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Interviewing for success: Part 2

Oliver Wendall Holmes once said, “The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.” In this second installment of “Interviewing for success,” I will address strategies for “moving forward” successfully during and after the interview.

Even though the employment interview is the single most important event in the job search process, recruiters and 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 of and even write out responses to requests and questions you know will typically be asked, such as: Can you tell me about yourself? What strengths do you bring to this position? What limitations? Why are you interested in this position, and how does it fit into your long-term career goals? Describe a career 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? Tell me about a time when a project you worked on did not meet your end-result expectations. In retrospect, what would you have done differently to achieve success? What are your compensation requirements?

Those questions are just a sampling of many that you may be asked. Be prepared to speak in concise, clear terms regarding relevant knowledge,

skills, abilities, experience and accomplishments that will show you are an ideal fit for the position.

Rehearse. You will 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. Practice until you can respond easily, enthusiastically and smoothly.

Have a friend or relative conduct a mock interview and record it. Seeing yourself with poor posture, squirming in your chair and fiddling with your hair or clothing, in addition to hearing how you sound when speaking, can certainly motivate you to practice until you are confident and ready to perform at your best. The mock interview provides you with an opportunity to identify your strengths along with those areas you need to work on.

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, use the last name of the interviewer unless requested to use a first name and, most importantly, project 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.” Keep in mind, though, the interview is a professional business meeting, so be aware of your level of familiarity. Actively listen, pay attention and 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 value you can bring to the team.

Be prepared to ask about three to six questions of your own. Why? You demonstrate your interest in the job and company and indicate you’ve done your homework to the extent you can ask detailed questions. Plus, 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 or her 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 timeline, etc.). 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.

Finally, look at each job interview as a positive adventure and a learning experience. Explore your impressions, examine your performance, continue to expect the best of yourself and then prepare to make the interview reality a success.

For a list of sample interview questions and questions to ask the interviewer, email succes-sim1@yahoo.com. For more information on Dr. White’s programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307. ●