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Part 2: Winning interview techniques

In this second segment of “Winning interview techniques,” strategies for managing yourself during and after the interview are addressed.

Even though the employment interview is the single most important event in the job search process, hiring managers are continually amazed at the number of applicants who drift into interviews unprepared, having only the vaguest idea of what they are going to say. So, make sure you have your act together.

Honing your interview skills takes practice. Think, even write out responses to questions you know will typically be asked, such as: Tell me about yourself. What are your strengths? What are your limitations? What interests you about this job? Describe an accomplishment of which you are particularly proud. What can you tell me that will make me confident that if I hire you, I’ll be making a really good decision? Describe for me a time on any job when you were faced with problems/stresses which tested your coping skills; what did you do? What are your compensation requirements? In general, be prepared to speak in concise terms regarding relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences that will show you are a good fit for the position.

Rehearse the interview. Be sure to avoid memorizing answers. You’ll find it much easier to respond to questions without stumbling and hesitating if it’s not the first time you’ve expressed your thoughts aloud. Prac-

tice until you can respond easily, enthusiastically and smoothly. If you have solid answers prepared for the frequently asked interview questions, you can often adjust them to answer new or surprising queries.

You may want to consider having a relative or friend conduct a mock interview and video it as well. Seeing yourself hunched over or squirming in a chair, fiddling with your hair or clothing, in addition to hearing how you sound as you stumble along can certainly motivate you to practice until you achieve a winning edge.

During the interview is the time to put your best foot forward: stand tall, smile, have a firm handshake, sit only after being asked, maintain good posture, place no personal items on the interviewer’s desk, speak to the interviewer using his last name and, most importantly, have a positive attitude.

Be prepared to like the person interviewing you. As one employer mentioned, “It’s hard not to like someone who likes you.” Do keep in mind, though, the interview is a professional business meeting, so be aware of your level of familiarity. Actively listen and pay attention, respond fully to each question, yet avoid talking too much. Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question. Keep the job for which you are being interviewed in mind at all times, focus on the employer’s needs and continually convey your interest in the position, as well as the contributions and the value you can

bring to the team.

If asked about a negative aspect of your background, show how you have turned an adverse situation into a positive one, and that you have learned from the past. Speak about how you have moved forward and are ready to bring your best to the position.

Be prepared to ask questions of your own. Why? You demonstrate your interest in the job and company, indicate you’ve done your homework to the extent you can ask detailed questions and the information you receive enables you to determine if the job is a good fit for you and your career goals.

After the interview, thank the interviewer for his time and express your interest in the job. Before you leave, get business cards and clarify what the next step will be (second interview, hiring decision, etc.). Make sure you send a follow-up thank you note within 24-48 hours after the interview. In today’s world of technology, travel and turnaround time, it is acceptable to send your note via email. A handwritten note is always welcomed when time allows.

In the final analysis, look upon each job interview as a positive adventure. Examine your impressions. You should learn something from each interview, if only what not to do the next time around.

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