

# Effective Interviewing

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Learn as much as you can about the type of position you are pursuing

- Read the job description if available. Sometimes job descriptions list the ideal candidate's skills. Don't be discouraged if you don't have capabilities in every area but think about your transferable skills and experiences.
- Prepare some general background information on your career field
- What have been some of the major news items in the past year or six months?
- What are some of the current trends in this career field?

### Research the organization

- Know what products or services the employer produces or performs.
- Find out about the employer's reputation within the industry. How do clients, suppliers and competitors view the employer?
- Research the employer's competitors. What are they doing in the field? What new advances are being made?
- Other information to research: key people in the organization, size in terms of sales and employees, location, organizational structure, latest news reports that affect the company.

### Assess Yourself

- Know what job you want and why you want it.
- Think through your job objectives and goals.
- Consider your key skills and how you will use them in this job. Avoid generalities; instead, offer specific evidence.
- Think about your accomplishments and when you have delivered more than what was expected. Focus on the action you took and the positive results.
- Brainstorm stories or examples that demonstrate your creativity, initiative, resourcefulness, problem solving and leadership.

### Keep calm through preparation

- Make an appointment with someone in Career Services for your interview preparation.
  - Practice the "tough" questions so you won't be caught off guard in an interview.
  - Think about your strengths and work skills related to the position and be able to demonstrate these through an example or story.
  - Practice talking about your skills and accomplishments as they relate to the types of skills required for the job.
  - Do a "dry run" before the interview. If possible, go to the location a few days before your interview to see how long it takes, to learn where parking is available, and to see the building. This will be one less thing on your mind before the interview.
  - Write down, in advance, questions you would like to ask the interviewer(s).
  - Practice, practice, practice. Review possible interview questions and practice responding to them out loud.
-

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

### First impressions matter

- Bring paper, pen, an extra resume, and list of references with you.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes ahead of time. When you enter the building where you will be interviewed, consider that the interview has begun. Be pleasant and polite to everyone you see.
- Smile and introduce yourself to the receptionist. That person can be a true ally to you.
- Stand when the interviewer comes to greet you. Smile and show enthusiasm. Establish good eye contact and greet the interviewer with a firm handshake.
- Have the interviewer indicate where you should sit. Keep your hands and your portfolio/notepad in your lap.

### It's show time!

- The interviewer will probably ask introductory questions or will ask you to "kick off" the interview. "Tell me about yourself" is a common kick-off question.
- Really listen to the question, reflect first on your response, and then answer the question. If you do not understand the question, politely ask for a clarification.
- Keep your responses short – no longer than 2 minutes.
- Be specific about your skills and experiences and how they can be of benefit to the employer. This is where many interviewees get in trouble. They are too general or too vague. Examples help to emphasize the points you want to make.
- If you are in a group interview, make eye contact with everyone as you speak. Start and end with the person who asked the question.

### Wrapping it up

- Raise questions throughout the interview if appropriate. Be ready at the end to ask your questions that you wrote down beforehand.
- It is generally not appropriate for you to bring up salary and benefits in a first interview but be prepared to talk about this if the interviewer introduces it.
- Sum up your interest and enthusiasm for the position. Let the interviewer know that you want the job.
- Ask the interviewer about the timeline for making decisions and follow-up.
- Make sure to get each interviewer's business card and thank the person for the opportunity to interview.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

### Reflect on your experience

- What parts of the interview went well for you? What went poorly?
- Pat yourself on the back that you have learned from the experience and will use it to improve future interviews.

### Thank the interviewer

- Write a thank you note to each interviewer within 24-48 hours of the interview. Send a thank you email. Make sure to briefly include things that you might want the interviewer to know about you that you missed in the interview. Keep it personal, mentioning specific things you discussed.
-