



James & Christopher

Worldwide Executive and Professional Search

THE INTERVIEW

...where hiring decisions are made...

One of the advantages of your working with an experienced recruiter is that you need not go into the interview without training or significant experience in the process. We have spoken to thousands of candidates and employers before and after the interview. We know what goes right, and what goes wrong. Most importantly, we know what you need to do to win and we are willing to share it with you. The next pages are filled full of do's and don'ts. Since you are a professional, we know you want to put your best foot forward and maximize your chances to WIN! Pay attention to this AND prepare, and you will find the interview to be a lot more fun and rewarding.

DID YOU KNOW ALL COMPANIES HAVE A HIDDEN AGENDA FOR THE INTERVIEW THAT THEY WILL NOT TALK ABOUT TO YOU??? There are, in fact, three hidden questions that are so vital that you must get a yes answer on all three or the company will NOT make you an offer. Yet, the answers are so obvious that you will not be asked the questions directly, but rather EVERYTHING you say will be interpreted against the hidden agenda to derive the "true" answers they really seek. What are these obvious but hidden questions?

1. Is this person competent for the position?
2. Is this person like us - will he/she fit in here?
3. Will this person stay with us?

In the following pages we will teach you how to make a professional sales call to sell your services in an effective way. The sales call has three major phases:

1. Definition of the buyer's needs - what it is they need for you to accomplish (and how, what, where, when, with whom, etc. are all relevant questions you should be asking in the first third of your meeting. Needless to say, candidates with smarts will be listening and noting, and simultaneously be relating back to the interviewer the skills, experiences, education, and interests you have that meet those needs.
2. The middle third of the interview is dedicated to building PERSONAL RAPPORT with the interviewer by getting to know him/her as a person and as a professional, and extending to him true picture of yourself and what makes you tick.
3. The final third is closing the sale. Trial close questions of "what do you think my first month priorities will be?" or "how will I relate to you in this position?" or "when do you need me to start?", etc., will give you an indication that they like you if they answer in terms that relate to you. The sales close given later in this paper shows you - **ASK FOR THE POSITION!**

We will also tell you what mistakes candidates make. Just remember, if you talk more than three sentences in a row, YOU are making the dumbest and most frequent error than can be made. If the question can not be answered in three sentences, YOU had better ask them to be more specific. If you are talking too much, it is because you are not prepared, or because someone just punched your emotional hot button, or because you are one of those people who are not aware of themselves.

If you are beginning to think that maybe you need to prepare a script of the questions you will ask, and yet another script of the questions you will be asked and the answers you will give, **YOU'RE RIGHT!** By doing so, you will not only outdo your competition, you will feel a lot more professional about the whole experience.

In a nutshell, you want to meet, favorably impress, and **TURN EACH AND EVERYONE YOU MEET INTO AN ADVOCATE** for yourself. Do not worry about the what's in it for me questions at the interview. **SELL! WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE!** The company will hire the person who has created the right attitudes for himself and those he/she meets.

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

The objective of the job interview is simple and singular...IT IS TO GET THE JOB OFFER!

That may sound pretty fundamental, and, of course, it is. But you would be absolutely amazed how many job candidates either do not know this or forget it during an interview.

During your course of preparation and interviewing, you should never forget this simple, singular objective. Getting the job offer is the single most important thing you can do.

Remember: You are not interviewing to decide if you would like to work for the company being interviewed. There will be plenty of time for thinking this through after the interview or after you have actually received the offer. Do not let your opinion of the company distract you from your objective. If you do not get the job offer, then it will make little difference that you do or don't like the position offered or the Company offering it.

You are not interviewing to broaden your knowledge of available opportunities. There are far more effective and efficient ways to do this. A "ho-hum" attitude has no place in a job interview. To leave the employer with the impression that you are just "Shopping around" is usually a fatal mistake.

You are NOT interviewing to learn what the particular company can do for you. Your singular purpose at this point is to get the job offer.

The "Winning Interview"

Interviewing with the objective of getting an offer is called the "winning interview". A specific technique is involved. This technique is built on the premise that for every open position there will be more than one fully qualified candidate. There may be ten...or more. There may be candidates that are better qualified than you are. But believe it or not, qualifications--so long as they are adequate--will make very little difference as to who receives the job offer. Now that does not mean that qualifications are not important. They are important. The employer is looking for qualified candidates to interview and there will be more than one of these. Therefore, the position will actually be offered to a qualified candidate, but on the basis of something other than qualifications. The point is simply that qualifications--abilities, experience and knowledge--are not enough. Qualifications may get you the interview but they do not get you the job offer. Use the winning interview technique and you dramatically improve your chances.

The Basic Technique

The "winning interview" is finding out what the open position requires and convincing the interviewer(s) that you are the man or the woman for doing that job.

The key work is "convincing". To be really convincing, you must seize the initiative at some point during the interview and subtly make the interview process according to your own strategy.

1. WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS REALLY LOOKING FOR IN THE JOB INTERVIEW?

The "winning interview" technique requires a thorough understanding of the conscious as well as the subconscious things that employers are looking for when they interview candidates for a position. How well you do in the interview will depend on how well you prove you meet tangible as well as subconscious criteria compared to the other candidates.

A. The Employer Looks First For Qualifications

The interviewer is, obviously, looking for a technically qualified person that can do what the employer needs to get done. But he looks only as far as he must in this direction. It will do little good to dwell on what a marvelous supervisor you could be. The employer looks for someone who can and wants to do what he needs done. Appearing overqualified is equally as deadly as appearing under-qualified.

Qualifications are what the employer is consciously looking for and as mentioned earlier, there will be more than one candidate who meets this first test. Therefore, the things the employer is subconsciously looking for become at least as important as qualifications--and perhaps even more important. The fact is, job offers are usually made because of something other than the candidate's qualifications.

B. The Employer Looks For An Optimistic, Positive Attitude

The employer is looking for optimistic statements and positive reactions to his questions. Pessimism and negativism never won a job offer for anyone. ENTHUSIASM COUNTS!

The idea in interviewing, then, is to elaborate on those things about which you can honestly be optimistic and positive. It is not necessary to "fake it". Nothing is more obvious than phony or superficial enthusiasm.

However, if you are optimistic and positive about any facet of a position, don't fail to show it.

C. The Employer Looks For Someone Who Likes Who the Employer is and What the Employer Does

If you like the employer's products...the people he has already hired...the location of the office..or any other item related to the position in question, do not be afraid to say so, with enthusiasm. The employer is looking to hire someone who has a high opinion of the position being filled and the company that is looking for employees.

Another way to say this is that the employer is going to hire someone who finds the work of the company...and the position being offered...interesting. It is up to you to let the employer know about your interest.

D. The Employer is Looking for Indications that the Candidate will Stay with the Company

No employer wants to hire someone who will likely leave the company. The problem with making the proper impression in this very important area is that interviewers seldom ask direct questions about longevity. Instead, the interviewer will ask: "Why are you looking for another position?" or he may ask "What are you looking for in a position?"

It is important to realize that either of these questions...or variations of them...are actually seeking a response which indicates what the potential employee's longevity in the position is likely to be. In response to these questions, the candidate must indicate his intention to stick with the position being offered and with the company that is offering it. Speak of earning your stripes in the organization and seeking a long term career opportunity, BUT, DO NOT speak about security - do not even use the word.

There is a simple and effective way to answer questions about longevity...one that will be fully satisfactory to the interviewer. In answer to either of these questions, the candidate should:

- 1) Make a positive statement about his former employer.
- 2) Make a short, positive, general but relevant statement about what he is looking for in a new position.

As an example, consider the following:

QUESTION: "Why are you looking to change positions?"

ANSWER: "Well, Bill, I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at the XYZ Corporation. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more aggressive situation. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions to the overall quality and quantity of work performed.

Brief. Positive. General but relevant to the point. That is the kind of answer that will tell the employer what he wants to hear about your potential longevity. It is a good way to convey how you feel about the right position...with the right company.

2. PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

There are several things that you can and should do to prepare yourself for the interview. What you do before the interview can, if fact, make the difference between receiving and not receiving the job offer. Pre-interview preparations, in the order of their importance are:

A. Prepare A Resume for the Specific Interview

B. Research the Company

Find out as much as you can about the company you will be interviewing for. This will not only make you feel more comfortable during the interview it will also you to show genuine interest in the company during the interview. The public library is a good source of information...particularly financial publications such as the Dunn and Bradstreet and Standard and Poor's directories and a publication called "Value Line" which is a summary and analysis of a company's operations and financial accomplishments. Ask you business reference librarian for help in finding all recent periodical citations about the company in the last several years. The idea is to be able to converse knowledgeable about the company and what it does.

C. Be Prepared to "Play by the Company's Rules"

Follow whatever procedures are suggested or required without question or comment...no matter how ridiculous the "rules" may appear to you. Many companies have set procedures for interviewing. You can make friends by complying fully and "fitting in" to this new culture.

D. Plan How You will Dress for the Interview

This may seem, trivial, but you would not want to miss a job offer simply because someone did not like the way you were dressed. For a professional position, dress conservatively. Research has shown dark gray and navy blue to be the two best suit colors (solid or pinstripe).

E. Arrive at the Interview Early

It is a good idea to arrive for the interview fifteen minutes before your actual appointment.

F. Keep Yourself in a Positive Frame of Mind

3. THE ANATOMY OF THE JOB INTERVIEW

Interviews take various forms and are conducted in various sequences. There is not a standard pattern. Some require testing.

You will probably be interviewed by more than one person. The interview may include lunch with a group of interviewers. Although there is no standard "structure", there are recognizable steps or stages within any interview sequence.

A. The Arrival

Usually, the first person you will meet is a receptionist who will direct you to the proper place at the proper time. The receptionist may or may not be expecting you. Tell her who you are and who you would like to see. Then follow her instructions.

B. The Initial Contact

Whatever form the initial contact with the company Personnel may be, your greeting should include a firm handshake and an enthusiastic "hello", followed by an introduction of yourself.

C. The Ice Breaker

In every interview, there is a very short interval before "business talk" starts. Usually, this interval is filled with "small talk". You should respond with enthusiastic and pleasant answers to remarks and questions...no matter how trivial. This is also your opportunity to get on a first-name basis with the interviewer. After the ice-breaker, do not hesitate to drop the "Mister Smith" and simply call the interviewer "Joe" or "Jim" unless you get a strong feeling against it. Thank your host for taking the time to see you and say how pleased you are to be able to meet him/her.

D. Chronological Interview

Unless the candidate - YOU - does something about it, the interview can...and probably will...be totally a "chronological interview to a close--by active choice-- after no longer than 5 to 7 minutes of introductory time. Do it sooner if you can. Avoid it all together if you can. The candidate can do this by seizing the initiative and beginning the all-important "Topical Interview". This must be done subtly, without a domineering or manipulative appearance.

Shifting to the topical interview is not difficult. The candidate should look for his first opportunity to ask the simple question:

"Bill, what exactly will my first assignment be?" or, "What is it, exactly, you need me to accomplish?"

When the interviewer responds with a description of your initial responsibility as a new employee, the topical Interview and your opportunity to convince will have begun.

E. The Topical Interview

The topical interview is totally different from the chronological interview. Instead of being guided by a backward review of your previous positions, the topical interview focuses upon responsibilities of the specific position for which you are being interviewed. Remember, your strategy is to find out exactly what will be expected of you in the new position and to convince the interviewer, or prove to him, that you can perform exactly as expected.

The initial question in the topical interview is the question which began it: "Bill, exactly what will my first assignment be?" This will be followed by listing of activities or duties that you will be expected to perform.

Your responsibility will be to relate each of the items of the list to your experience, knowledge, or exposure. Make the relationship between his requirements and your ability as close as possible. Where specific experience is available, use it by

all means. Where specific experience is lacking, relate your knowledge of the subject.

Once the "first assignment" is covered, move on with a question such as: "What else will I be expected to do in this position?"

Follow up each statement of responsibility and duty with related experience and knowledge, wherever possible. Continue the "what else" questions--the topics of discussion--until all aspects of the position are covered. The topical interview is your principal technique in learning what the position entails and proving that you can do it.

During the Topical Interview, you should:

- Miss no opportunity to compliment your interviewer on his approaches to problems. There is no better way to make a friend and gain a supporter in your job search than to let the interviewer know that you admire his accomplishments and respect his ability. THAT person must become your advocate if you are to win.
- Miss no opportunity to imply that you expect to be with the company for a career length of time. The interviewer will be continuously looking for such indications. Be careful not to suggest that you consider the position in any way temporary or that your ambitions are so big and ambitious that they may be beyond what the interviewer believes is possible. Of course, he/she doesn't know what the future holds for you but is worried that you may not stay with the company.
- Speak and act during the topical interview as if you already had the position for which you are interviewing. This means using "wills" and "cans" rather than "woulds" and "coulds". (Example: "What will be expected of me?" rather than "What would be expected of me?")
- Be careful not to speak negatively about mutually friends or acquaintances which may be discovered during the interviewing process. Keep the conversation strictly positive.
- Respond to questions fully, honestly, and positively. Go well beyond simple "yes" and "no" answers--elaborating on points which appear to be important to the interviewer and especially on those points about which you can get excited and show a positive, enthusiastic, and optimistic response. REMEMBER - three sentences in a row, maximum!

From the beginning of your meeting and before moving in to close the sale, it is advisable to build personal bridges with and establish personal rapport with you interviewer(s). Referring to them by name, asking about their experience with the company, what they think of its strong and weak points, their family status, what they think of the community, where they went to school, and what advice they would give to a new person starting off in the company - all are means to say "I like you and care about you as a person". Don't be distracted from the topical interview, but do remember that this person across from you is more likely to serve as your advocate if he/she likes you as a person.

It should be easy to detect the point at which you have convinced the interviewer of your capabilities. When this point is recognized, it is time to make the active decision to close the interview.

Closing can be achieved easily by asking the interviewer if he believes you are qualified for the position. This question--asked at the strategically proper time (usually 85% to 90% of the way through the interview)--signals the beginning of the important interview close.

F. The Interview Close

The closing phase of the interview is perhaps the most important aspect of the interview as far as making a lasting impression is concerned. It crystallized all that has gone on before. It leaves the interviewer a positive impression and can set you head and shoulders above competitors for the position when properly executed. There are four parts to the interview close:

1. You ask (to begin the close) if the interviewer believes you to be qualified for the position.
2. No matter what the response to that question (which will likely be non-committal), you follow with a statement that you know you can handle the position.
3. You make the statement--an even more positive indication of your interest--that the position is exactly what you are looking for and looking for and that you would like to have an offer.
4. Finally, as you are preparing to leave you tell the interviewer you would enjoy working with him personally.

By following this technique in closing, you will have convinced the interviewer that you can do the job. You will have to let him know that you are definitely interested and that you would like an offer. Perhaps more importantly, you have to let him know you will be a part of his team and that you are, in effect, the right candidate for the position.

A typical sequence for an interview close might be as follows:

Candidate: "Tell me Bill, do you think I qualify for the position?"
(This starts the interview close)

Interviewer: "Yes Tom, I think you do. However we have several more interviews to complete before we can make definite decision on making an offer."

Candidate: "Fine Bill, from what you have told me, I know I can do the job and I would definitely like to have the position. Can I count on your help in strongly advancing my candidacy?"

At this point you should expect to be dismissed or taken to another interviewer. All interviews--no matter who the person may be--should be handled in the same fashion--with a topical interview and a strong close.

VERY IMPORTANT! You must convince ALL parties in the interview cycle you are the candidate for the position. Assume each interviewer knows nothing about you and start your interview procedure from scratch.

G. The Exit

Your exit from the interviewer's office will conclude the interview. This exit must not be ignored, however, and should be viewed as an additional opportunity to display a positive attitude.

At the interviewer's office door (or at the elevator) the candidate should repeat the opinion that he can do the position, that the position is exactly what you are seeking. The opportunity for personal touch is also present at this point. You should take the opportunity to say that he would enjoy working with the interviewer--personally, unless the interview was a total disaster.

This reinforcement at the exit phase can make the difference between receiving or not receiving a job offer.

H. After the Interview

After the exit--while the interview is still fresh on your mind--write down what you feel are the strong points and the weak points of the interview. In this way, you can review your performance prior to your next interview and work on a stronger presentation of yourself as "right for the position in question.

Promptly call your recruiter so you may be debriefed while memories are fresh. Your recruiter will then be able to close the loop with his client company and probably get some early feedback for you. Most important, he/she can learn what you need to say and your follow up note and to whom it should be addressed.

The interview cycle is now complete. You have done everything--which the "winning interview" requires.

4. Common Mistakes in Interviewing

Four "mistakes" stand out as most commonly made by candidate's interviewing for a position. In order of importance these are:

A. Loosing Sight of the Interviewing Objective

The objective is to get a job offer within a framework of the truth and sincerity. This cannot be over stressed. Do not let your preliminary judgment of the company affect your interview technique and strategy.

B. Being Too Modest

For one reason or another, the job candidate--especially candidates for key technical positions--tend to understate their capabilities. This means that you should make the most of what you have. Do not, for example, forget that knowledge of how to solve a particular problem can be a strong qualification even though that knowledge may not have been applied directly to your job experience. Do not let the fear of misrepresenting yourself prevent you from relating the full scope of your experience and knowledge.

C. Asking "Me" Questions

Remember your objective...to get a job offer. Chances are that most of your questions in this area will be answered as a matter of course either by the Personnel Dept. or by the interviewers. Don't pursue questions about what the company can do for you during the interview. Emphasize instead, your ability to contribute to the company's goals.

D. Failure to "Sell" Your Abilities Throughout the Interview Sequence

There is no such thing as a "token" interview. It may be true that some people you interview have no power to hire you. But they almost certainly have the power to keep you from getting the offer. You should treat every interviewer as if he were key in getting position. Do not treat any person you meet as unimportant.

5. Typical Tough Questions

In your preparation for the interview you should prepare yourself to answer a number of questions that are almost sure to be asked.

****SOME TYPICAL QUESTIONS ARE:**

"Do you have any questions?"

The candidate should ask questions that are job related and forget even mentioning dunderheaded banalities like what do you pay, or what is the vacation policy, or can I continue to leave at 4:30 Tuesdays, or what is the retirement program.

"Are you willing to travel?"

The proper response should indicate flexibility. There is certainly room for personal preference to be expressed on this point. If you do like to travel, you should say so--enthusiastically. Unless you really are inflexible, do not let the interviewer form the opinion that you are.

"Do you object to overtime work?"

This question is usually not what it seems. The proper response again, indicates flexibility. A good answer might be:

"I have always been flexible when it comes to work beyond business hours, Bill. The fact is that I am project-oriented-- not clock-oriented-- and I will do whatever is necessary to get the position done."

"Will you relocate?"

If you are not willing to relocate, say so. If, however, there is any flexibility in your stance, you should indicate it. This question does not usually mean that you will be transferred as soon as you take the position. Rather, it asks if you would be willing to relocate later if the opportunity should arise. A job with a required and immediate relocation will almost certainly be described fully before the interview starts. Remember that you can explore the relocation question after the offer. Do not let the possibility of relocation dampen your enthusiasm for getting that offer.

"Why do you want to work for our company?"

This is a wide open question...perhaps you like what the company does. Perhaps you like its location...its people...its products. This is an opportunity to pay the company compliments and make a friend at the same time.

"Why did you leave your last position?"

If your job history shows that you have moved around quite a bit, make a positive statement which indicates that longevity in a job is one of your goals. You should also compliment your last employer and indicate that you are looking for a place to make real contributions over a longer term.

Salary Related Questions

Some of the most important questions during a job interview are related to salary. Ideally, from the candidate's point of view, salary negotiations...if there are any...should come after a firm offer, this does not mean, however, that salary questions will not be asked during the job interview.

Salary is extremely important but it is not the sole consideration. Salary and title are viewed by shrewd candidates as tactical issues which pale by comparison with the vital strategic issues of what firm you will be joining. Other facets of the position...opportunity, benefits, room for growth...may outweigh starting salary as a consideration.

In responding to salary-related questions, the candidate is wise to promptly and precisely disclose their current salary if asked.

The most general question asked about salary is: "What are you looking for in the way of salary?"

ABSOLUTELY DO NOT GIVE A NUMBER. (YOU RESPOND..."I WANT THE BEST OFFER YOU CAN MAKE WHICH WILL FIT ME INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION"...and SAY IT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU ARE ASKED WHAT YOU WANT - NO MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE ASK YOU).

What do you want to be when you grow up, or what are your goals questions.

If I were ever asked that question, I would say that I would like to become a very highly respected member of your team who could always be counted on to get the job done well and on time and who was viewed as a really good person to work with.

Does this answer fit you? If so, use it.

6. GENERAL TIPS ON INTERVIEWING

- * Remember as a general attitude that it is your responsibility to convince the interviewer that you are the person for the position.
- * Do not tell jokes.
- * Remember the role of Personnel Departments. They have the responsibility for screening. This department fills a vital role in the hiring process and the interview sequence. Do your best to make friends in this department. You may be asked to fill out a formal application. Do this with enthusiasm and neatly. When you reach the interview stage, combine the application with your specially -prepared resume (resume on top) and hand the package to the interviewer during introductory remarks.
- * Turn negatives into positives. When negatives arise during the interview, try to turn these into positive statements.
- * Do not let minor discourtesies steer you on a wrong course. Even if Personnel and interviewers keep you waiting too long or treat you in discourteous fashion, do not respond unkindly. Be prepared to turn these negatives into positives. Be patient and understanding. There may be a good and unavoidable reason for discourtesies. Do not let them distract you from your primary goal.
- * Avoid discussion of personal problems...either your own or those of the interviewer.
- * Always go well beyond simple "yes" or "no" answers. Look for opportunities to compliment the interviewer and the company. There is no better way to express your sincere interest in the position and in the company.
- * Once you have completed the interview, leave. Do not let an interview turn into a "social hour". Be courteous about the departure, but do not overstay your interview period.
- * Interview with confidence. Do not "back away" from any item on your resume or make excuses for performance. Approach the situation with the attitude that you have a right to work, that you have had meaningful employment in the past, and that you will accept nothing less than a wholesome growth experience. Confidence, built on self assurance, always contributes to interview success.

Finally, always remember that you will get a meaningful career opportunity from the interviewing process. Far more often than not, job loss or job changes eventually brings tangible improvements in a person's career situation. **GO FOR IT!**