

Ace the Interview



What is an interview?

The employment interview gives the employer the opportunity to appraise your qualifications, appearance and general fitness for the job opening.

The interview gives YOU a chance to appraise the employer and the job to see if your needs and interests will be met.

Think of the interview as a conversation between two people where each person is trying to learn more about the other. The interview process is a two-way street. You are traveling toward a goal—the right job, and the employer is traveling toward a goal—the right hire.



Traits on which you will be judged

1. **Personal Characteristics.** Do you have good grooming? Do you have good manners? Do you maintain good eye contact?
2. **Self Expression.** Are you confident in expressing your ideas?
3. **Maturity.** What about your overall sense of balance? Can you make value judgments and decisions?
4. **Personality.** What are you like? Outgoing? Shy? Overbearing? Quiet? Will you fit into their corporate culture?
5. **Experience.** What about your academic achievements? Involvement in extracurricular activities? Job skills?
6. **Enthusiasm and Interest.** Are you really interested in the employer? The particular job? Industry?
7. **Career Goals.** What do you want to do in your professional life? Is it consistent with the company goals?



Before the Interview

Spent some time researching the company or organization. Ask friends. Conduct research in the library, use the Internet, check with Career Development, and ask the company to send you brochures or annual reports.

Utilize the Chambers of Commerce, personal contacts, and printed materials about the company, its products and/or services, research newspapers, professional journals, libraries, etc.



Try to find answers to the following questions:

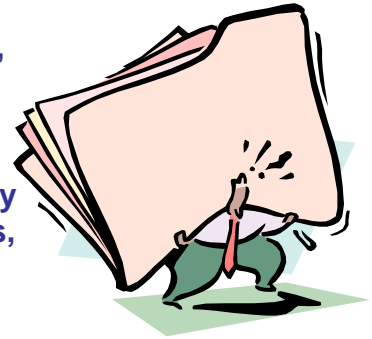
1. How large is the organization?
2. How long has the firm been in business?
3. What are its products and/or services?
4. Does the company have a good reputation?
5. What is the managerial style, corporate structure and culture of the company?
6. What kind of future seems to be in store for the organization?
7. Are the employees and the environment compatible with your personality?
8. Why do you want to work for this company?
9. What do you know about this company?
10. Why do you think you would like this job?
11. Who are their major competitors?
12. What benefits and/or drawbacks can you foresee in working for this company?

Mentally prepare other questions that you may be asked and tentative answers so that you are not caught off guard. Prepare questions you want answered by the interviewer. Get the date, time, place, and the interviewer's name. Ask about the format – will there be more than one interview or

interviewer, how much time should I allow, is there anything I should bring? Get the salary (or salary range) before the interview.

Neatness and cleanliness are critical for job interviews. Usually business suits and ties for men and suits or tailored dresses for women are appropriate for job interviews. Professional attire is usually conservative. Even in a business casual environment, dress for the interview. Review your work experience and skills. Pick out your most relevant job or school experiences. Also, recall any positive work habits developed at work or in school. Going over these things helps build confidence and gets you mentally prepared for the interview.

Prepare a folder with copies of your resume, references, samples of your work (or a portfolio), transcripts, certifications or licenses, if applicable. Be sure to have a data sheet of all pertinent information in case you are asked to fill out an application when you arrive. This may include exact dates of employment, company addresses, phone numbers, supervisors' names, salary history, detailed education and training.



During the Interview

Arrive early and take time to double-check your appearance. Try to relax. Breathe deeply or use mental imagery to help control your nervousness.

Greet the interviewer by name, make eye contact and shake his/her hand. Below are questions that may be asked during the interview. The first ten questions are often asked and are termed the “ten deadly” questions.



1. How do you spend your spare time?
2. What jobs have you held?
3. Where do you want to be in five years?
4. What kind of boss do you prefer?
5. What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
6. What is your major weakness?

7. Tell me about yourself.
8. What jobs have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
9. What type of a salary did you have in mind?
10. Silence—the interviewer intentionally pauses to see if you can handle the pressure.
11. In what school activities have you participated? Why? Which do you enjoy the most?
12. In what type of position are you most interested?
13. Why do you think you might like to work for our company?
14. What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
15. Why did you choose your particular field of work?
16. What do you know about our company?
17. What qualifications do you have that make you feel you will be successful in the field?
18. What are your ideas on salary?
19. Do you prefer any specific geographic location? Why?
20. Why did you decide to go to this particular school?
21. How did you rank in your graduating class in high school? Where did you rank in college?
22. Do you think that your extracurricular activities were worth the time you devoted to them? Why?
23. What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
24. What personal characteristics are necessary for success in your chosen field?
25. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
26. Tell me a story?
27. Can you get recommendations from previous employers?
28. What interests you about our products or service?
29. How did you happen to go to college?
30. Do you feel you have done your best scholastic work?
31. What do you know about opportunities in the field in which you are trained?
32. Have you ever had any difficulty getting along with fellow students and faculty?
33. Which of your college years was the most difficult? Why?
34. Do you like routine work?
35. Do you like regular hours?
36. What size city do you prefer?
37. Do you have an analytical mind?
38. Are you willing to go where the company sends you?
39. What job in our company would you choose if you were entirely free to do so?
40. Is it an effort for you to be tolerant of persons with a background and interests different from your own?
41. What types of books have you read?

42. Do you have plans for graduate work?
43. What types of people rub you the wrong way?
44. Do you like to travel?
45. How about overtime work?
46. What are the advantages of your chosen field?
47. Are you interested in research?
48. What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
49. Have you ever changed your major field of interest while in college? Why?
50. What is your idea of how industry operates today?

No matter how the question is worded, there are really only two questions:

Why should I hire you?

What can you do for my company?



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Behavioral interviewing is a structured interviewing strategy built on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance in similar circumstances. The interviewer probes for behavioral evidence of what the candidate said, did, felt and thought, and what were the results.

Behavioral interviewing allows the interviewer to gather evidence for critical capabilities in a way that is most likely to ensure that a person both possesses these capabilities and is likely to demonstrate them in future situations. It is these critical capabilities, called success factors that identify the very best performers in a given job. Success factors include:



- Technical of job specific knowledge and skills
- General abilities (communication skills, customer service, etc.)
- Behavioral traits or competencies (initiative, results orientation, risk taking, etc.)

Typically behavioral based questions are used to ask a person to describe an actual past situation. For example:

To assess communication skills, the interviewer might ask a question like....

“Tell me about a specific situation where you had to get something across to someone he or she found difficult to understand.”

To assess results orientation, the interviewer might ask a question like....

“Give me an example of a time when you had to go beyond the call of duty to get a job done.”



EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORAL BASED QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about a time when things didn't work out the way you wanted them to.
2. Tell me about when you worked under a tight deadline.
3. Tell me about a work situation where you had to do creative problem solving.
4. Tell me about the most difficult customer/client you have run into recently.
5. Tell me about the co-worker you get along with the least.
6. Tell me about a recent project that you found challenging.
7. When was the last time you painted a rosy picture to close a difficult sale/proposal?
8. Tell me about a time you went above and beyond the call of duty for a customer/client.
9. Tell me about a time you were assertive and it back-fired on you.
10. Tell me about the most difficult communication situation you have come across to date and how you handled that situation.
11. Tell me about a time you were assertive and it paid off for you.
12. Tell me about a time you had to give up something you really wanted to do to complete a task.
13. Tell me about a time you had your whole day planned out and something unexpected came up and how you handled the situation.

14. Tell me about the most creative idea you have had.
15. Tell me about a time your manager/supervisor wasn't around and you had to make a decision that they typically make and what happened.

Probing questions elicit details that help the employer assess a candidate against the job's success factors. These questions can involve asking a candidate for his or her thoughts, feelings, behaviors, dialogue and closure—how the situation turned out. Examples include:

1. What were you thinking when that happened.
2. What was your reaction?
3. What did you actually do?
4. What did you actually say?
5. What did other people say in response?
6. How did it finally turn out?
7. What was the end result?
8. Is there anything else I should know about this situation?

COMMON SKILLS TARGETED FOR BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEWING

- Alertness _____
- Assertiveness _____
- Coping _____
- Creativity _____
- Customer/Client Orientation _____
- Decision Making _____
- Flexibility _____
- Goal Setting _____
- Leadership _____
- Management _____
- Oral Communication _____
- Organization Planning _____
- Perception _____

Problem Solving

Sales Ability/
Persuasiveness

Team Building

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Prepare answers that are about one minute in length. Be specific; use examples that show your best qualities. Do not answer with just a “Yes” or “No.”

Ask questions to get a good understanding of what the job is about. Be sure you state your strong points. If you are not asked directly, say something like “You didn’t ask about my experience and I wanted to let you know I _____.”

Answer all questions honestly. When asked about negative job experiences, don’t blame or criticize other organizations. Never volunteer negative information about yourself.

There needs to be a balance of leading and following. Let the person in charge take the lead; however, help them out.

Sit up and look interested. Speak clearly. Do not gaze around the room or lay back in the chair. Conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing, even if you have other job offers.

Be sure to get the names and titles of all those who interview you. Ask the secretary for the correct spelling.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Immediately write a thank you note for the time spent interviewing. The attached sample thank you note might be helpful in drafting your letter.

Jot down notes about the company, including whether they will call you or if you need to call them, and if so, when.



Analyze how the interview went using the following checklist.

A CHECKLIST OF HOW THE INTERVIEW WENT

1. Did I feel at ease with the interviewer after my initial nervousness?
2. Did I highlight how my experience and skills could meet their qualifications?
3. Did I take the opportunity to mention my strengths; show them what I had to offer?
4. Did I ask questions that helped me to clarify the job and show my interest and knowledge?
5. Was I positive and enthusiastic?
6. How did I make myself stand out?
7. What did I learn that I can apply to my next interview?
8. Was there any information about my qualification that I failed to mention in the interview? (If so you might include it in your thank you letter).
9. Was there any information about the company I did not get or ask about?
10. Did I leave them with the impression that I really wanted the job?

APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES TO ASK IN THE INITIAL JOB INTERVIEW

Remember: Questions are pertinent only if the answer influences you.

1. What would be a typical first assignment?
2. Which of your locations have the type of job I'm looking for?
3. What type of orientation would I have?
4. What type of training programs do you have? How long is the training period?
5. What can I expect in terms of job progression in your organization?
6. How often would my performance be reviewed?
7. Do you have any recent graduates from MWSU working for you?
8. What percentage of supervisory positions are filled from within the company?
9. How much travel is normally expected?
10. How frequently do you relocate professional employees?
11. How much input does the new person have on geographical location?
12. Are there any immediate plans for expansion in your organization, either in new offices, new market areas, or new fields? In what directions are you moving?
13. How would you describe the atmosphere of the organization? What is unique about it?
14. In your opinion, why is it a good place to work?

DO'S

- Read the organization's recruiting literature first so you don't ask questions answered in their material.
- Talk with people employed by the organization or familiar with it before the interview if at all possible.
- Prepare some questions before going to the interview but be spontaneous enough to ask questions as they occur to you in the interview.
- Think what would be helpful for you to know about the position or the employer if you were offered a position there.
- Before you leave the interview, ask when a decision will be made, or what is the next step in the process, or when can I expect to hear from you.
- Before you leave the company, be sure to get the names and titles of everyone who interviewed you so you can send each of them a thank you.

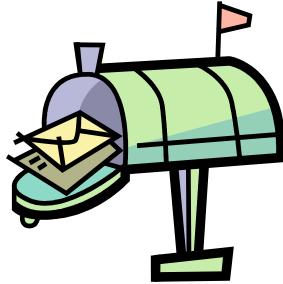
DON'TS

- Don't ask about salary or benefits (sick leave, vacation, etc.).
- Don't ask about job pressures, overtime, morale, etc. Observe during company visits.
- Do not bring anyone with you to the interview.
- Do not smoke or eat spicy foods prior to the interview.
- Do not wear strong perfume or cologne.
- Leave your cell phone and beeper in the car.

THANK YOU

It is important to send a thank you to everyone who interviewed you or met you on your visit to the company. You do not have to send a typed letter on 8 1/2" x 11" paper unless you feel it is necessary. Instead, buy some formal note card stationery and hand write your thank you(s). It gives your letter a more personal touch and, because it is smaller than standard, it will probably be on the top of the pile when the mail is delivered. That means it will be read first.

Get your thank you(s) out as soon as possible after the interview, but don't write them hastily. Give some thought to what you want to say. This is an opportunity to provide additional information and reiterate your interest in the position.



SAMPLE THANK YOU FOR INTERVIEW

Your Address

Date

Inside Address
(If possible, use individual's name)

Dear _____:

I appreciated the opportunity to talk with you on date . The information you shared with me about company name was excellent, and I am excited about the possibility of applying my education and experience to the position we discussed.

If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

(written signature)

Your name typed

Being friendly, honest and sincere helps to make a good impression and a successful interview.

POST-INTERVIEW THANK YOU NOTE

**150 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
June 8, 20XX**

**Mr. Paul Torrence
Kahn Enterprises
1931 W. Willow Drive
Chicago, IL 00178**

Dear Mr. Torrence:

Thank you for meeting with me this morning to discuss the media relations position at Kahn Enterprises. I would like to reiterate my interest in the position and your organization.

The enthusiasm I have felt right along about the possibility of working for you, has increased with our meeting. I am more certain than ever that I am well qualified to make the kind of contribution to Kahn Enterprises that you are expecting for your media relations specialist.

I will look forward to hearing your decision regarding my application.

Sincerely,

Jason Tribbett