



Win That Job: How to Interview Well

smyth

1055 Parsippany Blvd., Suite 405 • Parsippany, NJ 07054 • www.smythsolutions.com



Introduction

There is only one reason you don't get a particular job. You didn't get an offer.

When you go on an interview there should be only one thought in your mind. You must want an offer. Until you have a job offer you have no choice. You can't really evaluate the opportunity because you don't know what the opportunity is. You don't know compensation or many other factors which comprise a final job offer. At all times you must be thinking "I want this employer to offer me this position!" This is the single best piece of advice we can give you.

Forget about whether or not you want the job. Prior to getting an offer you don't have the option to turn it down. Every interview must be pursued as if you want the position; it is only by making this a habit that you know you'll be in top form when the best opportunity is in front of you. The time to truly evaluate an offer is when you have it. Everything you do from preparing your resume, searching for positions, networking, posting your resume to job boards and writing countless introductory letters all lead to the interview. Hopefully this guide will help you with this crucial final step.

Competition

Securing a new position is all about competition. It's the toughest type of competition because you don't know who the competition is or how you measure against them. It's not like a game where you can look at a scoreboard. There are usually hundreds of players and only one winner. If a company invites you to interview it is because they want to meet you. The interview is both an opportunity to lose and to win.





The Basics

You need to be secure with all the basics... There are many factors you can't control, but you can control all of the basics. After a company has reviewed hundreds of resumes, screened and interviewed many candidates, it comes down to choosing one from a group of well qualified people. Virtually everyone is qualified. At this point, all the little things will make the difference.

- ◆ Image—How well did you present yourself? Were your clothes pressed and clean, shoes shined, shirt starched, fingernails clean, hair combed?
- ◆ Were you on time?
- ◆ Did you treat the receptionist with courtesy?
- ◆ Did you present a neat, well packaged resume?
- ◆ Were you silly enough to chew gum?
- ◆ Did you walk in carrying shopping bags and look disorganized?
- ◆ Did you display patience and poise if the interview started late?
- ◆ Did you smell like smoke or have cigarettes visible?
- ◆ You are measured by every contact you have with an employer. Use spell-check when you email. Avoid vernacular. Make certain that every aspect of communication is conducted professionally.

References

References should be available to the employer the moment they ask for them. You should speak to each reference and ask for their permission before you list them as a reference. This is a critical step. Bring a prepared list of your references with you to the interview. It should state the name, contact information and your relationship to the individual. Companies are principally interested in your previous employers and your more credible references will be people you reported to.





Preparing for the Interview

You must know yourself. Sounds simple but it's best to spend some time making certain you can respond to simple questions without fumbling them.

- ◆ What are your current responsibilities?
- ◆ What does your current employer do?
- ◆ How large is your current or last employer?
- ◆ How many people are/were in the department?
- ◆ What is the title of the person you report to?
- ◆ Why are you looking for a position?
- ◆ Why would you like to work for the company you are interviewing with?
- ◆ Why is your job important?
- ◆ Identify everything you are proud of and be ready to give examples of your achievements.
- ◆ What are your strong points? Be ready to talk about them.
- ◆ What are your weak points?

Words Are Important

There are basic words you can use during the interview which will add to a positive impression.

- ◆ **We**—The easiest way to emphasize teamwork.
- ◆ **Team**—Being a team member means you are willing to contribute. Every employer will look for this.
- ◆ **Enjoy**—Use this word to describe your environment, your fellow employees and even parts of your job that others find boring. Remember, you are always competing.
- ◆ **Contribute/Contribution**
- ◆ **Learn**
- ◆ **Challenge**
- ◆ **Solve**
- ◆ **Create**
- ◆ **Profession**
- ◆ **Value**





The First Impression

The first minute of an interview sets the tone for what is to follow. Above all else make certain your first statement is a positive one. Never be negative. A statement to the effect that local traffic is a nightmare gets everything off to a negative start. Find something to be positive about. It could be a beautiful building, a cheerful receptionist, a favorable comment about their products, whatever it is, the statement should be positive and short.

It is always best if you show knowledge of the company in the first minutes of the interview. In today's world, with the resources of the internet, there is no reason to be uninformed. Most firms have a web page. You must spend time looking through it. If you were impressed, say so. Identify something you can talk about. Flattery can be a help and employers want to hire people who want to work for them. Just don't overdo it.

You need to smile. People hire people they like. Would you hire someone you didn't care for? The simple fact is that likable people receive job offers. Always remember you are competing for this job. The people making the hiring decision are held accountable for their decision. They will feel much more secure in their decision if they perceive you as a positive personality that other people will like.

Remember to impress everyone you meet. Make this a habit. Everyone is evaluating you. Security guards, Receptionists and Human Resources all can play a role in the hiring process, especially if you treat them negatively.

The Importance of Examples

Learn to punctuate your answers with examples of what you mean. As a rule, when you give concrete examples it makes communication easier and gives the interviewer the sense you are responding to them. Make sure your examples are on target. Answering a question by saying, "Yes, as an example, we developed our own reports in Excel which helped us track deductions."





What To Do If the Interviewer Doesn't Know How to Interview

This happens pretty frequently and you should be prepared for it. When faced with this, the rule to follow is to make the interview easy for the person behind the desk. If they have a tough time asking questions you can help by volunteering how well your experience relates to the current position and then give examples.

People love to talk. When they are talking they feel like they are in control and they are “leading”. If someone wants to talk – let them. Don’t interrupt; indicate your interest and understanding with short comments and body language. Prove you are listening intently by using comments such as:

“That’s the way we did it.”

“That’s a great idea.”

“I understand.”

The interviewer wants you to be interested in what they are saying. If you don’t indicate that you “hear” them, they’ll become disinterested in you. Many poor interviewers regard the interview as something they need to do but they’d rather be elsewhere. This is where preparation is very important. Identify the keywords associated with the position. Know what they mean. Make certain you use the keywords during the interview. This will place the interview on familiar ground, and will also show that you are familiar with the content.





During the Interview

Remember, you are there to secure an offer of employment. During the interview YOU MUST focus on this goal. You'll have time to evaluate the position after you've learned everything about it. Do not fall into the trap of analyzing the position during the interview. If you do you run the risk of distracting yourself from the primary goal. You want the employer to want you. Any other consideration during the interview is a distraction.

Give the interviewer 100 percent of your focus. Use body language to indicate your interest. Maintain eye contact, lean forward a bit; use your hands and voice to punctuate your answers. Be expressive.

Yes and no answers rarely work as well as a slightly expanded answer. If the answer is, "Yes," you can say, "Yes, I know that well," or, "Yes, I enjoy that part of the job the most." Your answers should be designed to signify more than just a statement of fact; your answers should show you are interested.

What To Do If You Don't Know An Answer

This is easy—admit you don't know the answer. Most people know when someone is evading an answer. If an interviewer detects this you immediately make all your answers suspect. You must present yourself as a candid, credible candidate. You can say that in the past you weren't required to use that skill but you learn fast or pick things up very quickly. Give an example of where you learned on the job or where it was necessary to learn very quickly.

The Value of Being a Problem Solver

Every department has problems. Every manager has headaches. During the interview find ways to demonstrate how you solve problems. If the question "What are your strengths?" is asked, a good answer could be "I am a problem solver, everyone thinks of me that way." Be prepared with an example of how you solved a problem.





Supposed You Don't Know What the Interviewer Is Talking About

If the conversation goes in a direction you are completely unfamiliar with, tell the interviewer you are unfamiliar with the topic. Ask what it is about. When it is explained you can say, "That's very interesting, I would like to learn about that or acquire that as a skill." Find a way to make any negative a positive.

Leaving An Interview

There are signals when an interview is coming to an end. Many times the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. Don't ask a question simply for the sake of talking or prolonging the conversation. If you have a good question, you should certainly ask it. At this stage, do not ask about benefits, compensation, personal days or holiday policy unless the interviewer leads the conversation to these areas. An emphasis upon the vacation and days off will certainly hurt your chances. Keep these thoughts to yourself unless you can make it a positive statement. If the interviewer tells you they have three floating holidays you can say, "That's great, it's much better than what I have now." The best time to explore benefits and compensation is after an offer is made.

End the conversation on a positive. Thank people for their time. Express interest. Find a reason to explain why the job is of interest. It's ok to state, "This is the type of position I am looking for," but be prepared to say why it is.

After An Interview

It is important to email or mail a note of appreciation as soon as possible after the interview. If possible, reference something positive that happened during the interview. Once again express your interest. The tone should be warm but business like. Use spell check, it is very important that the note be grammatically flawless. The note should also be concise.

If you are working with a recruiter, check with them prior to sending a follow-up letter. It is possible the recruiter knows the letter should be tailored to address a specific concern. It is very important to give the recruiter your impression of the interview as soon as possible after the interview.

Thank you letters should be customized but you can find many examples of letters simply by searching Google for "interview thank you letters".





Questions You May Be Asked

Smyth has developed an **Interview Guide for Employers** which has many questions covering different types of Credit, A/R, Collection positions and skill sets. You can download the guide and review the categories of questions which may apply to you at www.smythsolutions.com.

Best wishes on your job search!

Key Contacts at Smyth

◆ **Yesinne Alvarez, Director, Staffing and Recruitment**

201-714-4521

yalvarez@smythsolutions.com

◆ **John Broderick, President**

201-714-4522

jbroderick@smythsolutions.com

