

Interviewing

What You Need to Know

Do you know how to conduct yourself or what questions you should ask the employer during a job interview? You may have spent hours filling out worksheets and putting finishing touches on your résumé, but you often have less than 15 minutes to make a first impression. Interviewing is all about effective communication. Since you are being interviewed, your written communication [i.e., cover letter and résumé] was sufficient to help you make the first cut. Now you must anticipate what the interviewer is looking for and use this face-to-face time to verbalize your interest, enthusiasm and qualification for the position.

*"Let every man
be occupied,
and occupied
in the highest
employment
of which his
nature is capable,
and die with the
consciousness
that he had
done his best."
~ Sydney Smith*

The Employer Perspective

According to recent employer surveys, the following elements distinguished the most impressive candidates:

- ◆ Communication skills
- ◆ Strong liberal arts and general education foundation
- ◆ Knowledge of career and how their strengths and abilities apply
- ◆ Learning a great deal about enterprise on their own
- ◆ Genuine
- ◆ Preparedness for interview
- ◆ Maturity
- ◆ Common sense
- ◆ Positive attitudes and realistic expectations
- ◆ Bearing and confidence

Why Should an Employer Hire You?

No set of typical interview questions will prepare you for an interview as well as really knowing how to address this question. Prepare yourself by reviewing all the work you've done on your worksheets. You should be able to articulate your skills, experience and interests, and how they fit with the needs of the employer. Often, the person selected for a position is not the best qualified, but is the best at communicating a good fit with the position and company.

Why Are You a Strong Candidate?

Identify the key skills, qualities and experiences that the position requires, and consider how your skills, qualities and experiences match what the employer is seeking.

Hopefully, you have already researched—via the company's Web site, other Internet resources, periodicals, or other print materials—the company's products, culture, markets, competitors, revenue, future projections, and geographic locations. Your informational interviews and networking can provide additional information to assist you in your ability to articulate the fit between your qualifications and their needs.

What Examples Can You Provide?

Be prepared to talk about your previous experiences—in school, at work, in campus or volunteer involvement, through extracurricular activities—what you've learned from them, and how they demonstrate your readiness to meet that organization's needs. More about this will be discussed in the section on behavioral interviewing.

Do You Really Want This Job?

The employer is looking for enthusiasm for the position and the organization. Use expressions such as, "I'm really excited about the chance to interview for this job," to open an interview. As the interview is wrapping up say, "Based on our conversation I'm even more interested than I was before. What you've described sounds like an exciting place to work. When do you think the hiring decision will be made?" Use your own words, but make sure you explicitly communicate your enthusiasm for the position.

"In order to succeed, you must know what you are doing, like what you are doing and believe in what you are doing."
~ Will Rogers

Fifteen Surefire Reasons for Rejection

1. **Lack of proper career planning**—needs direction, no defined career goals.
 2. **Lack of knowledge in the field of specialization**—not well qualified, lacks depth.
 3. **Inability to express thoughts clearly and concisely**—rambles.
 4. **Insufficient evidence of achievement or capacity to excite action in others.**
 5. **Not prepared for the interview**—no research on the organization.
 6. **No real interest in the organization or the industry**—merely shopping around.
 7. **Narrow location interest**—unwilling to relocate.
 8. **No enthusiasm**—indifferent/ bland personality, conveyed no genuine interest in the position.
 9. **Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited, cocky, aloof.**
 10. **Interested only in the money.**
 11. **Asks poor questions or none at all**—little depth or meaning to the questions.
 12. **Expects too much too soon**—not willing to pay dues first.
 13. **Makes excuses or are evasive**—hedges on unfavorable factors in record.
 14. **No confidence and poise**—fails to look interviewer in the eye; immature.
 15. **Poor appearance**—sloppy; lacks sophistication.
- You can avoid these reasons for rejection by using your research, worksheets and additional information in this chapter to adequately prepare for your interview.

"If you have made mistakes, even serious ones, there is always another chance for you. What we call failure is not the falling down but the staying down."
~ Mary Pickford

Projecting a Professional Image

When in doubt, the safest choice for interview attire is traditional and conservative. Granted, you might feel a bit uncomfortable if you are dressed up and the interviewer is relatively casual. But, wouldn't it be more awkward if you dress casually for the interview and the employer is in a nicely tailored suit?

Do some research before deciding what clothing to wear. How were your networking and informational interview contacts dressed? Look at the employer's Web site to see if certain clothing appears to be standard with this company. A call to a company's human resources department to ask about attire is also acceptable. Finally, after you've decided on your interview attire, ask someone whose judgment you trust to give you their honest opinion.

Projecting the right image is a good investment. If money is an issue, you may consider asking parents for these items for Christmas or as an early graduation present.

A good rule of thumb is to err on the conservative side. If you doubt, opt for the more conventional image.

- ◆ Haircut: No extreme styles; avoid styles where hair is in the face.
- ◆ Shoes: Polished [preferably dark leather], with heels that aren't run down.
- ◆ Clothing: Clean and neatly pressed.
- ◆ Hygiene: Shower, brush your teeth and wear deodorant.
- ◆ Carry your résumé in a leather or leather-like portfolio. Briefcases are not necessary.

"A strong, positive self-image is the best possible preparation for success in life."
~ Dr. Joyce Brothers

Standard Tips for Women

- ◆ Wear a business suit typically in blue, gray or black; a tailored dress is also often appropriate, especially if worn with a jacket.
- ◆ Select neatly pressed blouses in whites or pastels. Watch necklines; you want a job, not a date. Avoid lace, ruffles and poor quality fabrics or fabrics that don't look crisp.
- ◆ Wear classic, dark, medium-heeled pumps with closed toes.
- ◆ Be conservative in wearing make-up, jewelry and perfumes, and keep it simple.
- ◆ Make sure skirt lengths, necklines and slits are conservative. Skirts and dresses should be no shorter than two inches above the knee. Hosiery should be worn at all times.

Standard Tips for Men

- ◆ Dark suits [gray/navy preferred]. Sports coats are usually too casual for most employers. Avoid faddish styles and cheap polyester fabrics. Look for a quality wool-blend material.
- ◆ Wear hard sole dress shoes in black, preferably with dark colored socks. Avoid casual shoes, cowboy or work boots, and suede materials.
- ◆ Shirts should be neatly pressed, plain white or pastel, and worn with a relatively subdued tie. Subtle striped shirts may also work. Make sure tie stays in place with tie clip. Avoid ties that are too wide or too thin.

Exceptions to the Rules

Many technology jobs [auto body/service, industrial maintenance, welding, machine tool, electronics, heating and air] do not require the business suit approach. In fact, some interviewers would perceive an overdressed applicant as a negative. Instead wear casual dress pants and an open collar shirt. For example, if applying for electronics technician position, you could wear khaki pants and a nice blue shirt without a tie. There may be times when a man may wish to wear a sport coat or a tie. Women may wish to wear dark, solid color slacks and a jacket or blazer with a contrasting solid color blouse, especially if taking a plant tour.

*"Of all things
you wear, your
expression is the
most important."
~ Janet Lane*

Stages of the Interview

Most interviews follow the format outlined below.

Breaking the Ice

- ◆ This is your first chance to make an impression.
- ◆ Actively and enthusiastically engage from the start while letting your personality come through.
- ◆ Avoid brief, one-word responses.
- ◆ Maintain eye contact, but don't stare them down.
- ◆ Maintain an open posture: no folded arms, head turned downward, etc. [Strive for a natural, conversational pose that is not overly casual or stiff.]
- ◆ Control nervous habits like lip smacking, ring twisting, fiddling, tightly grasped hands, leg kicking, foot twisting, etc.
- ◆ Handshakes should be firm.
- ◆ Using your hands when you talk is appropriate as long as it does not distract the listener and is natural for you.
- ◆ Avoid stiffness in posture; shifting positions is natural.
- ◆ Smile; let them know you are friendly and likeable.

Communicating Your Qualifications

- ◆ Expect questions regarding your goals, education, experience, interests, and activities.
- ◆ Give specifics that back up your answers to prove by example. Sharing an account of your personal success illustrates your effectiveness.
- ◆ Lead with the positive. Avoid anything that seems even vaguely negative.

Many employers are trained in behavioral or focused interviewing. The basic premise is to encourage the candidate to prove him or herself by sharing stories of past accomplishments that suggest the probability of future successes. You can do this by describing a Situation, Task, Action, and Result that utilized your unique skills and qualifications. Using the STAR model as described prepares you to answer many of the questions likely to be asked in any interview, and also allows you to develop a specific plan of what you want the company to know about you before the interview concludes. You must also be prepared to cite specific examples to support and reinforce your education, experience and skills. *The STAR Worksheet 5-1* will help you put this plan together.

*It is confidence
in our bodies,
minds, and spirits
that allow us to
keep looking for
new adventures,
new directions
to grow in, and
new lessons to
learn – which
is what life
is all about.”
~ Oprah Winfrey*

Example

Doug claimed to have excellent “people management” skills. He listed this on his résumé, and hoped to be given an opportunity to discuss it. During the interview, the employer asked him about his ability to manage people. Prepared for this question, Doug related how he had supervised a crew of 14 college students during 12-hour shifts for four months last summer. He explained that in order to keep production levels high, he had to assign each person to a workstation according to where he or she worked best.

Additionally, he had to keep sick days low among his crew. He accomplished this by creating a team-working environment, encouraging his crew to have fun while working. The interviewer was impressed, and Doug received a job offer a few days later.

Be a STAR Candidate

Use this model to present yourself as a STAR candidate:

Situation—Describe the situation.

In my first semester on campus, I had a job at the campus information desk. I was the first person that many campus visitors encountered.

Task—What task was required?

I had to direct people around a campus that I didn’t even know myself yet, so doing the job right was a challenge.

Action—What action did you take?

[This is where you can mention your skills.]

When the desk was slow I made a point of navigating the college’s Web site, getting a sense of what departments were in what buildings and where those buildings were on campus. Plus, I made a point of seeking out the names of the different buildings as I went from class to class—even the smaller ones that were easy to miss.

Result—What was the result?

Within a fairly short time I found that I was really familiar with the campus. Even my own boss—who’d been at the school for several years—would sometimes ask me where was a particular room or department.

More STAR examples:

S – At Ivy Tech, I didn't do so well in my first year. I was trying to do too much and wasn't budgeting my time or setting priorities very well. Midway through the second semester, my grades were the wake-up call I needed.

T – I knew that I needed to turn things around, and do it quickly.

A – When school started the next fall, I formed a study group with a couple of friends. We met twice a week for two hours at a time. Also, I persuaded my roommates to set certain “no TV” times in the room each night.

Another big thing was learning that I didn't have to say “yes” every time somebody asked if I wanted to go out.

R – Things turned around pretty quickly. By the end of my second semester, I'd brought my overall GPA above 3.0; I was on the Dean's list; and I was getting a lot more out of my college experience.

S – In high school, I worked weekends at the pizza restaurant near my parents' home. Over time I did pretty much every job in the place.

T – Part-timers would come and go pretty quickly. The owners were frustrated by the inefficiency of their training system.

A – I thought it would be a good idea to get the basic steps and procedures for each job down in writing, so one night I just started listing the things that I thought new employees ought to know into different sections of a spiral notebook: how to set up a table, turning the ovens off and on, etc. I added more over time. Before I left for college, I put it all on a diskette so that the owners could update it.

R – I still work there during the summers, and they're still updating the basic information I put together way back when in that old spiral notebook.

Be a STAR candidate! Have several STAR stories prepared before every interview. Think about what your stories say about the various qualities, skills and experiences you possess.

Situation

S

Task

T

Action

A

Result

R

Situation

S

Task

T

Action

A

Result

R

Now review the typical interview questions listed below, and consider how your stories can help you add substance to the answers.

Hint:

Mix a small amount of personal info: *"I grew up in central Indiana." ... with a small amount of educational info: "I chose Ivy Tech Community College, due to its size and strong reputation of providing practical learning opportunities and experiences—which felt about right—and I chose business as a program of study because I thought it would be a good fit and would provide a range of options." ... and a small amount of vocational info: "I've had two great internships in PR departments. That's one reason I've been really looking forward to talking with you today."*

Tell me about yourself.

Why should I hire you over other candidates?

Why do you want to go into this field?

Describe a situation where you had to juggle several difficult tasks.

Tell me about a time when you learned from a setback.

What role do you usually play on a team?

Hint:

Be prepared with a STAR story to illustrate these.

What are your major strengths?

What qualifications do you have that make you believe you will be successful in this field?

Hint:

Think “*not my greatest strength*” rather than “*weakness*.” Pick something that may not come naturally for you, that you have worked on and improved.

Name a weakness that you have.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Why did you choose your major?

Tell me about a time when you had to use strong leadership skills.

What do you do when you're not studying or working?

Tell me about an accomplishment in which you take pride.

How does your education relate to our needs?

Why do you want this job?

Why are you interested in this field?

Tell me about a situation when you had to work under pressure.

How do you feel about traveling/relocating?

What is your communication style?

If you've filled out all of the previous worksheets, you have already answered all of these questions. Now go back and circle all the skills you highlighted in your answers. Can't find very many? Better go over those answers again!

*"Believe in
yourself! Have
faith in your
abilities! Without
a humble but
reasonable
confidence in
your own powers
you cannot be
successful or
happy."
~ Norman
Vincent Peale*

Gathering Information about both the Position and Company

- ◆ Research + Curiosity = Good Questions.
- ◆ Base your questions on the research you've done. *“I noticed on your Web page that you have a six-month training program. Could you tell me more about that?”* is a better question than, *“Could you tell me about your training program?”*

Typical Questions a Candidate Might Ask

In almost all cases you should have access to information about the company and position before going into the interview. Your research into this is crucial when the interviewer asks, *“Do you have any questions for me today?”* Be ready to respond. For example:

- ◆ *I know your company has been successful in spite of the current slump in the economy. What do you think the reason is for that?*
- ◆ *Your training program sounds really extensive. What was your training experience like when you started your job?*
- ◆ *Do you have plans to expand the XYZ department?*
- ◆ *The job description says that teamwork and communication skills are essential for this job. What other qualities do you see as important?*
- ◆ *What would a typical week look like?*
- ◆ *What have you liked most about working for XYZ?*
- ◆ *I know you've grown by 20% in the past five years. Do you see that type of growth continuing?*
- ◆ *What is your company's philosophy regarding professional development?*
- ◆ *How are decisions made about who will be promoted within the organization?*
- ◆ *What qualities do you think distinguish your best performers?*

Closing the Interview

- ◆ Indicate enthusiasm for the job as well as appreciation for the opportunity to interview.
- ◆ Summarize what makes you especially interested in and qualified for the job.
- ◆ Don't shy away from a strong closing. [e.g., *“I'm very interested in this opportunity,”* makes a stronger impression than, *“This sounds interesting.”*] Tell the interviewer that you are confident in your ability to perform the responsibilities and make a contribution.
- ◆ Ask for clarification about the next steps in the selection process and when a decision can be expected.

“One thing life has taught me: if you are interested, you never have to look for new interests. They come to you. When you are genuinely interested in one thing, it will always lead to something else.”
~ Eleanor Roosevelt

The Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing

Do

- ◆ Be yourself.
- ◆ Dwell on the positive.
- ◆ Volunteer relevant information related to your qualifications.
- ◆ Shed your student image in appearance and use of language.
- ◆ Arrive 15-20 minutes early.
- ◆ Have references and additional résumés available for the employer.
- ◆ Be courteous to everyone.
- ◆ Choose a chair facing the interviewer.
- ◆ Have money with you for parking, lunch, etc.
- ◆ Go to the restroom before entering the interviewer's waiting room.
- ◆ Be aware of the current events in the world.
- ◆ Take a pen and any information you would need to complete an application.
- ◆ Bring a “mock” application—or your *Résumé Worksheet 1-7* to assist your completion of an application if necessary.
- ◆ Greet the interviewer with a smile, firm handshake, and direct eye contact.
- ◆ Take an umbrella in case of rain.
- ◆ Send a follow-up letter thanking the interviewer. If there is more than one interviewer, send a follow-up letter to each person. Be sure to get the correct spelling and job title for each person by writing it down or by obtaining their business cards.

Don't

- ◆ Chew gum or smoke.
- ◆ Use slang.
- ◆ Slouch or fidget.
- ◆ Be chatty while the recruiter reviews your résumé.
- ◆ Place anything on the interviewer's desk [i.e., purse, elbow, portfolio].
- ◆ Be too familiar with the interviewer. [Calling them by their first name unless asked to, making inappropriately familiar comments like “*That's a nice suit,*” or “*Your office is nicer than the one in which I last interviewed*”].
- ◆ Get the interviewer's name wrong.
- ◆ Pick anything up off the desk.
- ◆ Be a jokester.
- ◆ Give monosyllabic answers.
- ◆ Criticize anyone, including your past employer.
- ◆ Overuse their name.
- ◆ Ramble on or interrupt the interviewer.
- ◆ Make excuses or apologize for low GPA, lack of experience, etc.
- ◆ Get upset or angry and let it show. Even if the questions get into questionable areas, you can be firm without being angry.

Dealing with Illegal Questions

Area	Legal Inquire	Illegal Inquire
Name	If the applicant's work records are under another name.	If the applicant uses title Miss, Mrs., Ms.; or maiden or previous name.
Address/Housing	Place, length of time at current address, previous address, phone number, or how to reach applicant.	If own, rent or live in apartment or house.
Age	Require proof of birth certificate after hiring.	Require birth certificate/baptismal record before hire, or ask about age or age group.
Race/Color	Ask race after hiring.	Ask race or color before hire.
Sex	State that the organization is an equal opportunity employer.	Ask for gender, unless job-related, such as a restroom or locker room attendant.
Citizenship	If authorized to work in the United States.	Require proof of citizenship before hire, or ask status of spouse's citizenship.
Languages	What languages speak/read/write frequently only if relevant to job performance.	
Marital/Parental	Marital status, or number and ages of dependents after hire.	Marital status, or number and ages of dependents before hire.
Military Service	Ask about U.S. military service record and require discharge records after hiring.	Ask about service, except U.S. military, or request military records before hire.
Education	Names of schools attended and about language skills, such as foreign language skills.	Ask about nationality, racial or religious affiliation of schools attended, or how foreign language skills were acquired.
Arrest Record	Ask for a listing of convictions.	Ask about arrests.
References	Ask for general work references.	Ask for specific references that might reflect race, religion, nationality, or sex.
Organizations	Ask about organizational membership and offices held.	Listing of all organizations to which the applicant has belonged.
Photographs	Require after hiring.	Take photograph at/during interview.
Work Schedule	Willingness to work required work schedule and about military reservist obligations.	Willingness to work any religious holiday.
Physical Data	Require proof of ability to perform physical tasks required for the job; require a physical examination.	Height, weight, impairment, or non-specified job-related physical data.
Disabilities	Capabilities to perform the job [burden-of-proof rests with the employer].	Exclude disabled applicants as a class on the basis of a disability [each determined on a case-by-case basis].
Religion		Applicant's religion, religious customs or holidays.

Five Ways to Handle Illegal Questions

1. Answer the question and ignore the fact that it is in violation of EEO Laws and Regulations.
2. Answer the question with the statement; *“I am wondering how obtaining this information is relevant to the requirements of this position?”*
3. Politely sidestep the issue by not providing the requested information and sacrificing your principles, while seeking to avoid offending the interviewer.
Question: *“Are you married?”*
Answer: *“Regardless of whether or not I am married, I am determined to have a career in the XYZ field and see your organization as an excellent place to begin realizing this career goal.”*
4. Refuse to answer the question and take the risk of offending the interviewer.
5. Ascertain the question behind the question; [i.e., *“Do you have children?”* may be getting at whether or not you will be punctual and dependable in attendance. So you could say *“I assure you that if you check with my references they will tell you I had an exemplary attendance record”*].

“As in the case in all branches of art, success depends in a very large measure upon individual initiative and exertion, and cannot be achieved except by dint of hard work.”
~ Anna Pavlova

Mock Interviewing at Career Services

You've looked at how your qualifications fit the employer's needs. You've developed STAR stories that prove by example. You've researched the company and the position. Are you ready to gain an edge on the competition?

You may wish to set up a time to do a mock interview at the Career Services Office. These 50-minute sessions, with a staff member of Career Services in the interviewer role, are videotaped unless you request otherwise. Mock interviews provide practice in an interview-like setting, help you identify where you may already be strong, and can detect areas for improvement.

"In the absence of clearly-defined goals, we become strangely loyal to performing daily trivia until ultimately we become enslaved by it."
~ Robert Heinlein

Make the Most of Your Mock Interview

- ◆ Come dressed as if going to an actual job interview.
- ◆ Have an organization or a general occupational field [e.g., sales, human resources] identified that represents a target in your job search.
- ◆ Consider questions that cause concern, or you have struggled with in real interviews. Mention these to the career specialist, so these questions can be used in the mock interview and your responses critiqued during the video playback.
- ◆ Come prepared with questions you have for the employer.
- ◆ Any research on interviews that you can do in advance should also help you get the most from your mock interview experience.
- ◆ If you'd like to keep your videotape, please bring a blank CD to the mock interview.
- ◆ To schedule an appointment, please call the Career Services staff at [765] 269-5612.

Follow-up Essentials

Follow-up can help you turn an interview into an offer by knocking out your competition, reassuring the hiring manager of your capabilities, or turning a losing situation into a winning one.

Assess

*"It's not whether
you get knocked
down, it's
whether you
get up."*
~ Vince Lombardi

First, assess each interview. Effective follow-up depends on knowing what happened in the interview. Using the *Interview Follow-up Worksheet* 5-3 and answering the questions can provide valuable direction for your thank-you letter, and food-for-thought for future interviews

Interview Follow-up Worksheet 5-3

94

How did it go?

What did they say?

What did I say?

How many people did I see and how much time did I spend with each one?

What role does each one play and who is important?

Who is the decision-maker?

Which one is likely to most influence the decision?

How quickly do they plan to decide?

What do I have to offer that my competition does not?

What problems does the interviewer have and what solutions can I recommend?

“Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse.”
~ Henry Van Dyke

Send a Thank-you Letter

You should always follow-up with each person with whom you interviewed with a letter of thanks, regardless of how the interview went. Your goal is to influence the interviewers. The letter should be typed in a business letter format. Keep it brief and upbeat. Remind the interviewer who you are by reiterating a highlight of the interview. Also, re-emphasize your strengths and credentials for the position.

Address the following areas in your thank-you letters:

- ◆ Apply the same tone reflected in the conversation during the interview [formal, friendly, etc].
- ◆ Reaffirm your interest in the position and thank the interviewer for the time given to you.
- ◆ Recap your key qualifications that apply to the position, your understanding of the employer’s immediate needs, and what you can do to make his or her job easier.
- ◆ Address any objections to your candidacy. For example, you may know they typically hire someone with a different background than yours.
- ◆ Reiterate the commitment you made at the end of the interview and state the next steps. For example, “If I do not hear from Amy within the next week or so, I will follow-up with a call.”

The thank-you letter is a good forum to compensate for any weaknesses in your interview. For example, if you felt that you were too passive in your interview, express yourself more aggressively in your thank-you letter and vice versa.

Accepting or Rejecting Offers

Let’s say you’ve found an employer who wants you to fill their position, but the salary and benefits don’t quite match what you had in mind. However, it is a short commute with free parking and the work environment seems ideal. Let’s also say that at the same time another company has offered you the same type of job but with a higher salary, longer commute, and rigid work hours.

How should you evaluate or even negotiate these offers? First of all, if you’ve utilized the exercises and worksheets offered throughout this workbook and done your research, it’s reasonable to assume that any offer you receive at this point will utilize your strengths and provide opportunities to achieve your goals. Secondly, the manager who tendered an employment offer to you also thinks you’re a good fit for the position. You need to perform a final analysis of how the position tracks for you in terms of where you want your career to grow, what you are worth, and what you are willing to give up in exchange for other personal or material benefits.

Evaluate and Negotiate

All job offers can be negotiated. As noted in the previous offer scenarios, some components to consider include salary, benefits, location, and work environment. You will also want to consider the job design, staff personalities, growth opportunities, scheduling, perquisites [perks], and signing or performance bonuses.

Career publisher jistWorks provides this evaluation checklist of questions to consider before making a final decision. You will find it in *Job Search and Career Checklists: 101 Proven Time-Saving Checklists to Organize and Plan Your Career Search*, by Arlene S. Hirsch. Many of these questions can be answered by the research you've already done, and may provide good negotiation springboards.

- Did I meet the person who will manage me?**
- Do I think that I can get along with my new boss?**
- Have I met the people who I will work with?**
- Do I feel comfortable working with the other members of my team?**
- Where does this job fit in terms of organizational goals and values?**
- Do I understand the job responsibilities and expectations?**
- Do I think that I have the skills and experience to do the job right?**
- Where does this position lead in terms of career paths and direction?**
- Is this a dead-end job? Or is there room for growth and advancement?**
- Does the company treat its employees with respect?**
- Does the company have a lot of turnover?**
- Do I know why this position is available now?**
- Is the compensation acceptable?**
- Is the company competitive in its industry?**

- Does the company have a good reputation?**

- How often will I be evaluated? And on what basis?**

- Does the company provide any training?**

- Does this job enhance my skill set and career opportunities?**

- Do I feel good about this offer?**

- Would I prefer to keep looking for a better opportunity?**

"The secret of success is constancy of purpose."
~ Benjamin Disraeli

Take this opportunity to speak with your contact to clarify anything that was not spelled out in the job description, posting or interview. Now that the interview is behind you, perhaps you could request a follow-up visit that affords a more relaxed tour or an opportunity for a more candid discussion than what the structured interview situation allowed. The response to these requests may reveal a good deal about the corporate culture, as could any additional opportunity to interact with your prospective co-workers or manager.

Now that you're a candidate you can ask more probing questions about the position itself, the department or area growth opportunities, and the company's growth and direction.

How to Negotiate

There is never a better time to negotiate than when you've been offered the position. You know your career goals and needs and have researched opportunities, salary ranges and market trends. Negotiating provides the opportunity to:

- ◆ Establish the value of your skills/experience
- ◆ Establish a base for future salary negotiations
- ◆ Ensure win/win situation for you and employer

Refer back to your *Career Worksheet 2-1* and *Qualities Worksheet 2-2* to revisit your career goals and to refresh yourself on the qualities you offer. Make sure you compare any offers you receive against this model of your ideal career situation.

- ◆ Salary
- ◆ Bonus
- ◆ Health Care
 - Medical Coverage
 - Dental
 - Tax Saver
 - Flexible Spending Accounts
 - Wellness Program
 - Long Term Disability
- ◆ Life insurance
- ◆ 401[k] plan
- ◆ Childcare assistance
- ◆ Dependent care support
- ◆ Employee assistance program [EAP]
- ◆ Flextime
- ◆ Paid time off [PTO] bank
- ◆ Retirement benefits
- ◆ Stock ownership plans
- ◆ Tuition/education reimbursement
- ◆ Professional development
- ◆ Car allowance/company car
- ◆ Signing bonus

Accepting and Rejecting Offers

Whether you accept or reject an offer, you still want to maintain any networking opportunities that may arise during your search, so always respond positively and enthusiastically to any offers you receive. Keep in mind the hiring authority of your contact, and be respectful of their time frame and needs.

Most career search manuals and online resources stress the importance of securing the offer in writing. Ideally it should specify the department and position or title, salary and benefits, probationary period and review dates, any special arrangements [such as a company car or employer-supplied uniforms], and the beginning date. One way to secure an offer in writing is to note that you can consider starting on a certain date once you've received a written offer that allows you to provide your current employer with adequate notice of your intention to leave.

When you have made a decision to accept an offer you should respond verbally, specifying your understanding of the offer. In most cases it is appropriate to also follow this up with your written acceptance. Notify your current employer of your intention to leave in writing, and present it to them in person.

Other companies that are considering you as a job candidate or with whom you have been in negotiation should also be advised that you are no longer in the market. Make sure you express your appreciation for their consideration so you can keep future opportunities open as well.

When you determine that the offer is not in line with your goals, inform your contact in a timely and courteous manner. Tell them why you cannot accept and whether you want to be considered for future opportunities that are more in line with your career goals.

*"I firmly believe
that any man's
finest hour,
the greatest
fulfillment of all
that he holds
dear, is that
moment when
he has worked
his heart out in a
good cause and
lies exhausted on
the field of battle
– victorious."
~ Vince Lombardi*

Summary

You are now prepared to conduct yourself effectively in an interview situation. You know how to present yourself in a professional manner, what questions to expect, what distinguishes an impressive job candidate, how to present your skills and experiences, and you've done the research to know how to ask your own questions. Now you can relax and use this face-to-face time to verbalize your interest, enthusiasm and qualification for the position. When you do receive an offer, you can use your career goals, research and the exercises in this workbook to make an informed decision and provide opportunity for future growth.

Want to Know More?

Books

301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions

Vicky Oliver

This book is packed full of the toughest interview questions and the savvy answers for which today's managers are looking. While many interview books still focus on "What are your strengths?" and "What are your weaknesses?" *301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions* is the definitive guide to the real [and sometimes quirky] questions employers are using to weed out candidates.

Get Paid What You're Worth: the Expert Negotiators' Guide to Salary and Compensation

Robin L. Pinkley, Gregory B. Northcraft

Applicants who negotiate job offers receive salaries and benefits of significantly more value than those who do not. And the compensation package you negotiate today will affect all your future job offers. Shouldn't it be the best that it can be? *Get Paid What You're Worth* is the handbook you need to successfully navigate the business of negotiation

**Interviewing and Salary
Negotiation: For Job Hunters,
Career Changers, Consultants and
Freelancers [The Five O’Clock
Club Series]**

Kate Wendleton

Author Kate Wendleton has spent years helping job hunters land the best jobs at the best pay. She presents all the latest ideas for getting what you want, including how to assess the interview and turn it into a job offer.

**Negotiate Your Job Offer:
A Step-by-Step Guide to a
Win-Win Situation**

Mary B. Simon, Charnan Simon

Job hunters in today’s volatile business climate owe it to themselves to find out everything they can about their prospective employers and negotiate the best possible deals for themselves. This book arms savvy job-hunters with the knowledge and skills they need to evaluate a job offer in terms of mutual fit and the corporate culture, research a company for market value and long-term stability, gauge the impact of potential mergers or reengineering programs, and negotiate the best possible salary and benefits package

**Negotiating Your Salary:
How to Make \$1,000 a Minute**
Jack Chapman

Job hunters need this information now because the biggest mistakes happen in the beginning, well before the negotiating interview! Whether your style is tough or gentle, bluster or quiet, nervous or calm, you can still negotiate more money. You will learn: how simple preparation can double your salary, who should mention a dollar amount first, talking about salary incorrectly can knock you out before you even get a chance to interview, what your best first answer is to an offer, one phone call or one Web page can tell you what salary to ask for, and specific phrases to memorize that will boost your offer 10% or more.

**Preparing for the Behavior-Based
Interview: Getting the Job You
Want**

Terry L. Fitzwater, Brenda Pittsley,
Charlotte Bosarge [Editor]

Discover how to get noticed before the interview, learn to prepare for a successful interview, ask the right questions and have the right answers, and increase your potential for employment offers.

*“You have to
have confidence
in your ability,
and then be
tough enough to
follow through.”
~ Rosalynn Carter*

Online Interviewing Resources

Job Applications

Sample job application form to download and use as a guide to completing a job application form.

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/jobappsamples/>

General Interviewing

If the very word “interview” makes your palms sweat and your head itch, then take a deep breath, sit down and explore easy step-by-step tips and resources to master interviewing.

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Ftools.monster.com%2Fvirtualinterviews%2Ftech%2F>

Behavioral Based Interviewing

Behavioral based interviewing has been gaining momentum along with the ever-increasing demand for skilled and competent employees.

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/behavioral.htm>

Questions Asked by Employers

What are they going to ask? Obtain access to popular questions.

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/interviewquest.htm>

http://jist.com/interview_questions.shtm

Students with Disabilities

Your source to the largest hidden job market for people with disabilities.

<http://disabilitywork.com/?gclid=CO-BxdruvY0CFQdqIgodlFYbIA>

Illegal Questions

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/illegalinterv.htm>

Evaluating a Job Offer

At this site there are several articles about job evaluation.

<http://jobsearch.about.com/sitesearch.htm?terms=evaluating%20a%20job%20offer&SUName=jobsearch&TopNode=3474&type=1>

Salary

Learn the average salary at your level in your industry.

<http://www.salary.com>

Salary Calculator

<http://about.salary.com>

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/salaryhistory/1/aa110899.htm>