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Part 1: Winning interview techniques

"Desire is the key to motivation, but it's the determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal — a commitment to excellence — that will enable you to attain the success you seek." This quote by Mario Andretti, a world champion race-car driver and one of the most successful Americans in the history of the sport, ties in explicitly with the thought process you need to apply when preparing for a job interview.

Even the most qualified job seekers need to prepare. Though the interview is not a test to be passed or

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- *Do your research.* Know as much as possible about the company, its needs, as well as the nature of the job. Having this knowledge in your thoughts can not only give you a competitive edge but also enable you to show interest and make it easier to relate your skills to the company's needs.

- *Take a personal inventory.* Identify and analyze how your strengths, skill set, professional/personal expe-

rience and interests will enable you to be a good fit for the position and add value to the team. In addition, determine your top five marketable skills for the job. Of course, these may change based upon the specific position. Once again, be sure you are prepared to relate how these skills will allow you to contribute.

- *Catalog your successes.* For each job, write down your accomplishments. Pinpoint the details of the situation, the actions you performed and the measurements/results of each success.

- *Review and practice potential questions.* Reread the job posting and create a list of key skills, attributes, required and preferred qualifications. Then for each of these items, try to find solid examples from your experience and achievements that demonstrate how your background is a good match. One of the best techniques for identifying potential questions is to simply Google "sample interview questions." Ask friends, relatives and colleagues for questions they have encountered. Next, write out responses to the most likely ones. Practice your answers out loud. *Do not memorize* your responses. You want to sound natural, confident and prepared. If possible, work through several mock interviews.

- *Develop questions to ask the interviewer.* Why? Because you demonstrate your interest in the job and company; you demonstrate you have done your research to the degree you can ask probing, detailed questions; and you can gather information that will enable you to make a well-in-

formed decision when the job offer is proposed.

- *Pay attention to your appearance.* Your goal is to create a strong, positive, credible first impression. The way you present yourself is the single most powerful nonverbal statement you can make. Your attire should be neat, professional, in good taste and appropriate for your intended field of endeavor. And, of course, your grooming, from head to toe, should be in sync.

Carry a portfolio with hard copies of your résumé, references and any other material that may be of interest to the interviewer. Make sure you have the correct time (plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early) and have clear directions to the location.

Interviewing is a learned skill. All it takes is motivation, enthusiasm, commitment to excellence, confidence in yourself, and practice, practice, practice!

Stay tuned for "Part 2: Winning interview techniques" in the April issue when I will share strategies for "during and after" the interview. For sample interview questions or questions you can ask the interviewer, email your request to sim1@yahoo.com.

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