

Conquering Interviews

“Why do employers interview candidates?”

- To obtain an in depth picture of their work experiences and competencies and to determine if the statements made in the resume are true
- To assess the candidate's communication and interpersonal skills including how the candidate presents themselves
- To describe to the candidate, the job's responsibilities in detail, and determine if the candidate continues to be interested in the job
- An interview is the only way to determine if the candidate would “fit” into the company culture, work well with others and be able to perform within the job

You may be able to guess what the interviewer's selection criteria will be either from the job posting or from your research. To prepare for an interview, write a list of the skills, qualities, attitudes and experiences the company might expect you to possess. Then write your own agenda of messages they need to know about you.

By having a carefully planned agenda, you take back a bit of control in a situation where many people feel like a passive victim. Having your own agenda makes you a more useful and productive interviewee for recruiters because your answers are more likely to be well thought out and relevant. i.e. useful.

There are many books on the market that can assist you with preparing for the job interview process. Most of them contain hundreds of questions that will never be asked of you. All of these questions can be boiled down to 5 simple questions that you need to address:

1. Are you reliable?

Do you show up for work every day? Do you come to work on time? Do you do your job? Are you good to your word? Is your performance consistent over time?

2. Are you competent? These are the easiest questions to answer.

Do you have the required knowledge and skills to do your job? Can you leverage the technology required? Can you make decisions that combine knowledge and common sense?

3. Can you save us money or make us money?

There are many ways to affect profit. Have you ever:

Saved a customer relationship? Identified an unsafe situation or practice? Improved a process or developed efficiency? Reduced waste? Sold products? Avoided liability or litigation? Identified an error before it cost the company money?

4. Do we like you? i.e. Do you fit?

“What does fit mean?”

Do you communicate in a way that will be effective in that particular setting? Are your work values similar to ours? Do you take work home with you? Go on vacation? How do you define success? How do you measure productivity? Do you want the same things as we do? How well do you cope with change? How do you handle adversity, feedback, conflict, challenges?

5. Are you going to stick around and what are we going to do with you later?

This is why they ask you where you see yourself in five years. You might ask them if they have a succession plan in mind for this role.

Your agenda should contain messages that address each of these points as well as clearly stating the value you would bring to the organization.

Behavioural Interviews

Reciting a laundry list of qualities will not help you ace a behavioural interview. Because the interviewer wants you to prove that you are competent and well suited to the position by using examples that demonstrate your past behaviour, you need to develop messages that include examples from your past.

The format your answers will take is:

SITUATION ACTION RESULT

Consider Employer Needs

Do your homework on the company who will be interviewing you.

- What does the role require of you?
- What qualities and skills do they require?
- How would you describe the corporate culture or environment?
- What are some of the recent changes or challenges that the company has been faced with?

Make sure that you have addressed their requirements in your planned messages.

First Impressions

First impressions are important but easy to make. There are a few simple things you can do to set the positive tone of your interview:

- Show up on time
- Wear appropriate, clean and pressed clothes
- Do not smell of anything more than soap and fabric softener and have fresh breath

When greeting the interviewer:

- Rise
- Extend your hand
- Give a firm handshake
- Make eye contact and smile
- Say "Thank you for seeing me." or "Very nice to meet you."

If you need help preparing for a job interview, visit your campus's Career Centre and meet with an Employment Advisor.