

It’s time. You have sent out your resume, attended networking events, had meetings with people, and applied online and now...

You just got *the phone call*.

“Hello Mr. Jones. We have received your application for the Brain Surgeon position we have open and would like to talk to you. Is Wednesday at 2 PM ok with you?”

You’re excited. You should be! This is the moment you have been working and waiting for!

Interviewing is a skill. Just like any skill it can be improved with preparation and practice. We will work on honing your interview skills in this final piece.

Preparation

You **MUST** prepare for interviews. The more you prepare the more confident you will be when you arrive. Below is a list of suggested tasks for preparation.

- OJTTulsa.org has a schedule of Tuesday evening meetings; each of these meetings have a special class dedicated to interviews. It doesn’t matter if you have an interview coming up or not. *Go to the class and practice*. You can also check OJTTulsa.org for volunteers that are willing to help you practice.
- Research the company. Go to the company website and check them out. Perform a Google search on the company. If you have a library card you can access Hoovers website through the library website; check the company out on Hoovers. Google the names of executives in the company. See if the company has a Wikipedia page. Check out their stock, how has it performed over the last 3 to 5 years? Can you identify why?
- Search LinkedIn for the company. Look for the executives you found on Hoovers; check out their profiles. Look for employees (or former employees) of the company. If you are connected (either directly or through people you know) and have the time, try to schedule a meeting with any employee you can. Ask them what it is like to work for the company.
- Research the position. Go back to the company website, find the careers section and locate the posting. Google search the position title and the key responsibilities listed in the posting.
- Open Google and search for “interview questions” and “sample interview questions”. Research the possible questions you may be asked during the interview.
- Take notes on all your research. Did you find an interesting article about the company? Print it off and perhaps you can bring it up as a speaking point during the interview. (Of course the article should paint the company in a positive light! No negative media!)
- Build a list of questions you want to ask during the interview. **REMEMBER** the interview is a two way discussion. You should speak 30-40% of the time. You don’t want to ‘hog’ the conversation but you **DO** want to be an active participant. You are interviewing the company as much as they are interviewing you.

File “3005 - Interview Questions To Ask”

- This document is a list of 9 questions you may want to ask during the interview.
- It is **NOT** all-inclusive! Do some research and be prepared with other questions.

The next few files will cover using your accomplishments in interviews. Read the job posting again, paying attention to the responsibilities and requirements. Select your accomplishments that best fit what the company is looking for. Study these accomplishments and perhaps even print them off to take with you during the interview.

File “3006 - Using Accomplishments in Interviews”

This is an introduction to using accomplishments to answer interview questions. Remember the Situation, Action, Result format. What was the situation? How did you respond? What was the (positive!) outcome?

File “3007 - Answering the Tough Questions”

This is a presentation given by Bob Costello. Bob is the founder of MBC Associates; a Human Resource consulting firm with over 20 years experience.

Read the entire file and take notes. The first few pages are an excellent discussion about the interview environment and the remaining pages are questions likely to be asked during an interview. (A small piece of irony for you: over the last few years almost everything about unemployment has changed. It has changed for the job-seeker and for the company. Both are using different methods to find that ‘perfect fit’. In almost every case, the questions asked during the interview have not changed in years. Exceptions to this are companies like Google or Microsoft.)

- Remember the interview is a time of ‘mutual exchange’. The employer is deciding if you have the skills and ‘fit’ the company culture while you are deciding if this is a company you will be comfortable working for.
- Most interviewers are untrained and nervous. Interviewing people is not part of their daily routine and they are out of their comfort zone. You can make them comfortable by taking control of the conversation and explaining how you are a good fit. Remember this is not ‘man-handling’ or hogging the conversation; you want to control in a passive way that lets them feel like they are still in control.
 - Answer questions in 2 minutes or less.
 - Always finish with a question. “How does that sound?” “Ok..?” “Would you like to hear more?”
- The Money question
 - Also see file “3008 - Money Question Strategies” for more information. The bottom line is to avoid giving them a direct answer for as long as possible. Your goal is to make THEM give YOU a number. This puts you in a better position.
 - Exception to the Money question: Recruiters. They will need to know what you expect for compensation.
 - Paper or online applications that require you to enter a salary number.
 - Leave it blank
 - Write OPEN or NEGOTIABLE
 - Enter a range
 - Enter \$1.00 (yes, One Dollar)
 - Enter *** (SHIFT & “8” on your keyboard)
 - Be creative. Paper won’t refuse an entry and many websites will allow some of the above suggestions

- Strengths & Weaknesses question
 - Strengths: This is a great opportunity to sell you! I suggest using your most powerful accomplishment statement that matches the job requirements.
 - Weaknesses: Name a downside of one of your strengths. Note that you recognize this problem and are working to improve it. Google how to answer this question. (Be ready to explain HOW you are working to improve!)

Other notes on interviews...

- Get a business card (or at least a name) from *everyone*. This includes the person at the front desk. Within 24 hours (I suggest you run straight home and start writing!) send each person a thank you note.
 - Bring your business cards with you, 10 or less should do. It makes it easier to get someone's business card when you are offering your own.
 - Send a thank you note to the front desk person. This is an IMPORTANT person. Many companies will speak to the front desk person after an interview and ask how you treated them. ALWAYS be polite to the gate-keeper!
 - Thank you note to the recruiter (unless you have already sent this one. I usually send a thank you note to the recruiter after they call to schedule the interview).
 - Thank you note to each person you interviewed with. In most cases this is one person. Some interviews will be a panel.
 - You have been to the company, you know the address. You have no excuse for not sending thank you notes. This reminds them about you and sets you apart from other interviewers. I'll never forget speaking to a recruiter after an interview. She told me to send a thank you card and mentioned that NOT ONE PERSON THAT HAD BEEN IN FOR AN INTERVIEW SENT A THANK YOU CARD.
- Dress the part. In my opinion, an interview requires a suit, polished shoes and a well pressed shirt.
 - A note on suits. I never wear my jacket in the car. Wearing a jacket in the car puts wrinkles in the lower flaps. Keep a hangar in the car or just fold your jacket (length-wise, not top to bottom) and put in the back seat.
 - I also never carry a wallet when wearing a suit. I use a money clip. Wallets tend to be heavy and/or fat and throw off the balance of the pants or even worse make the jacket hang weird. If you don't have a money clip, use an office binder clip. This stuff will stay in your pocket anyway so no one will know you're using a binder clip!
- I know I don't have to say this but I'm saying it anyway.
 - Shave. I don't suggest wearing a beard to an interview. Mustache or goatee in today's society is usually acceptable as long as they are well trimmed.
 - If you haven't had a haircut recently, consider getting a haircut as long before the interview as possible. You want your hair neat but don't want to look like you got a haircut that morning!
 - Shower. Brush your teeth. Don't chew gum. A tic-tac is fine.
- Organize your notes and review them the night before and the morning of the interview.
 - You want your accomplishment stories, answers to interview questions and questions you plan to ask to be fresh in your memory.
 - Also review any notes you have made on the company and/or the position.

- Plan your route.
 - If you have been actively networking then you have been driving around town quite a bit and should know the active construction areas. Road construction slows down traffic.
 - Consider ‘rush hour’ traffic. You don’t want to get caught in traffic and be late to the interview!
 - Arrive to the parking lot no more than 15 minutes early. Enter the front door no more than 10 minutes early. You want to show that you are eager for the interview but also respect their time. You are probably not the only person interviewing today and you don’t want them to feel ‘rushed’.
- Call a friend.
 - You are probably nervous. It’s normal. Have a friend ready to call that you can talk to just before the interview.

After the interview...

- This can be a stressful time. “Do I call?” “Why haven’t they called me?” “What if they went with someone else?” Lots of questions will run through your mind. Find that friend you called just before the interview and sit down with them; let off some steam.
- Kim Armstrong is an Executive Recruiter & Job Coach at Vintage Services. She has some excellent thoughts on interviewing and I thought it best to quote her.

Regarding the question going through the mind of HR recruiters.... they want to hire strong candidates with easy-going, low maintenance personalities. Problem people...cause more work for HR. I can tell you exactly what I hear from HR Managers consistently. (Below are a few do’s & don’ts...this is not an exhaustive list...just a few points).

DO’s in an interview situation

- *Be professional and polite – with everyone.... like the receptionist, the janitor, the HR assistant, the HR Rep., the hiring manager. Say “hello” or smile to everyone you see while at the company you are interviewing. (Trust me.... this will be discussed when you leave).*
- *Must have a firm hand shake...practice this! It will reflect your level of confidence....and they WILL REMEMBER.*
- *Be transparent, honest, friendly, relaxed. Act as if you have a very calm and flexible personality when dealing with people.*
- *If you’re not outgoing...then get involved with a Toastmaster group...and learn how to communicate better.*
- *Be polite. Write a brief thank you note and MOVE ON. If you get a call back – then act pleasantly surprised and eager to move on to the next step.*

Don’ts in an interview situation

- *Don’t act nervous....relax. Don’t act desperate, rude, frustrated.*
- *Don’t ask pushy questions.... like... “how do I rank?” “ what are you benefits?” “ how often do you give raises/promotions?” (It’s not about you and what you can get).*
- *Don’t do anything that would be considered rude. Like using their pen to take notes. Don’t chomp on gum or a piece of candy. Don’t take your phone in.... you wouldn’t want to take a call or read a text message while waiting for your interview or during your interview.*
- *After the interview....don’t call them to follow-up. You can send a brief thank you email initially and maybe a follow up email a week or two later....but don’t stalk them!*

- *If you speak with someone at the company and they filled the position..... Your reply should NOT BE “Why didn’t I get the job?” or “Why wasn’t I selected?”THIS IS THE WORST THING YOU CAN DO. Often you will be blackballed from the company for this type of rude response. (It may be a legitimate question to you....but they will not appreciate you questioning their decision).*
- *If they filled the position.... your reply should be.... “thanks for the opportunity to interview with your company....please keep me in mind for other positions that I may fit”. This will often land you a future job with the company....if they liked your personality and thought you would fit into their culture.*
- *If one person at the company tells you the position has been filled....don’t contact another person in HR or the Hiring manager. They will talk amongst themselves and this will backfire on you and easily get you blackballed from working for that company.*

Don’t get so excited about your interview or a company that it comes across negatively in the interview or your follow up. HR and hiring managers will remember this negativity and make notes in your file and in their computer system. No one wants to hire a “loose canon” who gets upset easily.

I constantly hear stories about all sorts of botched interviews that could have been handled differently by the candidate.

If you cannot communicate well, if you’re not a likable person, if you show any sign of frustration, if you act snobbish, if you act desperate, if you act uptight, if you’re considered rude in any way YOU WILL NOT GET THE JOB... and you will never be considered for another position within that company....notes will be made in your file and in their system. IT’S NOT ABOUT HOW YOU PERCEIVE YOURSELF....IT’S HOW THEY PERCEIVE YOU! If you’re perceived negatively....you must be willing to change!!

Ask someone at the job ministry meeting to be honest and tell you how you’re perceived. If they can’t tell you one negative thing you need to work on.....ask someone else who will be truly honest! There has to be something you can change....no one is perfect.

You have had quite an adventure so far; building your resume, networking and meeting new people, practicing your Two Minute Drill, researching companies. Long hours and way more work than you normally put in at the office.

Searching for a job is **hard work**. Interviews can be stressful. Your day to day life might be chaotic. *You deserve this job! You’ve worked hard for it and done everything right!*

Maybe the company calls you and makes an offer. Maybe they don’t. Remember that *your perfect job is out there and you will find it.* Until that time you will have an exciting time meeting new people and learning new things. Know that you have friends that not only care about you but understand the frustrations and challenges you are going through. Make it a regular appointment on your calendar; attend the meetings at OJT every Thursday (or somewhere else). The positive emotion that flows through that room for an hour and a half is contagious. As a close friend of mine once said “it’s a great place to get a hug”.

I know your job is out there, waiting for you to find it. If any of this information helped you along the way, let one of the volunteers know.