION**

If you are sincerely interested in the position, your role now becomes salesperson!

You should clearly communicate your feelings to the employer, perhaps by as simply as saying, *"Based on everything I know about the opportunity, what I saw and heard today, this is something I know I can do and am very interested in it"*.

Ask the interviewer if he/she feels that you are qualified for the position. This gives you another chance to review points that may need clarification. Illustrate confidence in your abilities and convince the interviewer that you are capable of handling the position successfully.

Ask *"is there any further information you need about me to determine if I am the right person"?*

*"How do I compare to other candidates? Are they stronger in any area?"* With this you might learn what your chances are, but also it might allow strengthening your 'case'.

In parting, thank the people for their consideration, again state your interest and that you could be available to start within two weeks (or sooner!)

The farewell should also include a smile, direct eye contact, and a firm but gentle handshake.

## **THANK YOU NOTE**

Send a short note of appreciation to thank the employer or interviewer for the opportunity to interview. Restate your interest in the position and the company, and why, as well as your ability to do the job. Be sure to mail it not later than the following day. This is a good way to keep your name current in the interviewer's mind.