

# ACING YOUR INTERVIEW

Well you've made it through the initial evaluation and you got an INTERVIEW! Congratulations! Now what do you do? You may be feeling nervous and unsure about the interview process. But if you are prepared, those nerves will be manageable and you will be confident and calm during the interview.

## General Rules for Interviewing

### **Do**

- Prepare a 60 second commercial. This is a short verbal presentation that should
  - Be an advertisement to highlight your strengths and education.
  - Be tailored to each situation.
  - Demonstrate your enthusiasm, personal style, and judgment.
- Be early (You must be in the lobby 15 minutes before the scheduled interview.)
- Dress to impress. An interview is not the time to let your "wild child" show!
  - Dress – at least one step up from what people who are doing the work normally wear.
  - Conservative – Avoid bright flashy colors, bold patterns and designs, heavy or dramatic makeup, and large, flashy/glitzy jewelry. Jeans, t-shirts, and athletic shoes are usually not appropriate.
  - Make sure you've showered, shaved, and combed your hair. Your clothes should be clean and pressed.
  - Remove piercings, cover tattoos, etc.
- Remove your hat when you enter the building.
- Bring a pen and portfolio/notebook.
- Turn off your cell phone before entering the building.
- While waiting to be called in – sit up straight, no slouching, look at any company material that may be available. Look engaged and enthusiastic.
- Smile and make eye contact.
- Give a firm handshake and thank the interviewer for their time.
- Know your experience as it relates to the position.
- Have your short and long term goals well thought out and rehearsed.
- Answer questions concisely and give examples.
- Be prepared with one or two items that might be considered a "weakness for you". Be honest, but put it in a positive light.
- Be prepared! Before the interview, do your homework and research the company. Find out what their mission and vision statements are, what does the company do, do they have multiple locations, etc.
- After doing research prepare 2-4 questions. Write them down and have them available. When the interviewers ask if you have questions for them, you will be ready! This is your chance to let the interviewers know you are interested in their company and that you are ready to add value to the business. (See "Questions to ask at an Interview" page for examples)
- Close for the position with enthusiasm – have a list of reasons for why you are the best choice for the position (this might be a good place to use your 60 second commercial).

## Don't

- Don't be nervous.
- Don't drink too much coffee prior to interview.
- Don't smoke prior to the interview. Avoid smoking at least 30 minutes before the interview and don't smoke once you're dressed in your interview clothes.
- Don't slouch or lean in your seat.
- Don't squirm in your seat or tap your foot.
- Don't trash talk prior employers.
- Don't interrupt while others are speaking.
- Don't talk about personal problems...unhappy married life, divorce, problems with parents, etc.
- Don't ramble and talk too much.
- Don't talk money.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a question to be repeated or restated.

## Reasons for Leaving

When asked why you left a former employer or why you are considering leaving a current employer it's important to always remain *\*positive\**. If your reason for leaving is for "better opportunities" be specific about those opportunities. Examples are:

- *In search of a position with more challenges and responsibilities.*
- *In search of an opportunity with advancement potential.*
- *In search of an opportunity to do something I am passionate about.*

If you have "**voluntarily separated**" or are considering separating from an employer there are some positive, valid explanations that will make your future employer more comfortable. Here are some of those explanations:

- *Relocated/relocating to be closer to family; to an area with greater economic potential; better schools, etc.*
- *Temporarily left the workforce to raise children; to pursue an education.*
- *Time for a career change.*

## There are certain words that should be avoided:

- *Fired/Terminated: instead say "discharged", or "involuntarily separated". If you are asked for details, be honest, but avoid violating confidentiality or saying anything negative about the company, your former employer, supervisor, or co-worker. (If you need help preparing an answer, visit the Career Center, Tebbet 133 for assistance.)*
- *Laid Off: you should elaborate on why you were laid off. Examples: lack of work; lack of operating funds; seasonal or temporary employment; company closure; corporate merger, etc.*
- *Quit: instead say "voluntarily separated" or "resigned".*
- *Illness*
- *Personal Reasons*

### **Other items to consider**

Cell phones – nothing turns potential employers off faster than an inappropriate message

- Nothing cutesie or with an attitude.
- Your voice-not your children.
- No music – can be annoying or offensive.
- Just a standard “Hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I’m sorry I missed your call. Please leave your name, number and a brief message and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible.”

Social Networks – Facebook, etc.

- Be careful what you put on your Facebook page – potential employers often check Facebook when considering someone for employment.
- Avoid posts that are negative or complaining. The translation to an employer is: “Negative person = complainer, pot stirrer, high maintenance”.
- Posts that are full of foul language are also a turn-off to potential employers.
- Avoid putting up pictures of you and your friends engaging in inappropriate behaviors (bleary-eyed and drunk, chugging beer or drinking Jello shots, suggestive dancing, erotic poses, etc.).
- Remember, conversations on social network sites are not between you and your friends. They are between you and the WHOLE WIDE WORLD (www). Even with privacy settings, you have no control over what happens to your posts once they are out there.