

Preparing for Interviews

Your resume has done the job and you have been called to attend an Interview! What you had planned for has become a reality but now it can become a source of concern and anxiety as you start to anticipate the actual Job Interview. If you have not had much experience at this stage of the job search process or it has been some time since you have had an Interview it can be a stressful event. The information following should help you become truly prepared and in doing so, will help you approach your Interview with renewed confidence!

Remember, the Interview itself is merely an exercise in two-way communication between the employer and you, as each attempts to “sell” to the other. The employer “sells” the job and his/her company while the applicant “sells” himself or herself as the person best suited to fill it. The employer is most likely feeling anxious as well. She or he wants the “right” candidate to walk through the door! You can be that person.

“Today’s preparation determines tomorrow’s achievements”

- **Research the company:** This will be a quick review as you most likely did this when you were preparing your resume. The information is usually readily available on the company website. What products does the company produce/sell? Are they a local company, a global company? It is especially important to know the “culture” of the company. Do they support local causes? Do they donate to the local community? This will help you to prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview that will show the employer that you really want to work for **this** company.
- **Prepare the answers to Interview questions the employer may ask.** A list of typical questions are available in the Resource Centre, however, anticipate questions that may be asked specifically in your industry. The answers must reflect what you have to offer the employer that answers the questions, “Can you do the job”, “Will you do the job” and “Are you a good fit”. This means that your answers must reflect the skills, abilities, experiences and attitude that you bring to the table. How else will the employer know that you can do the job!
- **Prepare your Questions:** Be ready to ask some questions of your own at the end of the interview. Eg: Is there opportunity to grow with the company? Do you anticipate that the company will expand? I saw on your website that you donate to “.....,” as an employee, would I have the opportunity to help with fundraising? Does the company offer incentives? Ask questions that you really want to ask as it will show your interest and buy-in to the job and the company.
- **Directions:** Never be late for an interview. So be prepared. Know the address where the Interview will take place. Google the address if you do not know. Know how long it will take you to get to the interview and be prepared to arrive 15 minutes early. To an employer, being late for your interview is not acceptable. Many people take the time before the Interview date to make their way to the Interview site so that they can estimate how long it will take them and to check out parking. Be prepared for emergencies – traffic accident ahead, for example. Take the employers telephone number with you. Employers know that there are unavoidable circumstances and having their telephone number with you will allow you to call ahead if you are going to be late. It will also indicate that you are prepared and responsible. However, this needs to be used for unavoidable circumstances only.
- **“You never get a second chance to make a first impression”** It’s true! How you present yourself to the employer can be a deal breaker. Here are a few tips to consider:

- ✓ **Sight:**
 - Dress appropriately for your interview
 - Your clothes should be clean and pressed
 - Facial hair should be clean shaven or trimmed
 - Make sure your hair is cut and styled neatly
 - Never chew gum during your interview
 - Use good eye contact and SMILE!

Another tip on appropriate clothing:

✚ Whether you are interviewing for a job at a local construction site or at the Bank of Canada, dress according to how you would be expected to dress when you get the job, but take it “one notch up”. If it is at the construction site, wear your clean jeans, clean shirt and take your hard hat and steel toed boots with you. This will give the employer a positive first impression and having your boots, hard hat and gloves with you tells the employer that you are “ready for action”. Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed. How you take care of your appearance can indicate how you will take care of your work site.

- ✓ **Speaking:**
 - Speak in a professional tone with confidence
 - Do not use slang when speaking to your interviewer, and definitely do not swear!
 - Try not to say, umm, “you know”, “like”
 - Speak clearly and be heard!
- ✓ **Smell:**
 - Hygiene is of the utmost importance
 - Shower before your interview
 - Brush your teeth and do not smoke prior to your interview
 - Do not use cologne or perfume
 - Wear deodorant or antiperspirant
- ✓ **Touch:**
 - If your hands are sweaty – wipe them before you go into the Interview
 - Always greet the employer with a friendly and firm handshake and leave giving a firm handshake
 - It is not appropriate to touch or hug the interviewer – no matter how much you want the job!
 - Try to keep from fidgeting!
- ✓ **Taste:**
 - Remember to leave the employer with a “good taste.” You may not get the job, but if the employer is impressed he may tell a friend or colleague about you
 - And....check your breath!

- **Take copies of your resume and references:** Take a few copies of your resume with you. If there are two interviewers you can offer one to the second person, if needed. Absolutely, have copies of your References with you if you have not included them with your initial application. Any time the employer

asks for your References you must be able to hand them over. This shows you as being prepared and organized.

- **Take a pen and notebook:** Having a pen and notebook with you will show that you are organized and attentive to detail. Have your prepared questions written down ready for asking at the end of the interview. Write down additional information your employer needs from you. Having a pen and notepad may be a way to stop fidgeting!
- **Turn off your cell phone:** Interruptions from cell phones ringing and beeping says to the employer that you are not focused and the Interview is not important to you. Besides, if you take calls or are distracted in the interview and you are applying for a job where cell phones are for personal use only, the employer will determine, rightly or wrongly, that you will bring this behavior to your work site. Make sure your phone is turned off or leave it in your car.
- **Bring your Portfolio:** Depending on the job you are interviewing for, taking your Portfolio that shows your work and highlights your skills and experience, can bring a visible selling point at the interview. You are able to back up your claims and it can be very impressive to a potential employer.
- **Closing the Interview:** At the end of your interview, typically you will be asked if you have any questions. This is your chance to show that you are really serious about the job and have taken the time to research the company. These questions will be written in your notebook. Other questions, could include, “When will I expect to hear from you? “What is the start date for this position” – (if it has not been identified on the Job Posting). “Is there any other information you need from me that would further identify my ability to do this job?” Close with a handshake and a genuine, “thank you”.
- **Follow-up:** Your Interview is NOT over. Nearly 15% of hiring managers reject a job candidate who neglects to send out a Thank you letter after the Interview. 32% of hiring managers said they would consider the “thankless” prospect, but their opinion of him or her was diminished. If you want to be a step above the next candidate that walks through the door, depending on the position you have applied for, make a quick call or send a short email or drop off a card that simply thanks the employer for their time! To be effective, this must be done within 24 hours of the Interview.
- **If you are not the successful candidate:** Take the time to follow-up to ask the employer for feedback. Were their skills that you may be lacking? Will the employer anticipate other similar openings in the near future and would they consider you at that time? Don’t forget, even if you do not get the job, up to 15% of new hires do not work out and if you have taken the time to prepare and the time to follow up, you just may be the person they will call next!

Additional Resources:

Interview Skills workshop – WorkBC Employment Service Centre
www.gcflernfree.org/career – Career section – Interview skills
www.workinginCanada.gc.ca - How to prepare for an Interview
www.youth.gc.ca – search Preparing for a Job Interview