



# Interviewing

## INTERVIEWING

### The Goal

Leave them wanting more...leave the impression that your desire is to do your very best for the organization, that you are focused on their needs, and that you will be an invaluable asset to them.

**“You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression.”**

It is important to remember that first impressions count in the interview process. Be prepared and professional. The interview process is a two-way street. An employer uses an interview to learn more about the applicant’s personal and professional attributes and whether they will be a good fit for the position and the organization. The applicant uses the process to better understand the position and whether the goals of the company and responsibilities of the job match his or her career goals, objectives, and skill set. Additionally, this is a good chance to get an inside view of the company.

## FIVE-STEP INTERVIEW PREP

### 1. Research and Investigate

- The organization; its culture, economic conditions, structure, history, and purpose/mission.
- The position; the requirements and duties, based on your research, prepare intelligent questions; develop 3-5 questions ahead of time and have them written down.
- The industry; be prepared to discuss current issues and trends.

### 2. Review Your Responses

- Assess yourself; make a list of strengths, abilities, and experiences that relate to the job.
- Determine major points that you want to stress in the interview; how will you “sell” yourself.
- Identify three reasons for selecting this job and/or employer.
- List three assets you have which you feel will interest the employer.

### 3. Study your resume

- Review your resume as it fits the position; anticipate questions or issues that might arise.

### 4. Get Organized

- Solidify travel arrangements for the interview.
- Choose your outfit; project a professional image, be comfortable (not casual), dress conservatively.
- Gather appropriate paperwork: resume (bring 2-3 copies – make sure they match the resume that was submitted to employer), a completed application (if requested), references (a list of names, addresses, and phone numbers and/or letters of recommendation), and, in some fields, a portfolio (samples of your work).

### 5. Practice, Practice, Practice

- Practice responses to potential interview questions; answers should be a brief, results-oriented view of your experience and skills.
- Watch yourself in front of a mirror.
- Participate in a mock-interview at the **Internship & Career Center**.

## INTERVIEW TYPES

There are various types of interviews which depend on the employer, the job, the situation, and your position in the interview process.

Following are several basic types of interviews:

### Employment Interview

The most familiar is the employment interview. The focus of this face-to-face meeting is to determine whether the applicant's qualifications meet the employer's needs and vice-versa.

### Phone Interview

Employers use this opportunity to screen the applicant. They ask detailed questions about the applicant's background, skills, and professional interests which may not be covered or to expand upon information in either the resume or cover letter. It also gives the employer the chance to inspect the applicant's phone etiquette and behavior.

### Panel Interview

The applicant typically meets with two or more company representatives at the same time. The advantage is that the applicant is able to meet more than one person at one time, the disadvantage is that it can be intimidating – just remember you are not alone, others interviewing for the job have to go through this as well. Make eye contact with each interviewer, don't get caught focusing on only one person.

### Group Interview

This allows multiple individuals (interviewees) to meet with one employer. It may sound easier because there is more than one applicant involved. However, in this situation, the applicants are doing the majority, if not all, of the work. The employer typically instructs the applicants to interact and/or interview each other.

### Informational Interview

The important thing to remember about the Informational Interview is that it is **not** an Employment Interview – this interview is initiated by the job seeker. The purpose of the interview is to gain information about a certain career or company rather than to pursue a position within a certain organization. The applicant is in complete control. She/he is responsible for making the initial contact with the employer and running the actual interview. The great thing about the Informational Interview is that the applicant has the opportunity to ask just about anything, even questions about salary and benefits, which are considered taboo in initial Employment Interviews. Keep in mind that this is a professional interview and all questions should be related to a particular career. At the very least, the Informational Interview broadens the applicant's professional network. It could also lead to an Employment Interview and a possible job offer.

## INTERVIEW STAGES

Following are several stages that applicants typically go through during an employment interview:

### 1. Breaking the Ice

- Getting acquainted
- Small talk to make each other feel comfortable

### 2. General Information Gathering

- Employer asks questions to expand on information given in resume
- Employer surveys the applicant's background, goals, and areas of interest
- Stay relaxed and involved
- Be positive throughout

### 3. Focusing

- Applicant directs employer to her/his strengths and how they relate to the needs and goals of the company
- Applicant asks specific questions about the responsibilities of the job and articulates how his/her abilities and background match.
- DON'T talk about money or benefits before they do!
- Don't let the interviewer talk the entire time

### 4. Closure

- Employer summarizes the company's needs and goals, confirms applicant's interest in the job, discusses next phase of the search process
- Applicant summarizes strengths that fit the employer's needs, confirms any follow-up meetings, and asks for the interviewer's information/business card

### 5. Follow-Up – (Don't neglect this step)

- Applicant sends a thank you letter (*no later than 24 hours after the interview*) to the employer indicating continued interest and highlighting strengths
- Applicant calls the employer 1-2 weeks after sending the thank-you letter to inquire about the status of the position.

## INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### Develop Your Personal Themes for the Job Interview

There are ten basic types of information sought by recruiters in a typical job interview, knowing what these points are, and being able to readily discuss how each point relates to you, will leave you better prepared and in greater control of the interview process. Think of this information as your sales pitch. Each is designed to showcase your best skills and qualifications. They will help you develop a strategy for selling your qualifications in virtually any interview situation.

#### 1. Passion for the Work

- Ask yourself, "Why am I interested in working in this field/in this industry?" Do you feel a passion for the work/organization? If so, why? Give specific examples of the things that excite you.

#### 2. Motivation and Purpose

- Interviewers will want to know why you want to work for their particular company. Ask yourself, "Why do I want this interview?" Don't simply repeat your resume and employment history. What's the most compelling case you can make to prove your interest? Have you used the company's products or talked to its customers or competitors?

#### 3. Skills and Experience

- Consider your key skills and how you'll use them in this job. Avoid clichés and generalities; instead, offer specific evidence. Think about your weaknesses and how you can minimize and balance them with your strengths. Try to describe yourself as objectively as possible.

#### 4. Diligence and Professionalism

- Describe your professional character, including thoroughness, diligence, and accountability. Give proof that you persevere to see important projects through, and that you achieve desired results. Demonstrate how you gather resources, how you predict obstacles, and how you handle challenges.

5. **Creativity and Leadership**
  - Offer evidence of your effectiveness, including creativity, initiative, resourcefulness, and leadership. What examples can you provide for each? Focus on how you overcome problems, take advantage of opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked, and foster cooperation to gain the support of others to accomplish goals.
6. **Compatibility with the Job**
  - Discuss your specific qualifications for the job. How well do they fit the requirements of the position? Focus on what you are seeking in your next job.
7. **Personality and Cultural Compatibility**
  - Consider your personality on the job. How do you fit in with other types of personalities? What types of people would enjoy working with you for hours at a time? How would the company's customers or clients react to you? Your goal is to develop responses that make the interviewer feel confident there won't be any surprises after hire about your personality on the job.
8. **Problem-Solving Ability**
  - Offer proof, with examples, of your problem-solving ability. How have you resolved difficult issues in the past? Are you practical in how you apply technical skills? Are you realistic? Focus on real issues, on logical value-added solutions, on practical outcomes of your work, and on realistic measures of judging these outcomes.
9. **Accomplishments**
  - Think about your initiative and accomplishments. Offer examples in which you've delivered more than what was expected. Don't give long descriptions of situations; instead, focus your answer on the action you took and the positive results you obtained (**Situation-Action-Result**). If you were hired, what situations would you handle especially well? What can you contribute to the organization?
10. **Career Aspirations**
  - Tailor your aspirations to the realities of this particular job and its career path. Avoid listing job titles or offering unrealistic performance deadlines. Instead, reiterate the skills and strengths you want to develop further. Do you want cross-functional experience, a larger budget, or more supervisory responsibility? Why would you be effective with that additional experience?

## Non-Verbal Communication

**“Actions Speak Louder than Words” - What You Don't Say Can be as Important as What you Do.”**

Following are five key non-verbal communication skills, ranked in order of importance:

- **Handshake** – You've probably heard it before but it is worthwhile stating again. Keep your hand straight and firm; not too firm that they wince, but no limp handshakes.
- **Eye Contact** – Maintain eye contact without staring. If you look away while listening, it shows lack of interest and a short attention span. If you fail to maintain eye contact while speaking, at a minimum it shows lack of confidence in what you are saying and at worst may send the subtle message that you are lying. Practice, ask others to watch you.
- **Facial Expressions** – Don't forget to smile – sounds easy but often times when we are nervous or stressed we don't realize we are not smiling. You don't need to smile continuously but keep it coming back. Practice being aware of the expressions you are making, frowning, raising and

lowering of your eyebrows, or turning your nose up. Practice the interview in front of the mirror and watch your facial expressions or better yet, video tape yourself.

- **Posture** - Posture signals your confidence and power potential. Stand tall, walk tall, and most of all, sit tall. When standing, stand up straight.
- **Sitting** - Sit at the front edge of the chair, leaning slightly forward. This will speak volumes about your interest and motivation. Don't slouch or sink into the chair. Keep your arms at your side or in your lap. Men, it is best to keep your legs uncrossed. Women you may cross your legs one knee over the other, do not cross them ankle on knee
- **Gestures** - Contrary to popular belief, gestures should be used sparingly during the interview. When you do use gestures, make sure that they are natural and meaningful.
- **Space** - Recognize the boundaries of your personal space and that of others. Approximately arm's length is typical, be prepared, however, not to back up or move away from someone who has a personal space that is smaller than your own. Hang in there, take a deep breath, and relax.

## Questions

### Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Following are some typical questions asked by employers. Practice your responses and prepare answers which offer a brief, results-oriented view of your experience and skills.

- Tell me about yourself. *Focus on your experience and accomplishments as they relate to the position.*
- Why do you want to work for our company? *Use your research about the company/position to reply.*
- What are your strengths/weaknesses? *As they relate to performing the job, focus on accomplishments that highlight strengths and ways you are improving upon your weaknesses.*
- What are your professional/career goals? *Connect this to your personal career/future plans.*
- What did you like best/least about your previous job? *Never offer negative information about company or supervisor. Your examples should demonstrate/highlight particular values/skills*
- How would you describe your ideal job? *Connect this to your career objectives and the research you have done about the organization and position.*
- Describe your most significant accomplishment...biggest challenge. *Relate these experiences to attributes you will bring to the position.*
- What motivates you? *As it relates to your career plans.*
- Why should I hire you? *Focus on your accomplishments, experiences, and the abilities you can bring to the position.*
- Do you have any questions? *YES! This is when you can ask from memory or ask for permission to use your "prepared" list of questions. (Make sure questions are neatly typed on professional paper; 3-5 questions)*
- Why did you leave your last job? *Tell the truth positively.*
- What do you see yourself doing five/ten years from now? *Relate one or two of your long term goals to the position/organization.*
- Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it? *Focus on the process of conflict resolution, not the nature of the conflict itself.*
- Why did you choose to attend Loyola University Chicago? *Focus on the decision-making process or aspects of Loyola's mission which related to your goals.*
- Is your GPA an accurate reflection of your ability? *Focus on your activities, projects, classwork to further represent your capabilities.*
- Why are you interested in our company/the position? *Use your research findings to relate information about the organization to your needs/values.*

- What kind of salary are you looking for? *Research should give you an average range for the industry, position, and location. Additionally, by researching the company, you may be able to determine the organization's salary ranges.*

### **Suggestions for Questions You Might Ask**

- Clarification regarding particular aspects of the position; typical day/week; reporting relationships; learning opportunities; fit into the corporate structure?
- What are the typical issues of the industry/position?
- How would you describe the company's values and management philosophy?
- What are the policies and procedures for evaluation in this position?
- What is the typical career path in this area of the organization?
- What qualities would it take to be successful in this job? The company?
- Where are you in the search process? What are the next steps?
- Why did the position become available?
- What do you feel are the essential factors for success in this position?
- Could you give me a profile of someone who does very well at \_\_\_\_\_?
- What problems/challenges do you feel the successful candidate should be able to solve?
- What short-term objectives would you like to see the person in this position achieve?
- Any questions which would be appropriate related to current events/trends/company-related content.

### **What to Ask in an Informational Interview**

Remember an informational interview is your chance to learn about a certain career or company, it is not an employment interview and you must NOT ask for a job. You may, however ask some questions that would not be as appropriate during an employment interview. Following are some possible questions that you can ask in this type of interview:

- How do you spend a typical day/week?
- What are the positive/negative aspects of working in this field?
- What skills, education, and experience are required?
- What are the toughest challenges you face in the organization?
- Do you know of anyone who is looking for an individual with my skills and experience?

### **What to do When Asked an Inappropriate Question**

It can be an uncomfortable situation when asked an inappropriate or illegal question pertaining to such topics as race, nationality, religion, age, or marital status, especially if you are interviewing for a position that you really want. It is important to assess what kind of information an employer is seeking in asking these questions. For example, if an employer asks if you are planning on having children, they may be interested in whether or not you will be able to travel. You can address this issue in an interview without having to answer the question. For instance, a possible reply could be "Well, if you are worried about whether or not I will be available for business trips the answer is yes, I will be able to travel". This can effectively convey the necessary information that the employer was interested in and direct the line of questioning away from the inappropriate topic.

## **ETIQUETTE**

### **Basic Guidelines**

- NO CELL PHONES – Leave the cell phone at home or turn it off – forget the vibrate setting, it can be heard in a quiet room
- No electronics with sound – Handhelds that beep or ring, watches that beep on the hour, etc.

- No laptops, unless it is necessary for the interview – if you have to carry it, keep it in a briefcase
- Small purse or none at all; place all necessary items in a briefcase
- Carry a professional briefcase – Chose a dark color such as black, brown or navy, avoid backpacks, bags with wild colors
- DON'T smoke before or during the interview (don't have cigarettes in view)
- Be on time (not too early, e.g. more than 15 minutes)
- Bring a pen, paper, and extra resumes; it's worth investing in a professional quality pen and nice leather (leather-like) portfolio folder.
- Don't make excuses or criticize
- Don't set items on the interviewer's desk
- Wait to be seated
- When asked into the interviewer's office, walk in like you belong; don't hesitate, peek in, or act sheepishly.

## What to Wear

Dressing appropriately can mean different things for different situations. Know the field and organization you are interviewing for to better assess the appropriate attire. Keep in mind that even if employees dress business casual, you want to impress, professional attire is appropriate for the interview. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed.

### Both Men and Women

- Suit: Conservative two-piece business suit (solid black, dark blue or gray is best).
- Shirt: Dress shirt, long-sleeved shirt/blouse (white is best, pastel is next best).
- Shoes: Clean, polished dress shoes, dark to match suit - no red, white, pink, yellow or funky shoes, no gym shoes.
- Coat: Dress coat or trench coat (mid to long length) – avoid leather, no short jackets, ski jackets or athletic wear.
- Hair: Well-groomed hairstyle - avoid colors other than natural hair color.
- Fingernails: Clean and trimmed.
- Avoid cologne or perfume – the best scent is no scent at all.
- Empty your pockets--no bulges or noising keys or coins.
- No gum, candy or cigarettes.
- Light briefcase or portfolio case.
- No facial piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.)

### Women

- Makeup should create a natural look avoid heavy (evening) eye shadow, wild colors, glitter, or trends.
- Hosiery should have NO RUNS, avoid wild colors or textures.
- Small purse or none at all; carry a briefcase instead.
- If you wear nail polish, use clear or a conservative color.
- Subtle jewelry; a dress watch (no sport watches), post or small earrings, and 2-3 gold or silver rings. Avoid wild styles or thumb rings.
- Hair color should look natural – if dyed no pinks, purples, orange, blue etc.

### Men

- Necktie: plain or small pattern, subtle colors (i.e., maroon, yellow, gray, light blue, beige).
- Jewelry; No earrings or facial piercings, no necklaces or gold chains, one ring on each ring finger is appropriate (such as class ring, single stone), avoid additional rings.
- No visible tattoos.
- Dark socks (black is best).
- Hair; Shorter is better for men, natural hair color – if dyed, no pinks, purples, orange, etc.
- Shave; clean-shaven or well-groomed facial hair (i.e., mustache, beard).