

INTERVIEW PREPARATION KIT

To be prepared for a successful interview you must invest the time to understand and prepare for each situation – because someone else will! The information below is intended to provide you with some basic guidance on preparation, conduct and things to avoid. You are not expected to memorize all the information but if you spend time reviewing the concepts, questions and preparation initiatives, it will show in the interview. You will feel prepared, and have much more confidence and significantly lessened anticipatory anxiety, which can always be expected but almost always fully diminished after the first few moments of the interview. It has been proven over and over that candidate selection is determined by chemistry more than 60% of the time - even when applicable skills / relevant experience may not be comparable! Do your homework and be confident so you can take charge at the appropriate times in the interview.

Ask Intelligent Questions When Being Interviewed

One of the worst mistakes currently being made by job applicants is not being prepared for an interview. It goes without saying that you will wear the appropriate clothes, try to get plenty of sleep the night before, show up on time and pay attention during your interview. However, will you answer the interviewer's questions intelligently and will you ask the right questions to spark the interest of the interviewers?

Questions to ask

When you interview for a position with almost any company, there comes a time when the interviewer asks, do you have any questions. If you sit there and look bewildered and respond with a lame 'no, I don't have any questions' you are most likely sealing your fate before you finished the first interview.

The object for every interview should be that you are extremely excited about the opportunity and excited about working for that particular company. To portray this excitement you must ask educated, probing questions that show you have done your research and really are interested in the job.

You do this by asking questions about the position. Show the interviewer that you have read the entire job description, that you have some further clarifying questions and add in some of your own skills to heighten your chances of being hired. Then ask the interviewer about the company, what it is like to work there and show that you have researched the company and have a working knowledge of the company's main line of business.

Make an impression.

When interviewing for a job, you are setting the stage for the initial impression you will make with each interviewer. This first impression is most important when trying to get a job. If you do not ask any questions, interviewers are most likely going to assume that you are not interested in the position or in working for the company. If you did not take the time to read the job description or learn about the company why would they want you to work for them?

If you ask silly or unnecessary questions, interviewers will get the impression that you are not a professional candidate and would not make a good addition to the team. Questions like, what time do I get off of work, do we get free drinks and how often do we get paid are red flag questions. These questions should be saved until you actually get hired. If, however, you ask insightful questions that elicit further information about the company or the position, interviewers are usually impressed that you have a working knowledge of the company and have insights into the position for which you are applying.

One added benefit of asking questions is that it allows you to expound on your abilities and how they match up directly with the position. It also allows you to highlight some of your skills, your attitudes and your work ethic and show the

interviewers that you would make an excellent addition to the company's workforce. So, instead of thinking of the requisite research as a pain, just look at it as another way to show what a great employee you will be.

Your Handshake Sets the Tone for an Interview:

Meeting someone for the first time can be a very nerve-racking event. Meeting someone for the first time that is going to interview you for a job can reach new heights in frazzled nerves.

The very first thing most job interviews involve is shaking the hand of the interviewer and introducing your self. If you blow the first part of the interview, your chances for securing that job drop considerably. Avoid the extreme handshakes (the cold, dead fish, the bone crusher, or the wet willy) and just go with the regular handshake.

The regular handshake:

Men and women alike offer a variety of handshakes that are personal, distant, warm, cold and anywhere in between. When you are speaking with an interviewer about working for them, it behooves you to set the tone of your interview by shaking the interviewers hand firmly, dryly and with not too much enthusiasm.

Today's standard handshake calls for a firm grasp generally returning equal pressure to the interviewer. This rule applies to men and women. The only time you want to deviate from this rule is when the interviewer is a bone-crusher or if they offer you a cold dead fish. In these instances, respond with a medium grip handshake with just a few shakes.

All in all, whether man or women and no matter where you are from, it is imperative that you give a firm handshake and make eye contact when interviewing for a job. Your handshake offers the interviewer a split-second interpretation of what type of person you are. So, make sure you shake hands in a professional, business-like manner with not too much moisture, not too much strength and just a few shakes. Go so far as to practice with a friend because ultimately, your handshake sets the tone for the interview.

Ask The Right Questions

Asking the right questions is an art form and takes some interpretive work on your part. Initially, ask about the interviewers. Ask them how long they have been with the company and do they enjoy working there. Also ask them where they see themselves in the next five years with the company. This adds a more personal level to the interview and lets you prepare how you want to word your next questions.

Ask pertinent questions about the position. If you are applying for an accounting position, ask what other departments you will interact with on a daily basis. Ask what departments you will work most closely with. Ask if the position is a new position or if somebody left. If someone left, ask why. Ask where the position might lead within the corporate structure five years down the road. Finally, ask if the position is one you can grow with?

Next, ask about the company. Find out if it is public or private. If public, you should have read the latest news and you can ask the interviewers how that latest news has affected them in their job roles and how it is affecting the company as a whole. You can talk about the company size and your preferences for the size of company where you have worked and where you want to work.

Finally, ask about the benefits. You should ask about the benefits in a generic manner so that you do not venture into the realm of Human Resources. Instead, ask one of the interviewers on a personal level if the benefits are good and if they meet the needs of their families. Your goal throughout the questioning process is to leave the impression that you plan to stay and work for this company for a very long time.

Show Them You Have The Right Stuff

If you will spend 30 minutes before your interview doing a little research, you will make a lasting impression that will give you a better chance of being hired. By asking intelligent questions you can show the interviewers that you are smart and that you cared enough about the position to do some research. You can also show that you are interested in the company and your future with the company. Finally, you can show that you are willing to work hard to get the position and that you would make an excellent candidate for that position and for the company. By asking intelligent questions, you will hopefully make an impression on the interviewers that will get you another interview and also get you the job.

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

A Few Key Principles About Asking Questions

- Ask only those questions to which you want an answer. This may seem obvious, but many people will ask questions merely to impress the interviewer. Why waste your time and theirs when they are likely to see through your smoke-screen?
- Ask questions that reveal the depth of your research and your interest in the job. In other words, don't ask questions that are easily answered on the company Web site or in the job description.
- Don't ask questions about salary, vacation, or other benefits until you are offered the job. If you do ask, the interviewer will be inclined to think that you are more interested in the money than in the position.

Sample Interview Questions To Ask The Hiring Manager About The Job

1. Could you show me where this job fits in the organization?
2. Which specific skills are necessary to succeed in this job?
3. Would you please describe the ideal candidate for this job?
4. How do my skills, experience and education differ from those of the ideal candidate?
5. What are the day-to-day duties of this job?
6. Do you have anything to add to the job description that XYZ advertised?
7. Does this job have any special demands?
8. How much travel does this job require?
9. How many hours are in a typical workweek?
10. What is a typical workday like in this position?
11. How would you describe the working environment?
12. Are there specific problems or challenges an employee would face in this position?
13. If you hire me, which duties would you like for me to accomplish first?
14. Which projects would you like for me to complete in the next six months?
15. What are the long-term objectives of this job?
16. Who would be my immediate supervisor and where does he or she fit into the organization?
17. Would you please describe your management style?
18. Could you tell me about the people who would be reporting to me?
19. What are my potential coworkers like and how many are there?
20. How much autonomy would I have in making decisions?
21. What would be my budget and spending authority and responsibilities?
22. What level of input would I have in determining my objectives and deadlines?
23. How many projects must an employee in this position multitask at once?
24. What are the opportunities for advancement in this position?
25. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
26. Why was this new position created?
27. May I ask why the employee in this position is leaving or no longer fits it?
28. Was the previous employee promoted?
29. May I talk with the person who last held this job? Other members of the staff?
30. Has anyone ever performed poorly in this position? What did he or she do wrong?
31. How do you measure an employee's performance and provide feedback?
32. How does an employee know he or she is performing this job to expectations before annual merit reviews?

Sample Interview Questions to Ask About the Organization

1. How does the Organization acknowledge outstanding employee performance?
2. What are this department's goals and how do they fit with the overall Organization's goals?
3. How does this department fit in with the Organization's five-year plan?
4. Does the department or Organization face any major challenges?
5. Do you foresee any significant changes in the Organization in the near future?
6. What's the Organization's policy about employees advancing their education?
7. Does the Organization offer employee training?
8. How does the Organization promote and support professional growth?
9. What's the Organization's policy for work-life balance?
10. What's the Organization's policy for employee retention?
11. What is the Organization's customer service policy?
12. Has the Organization recently laid off employees and why was it necessary?
13. How did the Organization handle notification, severance and outplacement services during the last layoff?
14. Is the Organization planning or considering a layoff in the near future?
15. What can you tell me about the employees who work here?
16. May I see an organizational chart?

Sample Interview Questions to Ask about the Organization's Problems (And Reflecting Your Ideas):

1. Is there any problem on this job with waste/quality/accuracy/public acceptance/meeting quotas/inventory, etc.?
2. Have you considered - (some equipment or technique to improve operations)?
3. Do any factors prevent action along this line...?
4. Have any recent steps been taken regarding the problem of...?
5. How is the current marketing program going?
6. Is there an untapped market for your service in...?
7. Would this approach produce good results...?
8. How long have you been at the company?

Sample Interview Questions to Ask in Summary

1. Is there anything else I should know?
2. Is there anything else you'd like to know?
3. Is there anything that would prevent you from offering this job to me?
4. How do I compare with the other candidates you've interviewed so far?
5. Do you have any feedback?
6. Do you have any concerns? What can I do to alleviate them?
7. When can I expect to hear from you again?
8. May I follow up with you by phone or email in about a week?
9. If you decide to extend an offer, when would you like me to start?
10. What's the next step?

Sample Questions to Ask *ONLY AFTER RECEIVING AN OFFER*

1. Based on my qualifications, don't you think \$___ a year would be appropriate for me in this job? Do you think more could be justified in light of my particular experience?
2. I greatly appreciate your offer. How soon do you need a decision? Will it be all right if I let you know by (date)?
3. Could you tell me briefly about your benefits program? (Vacations, insurance, retirement, profit sharing, bonuses, hospitalization, etc.)
4. I can be ready to go to work in ___ days. Should I plan on that?

Questions You Shouldn't Ask During a Job Interview

Want to know what not to ask a potential employer? Here's "The Rogue's Gallery of 16 Awful Questions."

1. What does your firm do?
2. What are your psychiatric benefits?
3. Are you (the interviewer) married?
4. Can you guarantee me that I will still have a job a year from now?
5. The job description mentions weekend work. Would I really have to do that?
6. How can you determine my qualifications in a short interview?
7. Do I get to keep the frequent flyer miles from my trips?
8. Would anyone notice if I came in late and left early?
9. How am I as a candidate?
10. What is the zodiac sign of your firm's managing partner?
11. How many (particular ethnic group) do you have working here?
12. Do you offer free parking?
13. What does this firm consider a good absenteeism record?
14. What do you mean by "relocate"?
15. Do you reimburse the cost of getting an MBA?
16. Can you tell me about your retirement plan?

Common Job Interview Mistakes - Want to know what not to do at the job interview? Learn from the mistakes of others. Here's "**18 Deadly Interview Mistakes Job Seekers Make.**"

1. Arrive late for the interview.
2. Indicate you are late because the directions you were given were not good.
3. Look disheveled and inappropriately dressed.
4. Slouch in your seat.
5. Don't maintain good eye contact with the interviewer.
6. Do your firm research at the interview by asking, "What do you guys do here?"
7. Don't make a connection between your skills and the needs of the employer.
8. Brag about how great you are, but neglect to cite evidence of your accomplishments.
9. Respond in an unfocused, disorganized, and rambling manner.
10. Remain low-key and display no enthusiasm for the job.
11. Answer most questions with simple "yes" and "no" answers.
12. Appear desperate for a job--any job.
13. Call the interviewer by his or her first name, or use the wrong name.
14. Give memorized responses, forgetting parts in the process.
15. Badmouth your current or former employer.
16. Ask "How am I doing? Are you going to hire me?"
17. Blurt out, "I need to make at least \$50,000. I hope this job pays at least that much," near the beginning of the interview.
18. When asked "Do you have any questions?" **reply "No."**

Fifty Standard Interview Questions Hiring Manager's Will Ask You !

It is not enough to have solid answers for only the above questions. You need to be prepared for the full spectrum of questions that may be presented. For further practice, make sure you go through the required mock interview (see the Competitive Interview Prep chapter); and for further review, look at some of the following questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your experience.
3. What is your most important accomplishment to date?
4. How would you describe your ideal job?
5. Why did you choose this career?
6. When did you decide on this career?
7. What goals do you have in your career?
8. How do you plan to achieve these goals?
9. How do you personally define success?
10. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
11. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
12. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
13. If you had to live your life over again, what one thing would you change?
14. Would you rather work with information or with people?
15. Are you a team player?
16. What motivates you?
17. Why should I hire you?
18. Are you a goal-oriented person?
19. Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
20. What are your short-term goals?
21. What is your long-range objective?
22. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
23. Where do you want to be ten years from now?
24. Do you handle conflict well?
25. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?
26. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
27. Do you handle pressure well?
28. What is your greatest strength?
29. What is your greatest weakness?
30. If I were to ask one of your professors (or a boss) to describe you, what would he or she say?
31. Why did you choose to attend your college?
32. What changes would you make at your college?
33. How has your education prepared you for your career?
34. What were your favorite classes? Why?
35. Do you enjoy doing independent research?
36. Who were your favorite professors? Why?
37. Why is your GPA not higher?
38. Do you have any plans for further education?
39. How much training do you think you'll need to become a productive employee?
40. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
41. Why do you want to work in the _____ industry?
42. What do you know about our company?
43. Why are you interested in our company?
44. Do you have any location preferences?
45. How familiar are you with the community that we're located in?
46. Are you willing to relocate? In the future?
47. Are you willing to travel? How much?

48. Is money important to you?
49. How much money do you need to make to be happy?
50. What kind of salary are you looking for?

Don't Just Read These Questions—practice and rehearse the answers. Don't let the employer interview be the first time you actually formulate an answer in spoken words. It is not enough to think about them in your head—practice! Sit down with a friend, a significant other, or your roommate (an especially effective critic, given the amount of preparation to date) and go through all of the questions. If you have not yet completed a mock interview, do it now. Make the most of every single interview opportunity by being fully prepared!

10 Interview Questions Decoded

Anyone who's ever spent time in a job search has probably walked away from at least one interview knowing right away that they botched it. Quite often, people who do feel confident about their last interview know they still could have answered one or two questions much better than they did.

The problem behind such scenarios is that too often, job seekers misunderstand or underestimate what they're being asked during an interview, according to Jack Warner and Clyde Bryan, co-authors of "Inside Secrets of Finding a Teaching Job." A question such as, "Do you have any more questions for me?" may seem innocent and simple enough to answer, but candidates who give a weak response are usually the ones screened out of consideration for the job.

Job seekers should be aware that every question an interviewer asks is an opportunity to sell themselves as the most outstanding, must-have candidate for the job. In their book, Warner and Bryan identify some of the most popular interview questions, reveal what interviewers really want to know when asking them and offer tips to help job seekers develop a savvy response.

These questions include:

Tell us about yourself.

What they're really asking: What makes you special? Why should we hire you?

Tips: Prepare several selling points about yourself. Give a quick "elevator speech" that overviews your experience and achievements.

What are your greatest strengths?

What they're really asking: How do you perceive your talents and abilities as a professional? Will you be an asset to our organization?

Tips: Sell yourself. If you don't promote your strengths, nobody else will. Prepare six or seven responses. Be "confidently humble."

What are your greatest weaknesses?

What they're really asking: How honest are you being about yourself with us? How realistic are you?

Tips: Present your weakness as a positive. Don't talk too long or emphasize your downfalls.

Why are you interested in working here?

What they're really asking: How dedicated are you? Do you have a passion for this type of work?

Tips: Keep your answer simple and to the point. Stay away from such responses as, "Many of my friends have worked here." This response isn't very impressive.

Why should we hire you?

What they're really asking: Can you convince us you're "the one?" Can you sell your "product?"

Tips: Make a powerful statement about the value you'll bring to their organization. Toot your own horn, but be wary of sounding arrogant.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

What they're really asking: Will you only be here for a year before moving on, or are you committed to staying here for awhile? Are you a stable person? Can you set goals for yourself?

Tips: Be aware that they might not want to hire someone who will only be around for a year or two. Feel free to say that you have one goal at the moment: to be the very best employee for that particular job.

What are some of your hobbies?

What they're really asking: How well-rounded are you? What do you do outside of work that might transfer positively into the workplace?

Tips: Emphasize any hobbies or activities that may relate to the job. Help the interviewer learn more about you and perceive you as a person, rather than a job candidate. Therefore, don't just answer questions, respond to them.

Would you be willing to pursue an extra certificate or credential?

What they're really asking: How is your attitude? How flexible are you?

Tips: Tell the interviewer how important professional growth is to you. Understand that the person who will impress the interviewer the most is the one willing to do the extra work.

What were you hoping we'd ask today, but didn't?

What they're really asking: Is there anything special about yourself that you want us to know?

Tips: Consider this a "show and tell" opportunity. Use materials from your portfolio to convince them how valuable you'll be to their organization.

Do you have any questions for us?

What they're really asking: Are you prepared to ask questions? How interested are you in this position?

Tips: List five or six questions on an index card. Ask at least one question, even if all of your prepared questions have been answered. Never say, "No, you've answered all of my questions." Warner and Clyde remind that it's important to sound natural and thoughtful when replying to such questions, saying, "Don't let your responses sound 'canned' or rehearsed. It's important to make the interviewer feel as though you've given serious thought to their question and are genuinely interested in the job."

BODY LANGUAGE

Eight Tips on Job Interviewing

NEW YORK - On paper, the applicant looked like a strong candidate for chief financial officer: graduate of a top business school, solid work history and top-notch references. But at the initial interview with a major Midwestern headhunter, the candidate offered a dead-fish handshake, slouched and fidgeted in his chair, failed to make eye contact with the interviewer and mumbled responses to basic questions.

Was he unprepared for the interview or just nervous because so much was on the line? It made no difference--his weak body language killed his chances despite strong credentials. "It was a horrifying encounter," says Scott W. Simmons, vice president at Crist Associates, an executive-placement agency in Chicago. "He wasn't a presentable candidate and didn't make it to the next round. He had a strong background, but after the interview, I'm not sure how he made it as far up the corporate ladder as he did. I just couldn't see him as a CFO, the position we were seeking to fill."

Get seven tips on job interviewing body language. A strong cover letter and resume will get you an interview for that dream job, but you can easily kill your chances with weak body language. Presentation sets you apart from other applicants in a competitive situation (see: "Dressing For The Job"). Remember, if you got the interview, the prospective employer thinks you can do the job. The interview is your opportunity to convince the employer that you're the best candidate (see: "Hitting A Job Interview Home Run"). Many people polish their verbal skills for an interview, but few give much consideration to their body language, and that's a mistake.

"When you walk into a job interview, the first impression is made in three to seven seconds," says Mary Dawn Arden, an executive coach and president of Arden Associates in New York. "One study found that a first impression is based on 7% spoken words, 38% tone of voice and 55% body language."

A bad first impression is difficult to overcome, no matter how solid your credentials. But with a little work and practice, you can buff up your body language skills to boost your chances of nailing the interview and taking the next big step in your career. To see and hear yourself as others see and hear you, Arden recommends practicing your presentation in front of a mirror while speaking into a tape recorder. "No one can fault you for being too formal in an interview," Arden says. "But being sloppy, or even too casual, will kill your prospects." Pay attention to little things, like posture, sitting up straight, planting your feet squarely on the floor, hand position and making eye contact with the interviewer. There's no dictionary for body language, and it's impossible to say this or that gesture means X, Y or Z.

But In General, Here's How Some Basic Body Language Will Be Perceived:

1. Arms folded across your chest is often seen as a defensive posture or, at best, as reserved and uninterested in the conversation.
2. Standing with your hands in your pockets suggests a lack of confidence or unease.
3. Sitting with legs crossed while shaking one leg or wiggling a foot suggests nervousness or severe discomfort.
4. Staring blankly at the floor suggests a profound lack of interest in the conversation.
5. Rubbing or touching your nose during a response suggests that you're not being completely honest.
6. Rubbing the back of your head or neck suggests you're bored by the conversation.
7. Pointing your feet toward the door or leaning in that direction suggests that you want to end the conversation quickly and flee--perhaps in a panic.
8. Slouching in the chair suggests you're unprepared for the interview, or that, deep in your heart, you know you're not up to the task.

None of this is carved in granite--you may rub your nose simply because it itches. But simple actions may betray your inner thoughts. You don't want to test how these seemingly innocuous actions will be interpreted in an interview, so it's best to avoid them. "You want to project confidence--not arrogance," Arden says.

MARKETING YOURSELF

Make Job Searching A Marketing Effort

Most job seekers realize that the job searching process is a marketing effort. It requires some degree of "sales" skills. However, a common mistake job seekers make is perceiving sales skills as imposing their will on someone else. This comes from thinking about selling abstractly, or thinking about how stereotypical (and often unsuccessful) sales people try to sell things. The truth is no one wants to be "sold" on something, and that includes recruiters and employers. If you think about times you came to decide you wanted to buy something, most likely it can be boiled down to one of two motivating factors: an **opportunity and/or a challenge**.

Think about kids who buy the Nike Air Jordan sneakers. They buy them for the *opportunity* to be like Michael Jordan. Challenges typically occur when there is a dilemma about living up to one's image of themselves. For example, someone may buy a Mercedes because they felt an internal challenge about being successful and not having a car that shows that success off. In terms of personal negotiation and persuasion skills, offering opportunities is a less risky option than offering challenges, even though both can motivate people to make a decision. Offering challenges is best done subtly, because an obvious challenge can be taken as an insult.

Here's an example of what we're talking about: Let's say you want an employer to make a decision to hire you within the next week. If you call them a couple days before the end of the week and inquire about whether they've made a decision yet, that would most likely not be successful because you have not inspired any challenge or opportunity in the employer's mind. In fact, it could have the opposite effect because the employer might think you're desperate and think you're not such a rare opportunity.

However, if you do a good job of presenting yourself as a top-notch candidate, and you present the employer with opportunities to reach their objectives if they hire you, and you give the employer a reason why they have to make a decision within a certain period of time, you have then created a challenge. If the employer perceives you as a highly desirable candidate and thinks there is a chance someone else may hire you before them, a personal dilemma has then been created in their mind where they will want to live up to their image of being a desirable company to work for. They will also feel challenged in terms of their skills as a recruiter and being able to recruit a top-level person.

Presenting Opportunities

Presenting opportunities is necessary in effective selling, but it's not just a tactic because it requires that you do some real work, and for it to be done well, you have to be genuinely committed to the opportunity you're presenting. Offering an employer a compelling opportunity requires that you create a vision in your mind of the possibilities and that you share your vision with them. And creating a vision requires that you understand the dynamics of the company and how your background can be helpful to what they're trying to achieve. Researching the company before the interview through personal contacts and the Internet can help. You'll probably also need to ask questions in the interview about the employer's objectives and how they see you fitting in.

Your vision can come across as more credible if you share with the employer stories about things you've done in the past which illustrate your competency in terms of being able to do what you envision for them. This conversation should be a back and forth discussion, and the more the employer talks about how they see you fitting in to their plans, the better. The clearer the picture they have of you coming in to their building every day to do the job they're considering hiring you for, the better.

Offering a Challenge

Presenting an opportunity will take the employer a long way in the direction of making a decision in your favor. However, a challenge is needed in order for the employer to feel like they need to make a decision imminently. The challenge doesn't have to come from you: it can come from an outside source. For example, if you've offered a compelling opportunity and their boss told them a decision has to be made today, they may feel challenged to make a decision for that reason.

If you've ever seen the movie "Glenn Gary, Glenn Ross" with Al Pacino, Alec Baldwin and Kevin Spacey, you may remember the line "ABC: Always Be Closing." Offering a challenge is closely related with the idea of closing.

However, no one wants to feel like they're being "closed." No one wants to feel like they're being manipulated. But if the person feels like they have to make a decision, it can be beneficial to you (assuming the opportunity you presented is compelling). If you came across as very impressive in the interview and discussion of opportunities, the employer may already feel challenged to make a decision because they don't want another company to take you first. You can subtly offer a challenge yourself by mentioning you have received another offer which you haven't decided on yet (if that's true). Remember, you don't want the employer to perceive the challenge as artificial. If they do see it that way, they'll feel like you're trying to "sell" them.

Summing Up

In summary, effective selling in job search situations is about inspiring the employer to see you as being highly valuable and getting them to feel a sense of challenge when it comes to being able to hire you. Some ineffective selling techniques, such as calling after an interview to just "inquire" about your application status, can be counterproductive and can make you come across as less valuable. When it comes to interviewing, it's more important to get it right the first time and make a good impression on the first try.

"Arrogance is the antithesis of confidence and shows a profound lack of self-confidence:"

1. At the interview, always grasp the interviewer's hand firmly and look him straight in the eye when introduced. Thank the interviewer for taking the time to talk. Never sit down before the interviewer, and don't throw yourself in the chair like a teenager preparing to sink into a vegetative state in front of the TV.
2. In most cases, there will be a desk or a table between you and the interviewer that will establish a safe "personal space."
3. If not, don't get too close--18 inches is about the lower limit, and two or three feet will be more comfortable for most people.
4. When responding to a question, speak directly to the person who asked it. If there are several people at the interview, glance briefly at them, but always return to the questioner before ending your response.
5. No one expects you to sit ramrod straight, but you need to sit up to project an image of alertness and interest in the interview.
6. "Use hand gestures for emphasis," Arden says. "You're not a cheerleader, and you don't want to fidget unconsciously. This is why it's important to practice before a mirror."
7. Reflect the interviewer's body language, but don't mimic it. Underscore your seriousness, interest and confidence by making eye contact, cocking your head to catch questions and smiling. But don't follow the interviewer's every twitch, jiggle and jump with a twitch, jiggle and jump of your own, because that quickly degenerates into self-parody, and what you hope to project as earnestness becomes twaddle.
8. If the interviewer leans back in his chair, clasps his hands behind his head and smiles, that's probably a look of condescension. If he's drumming his fingers on the desk, he's probably bored.
9. If the interview is interrupted by a phone call, busy yourself with papers in your briefcase and restart the discussion by asking something like, "Do you agree with the way I handled the billing situation?" or simply, "To get back to your question...." This will refocus the conversation and flatter the interviewer by asking for an opinion, while restarting the conversation without a hitch.
10. Most interviewers hold all calls when meeting with applicants, but a few ask the secretary to call simply to see how you'll handle the interruption. If the interviewer takes a phone call, don't get angry. Motion to the interviewer that you're willing to leave if the call is important. If the interviewer shakes his head no, busy yourself with personal papers to create a sense of privacy.
11. These basic techniques will work for privately held companies and major corporations, such as Exxon Mobil, Microsoft, Intel, Wells Fargo and Jet Blue.
12. Finally, keep your comments on a professional level. Can the jargon and computer analogies, and don't sound like a junior high school kid who's just discovered naughty words.
13. "I had another candidate who dropped 'f-bombs' and other swear words left and right during an interview," Simmons said. "He was in his mid-40s and had served as a chief operating officer for a financial-services company, so he should have known better. His language made no sense and killed his chances."

Using References Effectively

Most people don't give much thought about references until after a potential employer asks for them. After all, searching for a job is very time consuming and doesn't give you much of a chance to think about anything except getting interviews. But reference checks are a very important part of the job search process: both for job seekers and for employers. For employers, references are a chance to add depth to the information they have learned about you from the interview and from your resume. At a minimum, your references should confirm the information the employer has about you and that you are a competent employee. However, you should strive to provide references who can be as enthusiastic about you as you would be about yourself. A great reference makes the hiring manager feel good about their decision to hire you and sets a positive tone for your first few days on the job. As the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression and your references can help you do that.

Getting Your Ducks In Order

It's a good idea to get a reference letter from your manager as soon after leaving a position as possible. Getting a reference letter right away makes it easier for your manager to recall specific contributions you made to the team. Even if you don't end up needing a reference right away, having the reference letter provides you with something to fall back on in the event you are unable to contact your former manager at a later time. Plus, if you decide to go back to the manager a year or more later to ask them to provide a phone reference, you can remind them about the reference letter they wrote for you. Before asking someone to take the time to write a reference letter or provide a phone reference, it's a good idea to get a feel for what they would say about you. One way to do this is to say "Do you feel you know me well enough to write a good reference letter?" instead of just "Could you write a reference letter?" This way, if the person doesn't feel they could say something positive, they have an easy way to decline your request.

Employers who ask for references want to confirm dates of employment and position titles at a minimum. They will also try to find out if your former boss would rehire you given the opportunity. And many employers will ask the reference to grade your abilities in the specific areas that will apply to your new job. For example, if you're applying for a job as a manager, the employer may ask your reference to rate your managerial skills on a scale from 1 to 10. Having a sense of the types of questions employers are likely to ask your references, you should try to gauge the potential reference's response to these questions before deciding to let them vouch for you. For example, you could say "I'm curious - if you had the chance, would you hire me again to work for you?"

Using Non-Employer References

If you don't have a lot of good references from former employers, non-employer references can be helpful too. Generally, a potential employer will want at least two references from former employers. But if they require three references, you may be able to provide two from former employers and one from someone else. Professors, former co-workers and customers can all be good references if they know you well. If you have a choice between providing three lukewarm references from former employers or two lukewarm references from former employers plus one glowing reference from someone you didn't work for, the latter is probably the better choice. A survey done by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found more than eight out of ten human resource professionals regularly check references, so don't count on an employer not contacting a lukewarm or bad reference.

Legal Issues

There are a lot of misconceptions about the legal issues surrounding reference checks. Some job seekers mistakenly believe that former employers can only provide dates of employment, position titles and salary history. Even though many companies have established regulations specifying that managers are only to confirm dates of employment, position and salary history, many managers are either unaware of these regulations or simply ignore them. Legally, an employer can provide as much information as they want about your tenure with their organization.

As long as a former employer does not knowingly provide false information in a reference check, it is fair game. An employer can legally say or write negative things about you if they are just opinions. For example, the employer could say "John was a horrible manager." What is not legal would be for an employer to knowingly provide false information. For example, if a former manager didn't like you, they could not say "John started a fire in our office building that caused thousands of dollars in damage" if it was not true. Regardless of the legal rules, you do not want your references to say bad things about you.

Thank You Letter Examples

(Always get them out the same day- to all interviewers)

1. General

Mr. Archie Weatherby
California Investments, Inc.
25 Sacramento Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Weatherby, Thank you for taking the time to discuss the insurance broker position at California Investments, Inc., with me. After meeting with you and observing the company's operations, I am further convinced that my background and skills coincide well with your needs.

I really appreciate that you took so much time to acquaint me with the company. It is no wonder that California Investments retains its employees for so long. I feel I could learn a great deal from you and would certainly enjoy working with you.

In addition to my qualifications and experience, I will bring excellent work habits and judgment to this position. With the countless demands on your time, I am sure that you require people who can be trusted to carry out their responsibilities with minimal supervision.

I look forward, Mr. Weatherby, to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Oakley

2. Builds on Strength

Dr. David Kresgee
Great Fault Labs
5 Main Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Dr. Kresgee:

I'd like to thank you for talking with me about the research- assistant position in your seismology lab. I truly appreciate all the time and care you took in telling me about the job and learning more about me.

I'm so pleased that you agree that my senior research project in seismology provides me with excellent experience for this position. I am eager to bring my passion for seismology to the research-assistant position, and I am convinced the knowledge and experience I've already cultivated make me the best researcher for the job.

I very much look forward to learning of your decision soon. Please feel free to contact me if you need more information about my qualifications.

Thank you again for the exhilarating interview.

Sincerely,
John Oakley

3. Stresses Job Fit

Dr. Steven Page
Rolling Hills School Health Clinic
5 Main Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Dr. Page:

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me today for the social worker position.

I felt a wonderful rapport not only with you, but with the whole Rolling Hills School Health Clinic staff. I am more convinced than ever that I will fit in beautifully as a member of the team and contribute my skills and talents for the benefit of schoolchildren in the Rolling Hills district.

I can make myself available for any further discussions of my qualifications that may be needed.

Again, Dr. Page, I very much appreciate you and your staff taking so much time to talk with me about this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,
John Oakley

4. Entice the Employer

Ms. Sentra Nessen
Dayton Sumner Memorial Art Museum
203 Harbor Street
Baltimore, MD

Dear Ms. Nessen:

I want to thank you for taking the time to interview me yesterday for the position of assistant director of the Dayton Sumner Memorial Art Museum. You, Mr. Dawson, and Dr. Acquino exuded warmth, and I know we could all have an excellent working relationship.

As I further studied the job description for the position, I grew even more confident that I could take the museum to new heights of success. With the resources I've gathered, I am ready to hit the ground running with grant-writing. The 15 percent bonus for grants brought in is an excellent incentive, and I would devote a significant portion of my time to this important venture. I also have a number of great ideas for community and media relations and am excited by your interest in bringing more schoolchildren to the museum.

As I mentioned when we met, I would like to use my fine arts degree and journalism minor to enhance the museum's identity while at the same time meeting the needs and expectations of the community. I believe I can make a significant contribution to the fundraising effort, and I am particularly interested in exploring a corporate donor program.

I am convinced I could bring a new degree of organization to the museum, including sinking my teeth into making the workspace far less chaotic and far more functional. More importantly, I'd like to get communications on track so that newsletters and invitations are sent out on a timely basis. I have some ideas for making the newsletter more user-friendly. I feel it is extremely important to maintain close communication between the board and director, and I am committed to doing so.

Ms. Nessen, I thank you again for considering me for this position. I look forward to the possibility of working with you.

Sincerely,
John Oakley

5. Interview Afterthoughts Mention

Ms. Tess Bonwitt
Razzle Magazine
1010 Madison Avenue
New York, NY

Dear Ms. Bonwit:

I'd like to thank you for the time you spent talking with me about the marketing-research analyst position you have open at *Razzle* magazine. I am very excited about this position and convinced that my marketing training equips me more than adequately for the job.

I meant to mention during the interview that last summer I attended a three-week intensive seminar on SPSS, the foremost marketing-research software package. I know the job description mentions the ability to use SPSS, and I wanted to make sure you knew that I am extremely well-versed in the use of this software. Please contact me if you have any questions about my ability with this program or about any of my other qualifications.

As you know, my work-study position in the institutional research office here at Rutgers provided an excellent background for marketing- research work.

I look forward to hearing from you soon about the position, and I again thank you for meeting with me.

Sincerely,
John Oakley

FORMAT OF THE LETTER

A thank-you letter should be fairly short. Keep in mind it's being received by a busy person who is probably having a stressful day. Making the letter positive and perhaps including a tasteful joke can make the interviewer feel good about having taken the time to read the letter. You may also express your appreciation for the time they spent with you in the interview and the information they provided. If you have good handwriting, you can even send a hand-written note to make the letter seem more personal.

You should only mail a thank-you letter after an in-person interview. Sending a thank-you letter or email after a phone-only interview could make you seem too eager. Plus, at the phone interview stage, interviewers are generally still busy screening out a lot of people and your email could be viewed as being pushy.

The salutation you use in the letter should be the same salutation you used with the interviewer in person. So if the interviewer said to "call me John" then that's the salutation you should use in the letter. If you're unsure, it's always safest to use a formal salutation like "Mr. Smith."

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Friday regarding the position of Senior Accountant at your firm. I was very impressed with your operation and the people I have met so far in your office. I appreciate how critical it is for your firm to revamp its financial reporting systems, and I would appreciate the opportunity to help ABC Corporation reach that goal. In my experience revitalizing the financial reporting systems at my current employer, DEF Company, I have seen how beneficial a successful resolution of these issues can be. Again, it was a pleasure meeting you and I remain interested in joining your team.

Sincerely,
Joe Doe

****Follow-Up Call Wins the Interview****

In Person, Telephone or Job Board Applications

You've sent your resume to three (or 16 or 110) prospective employers, so you've done your part. Now all you have to do is sit back and wait for the phone to ring. But why is nothing happening? We've got news for you: Your phone will never ring. The fact you sent your resume in response to job postings means very little in the grand scheme of things. The search industry has designed the search process to cater to employers' needs, not yours -- even if you're a perfect match for a posted job. By falling into this trap, you've aligned yourself with the masses to take a number and wait and play the game on their terms.

Meanwhile, another more enterprising candidate slips in by way of a referral or a well-placed phone call and gets an interview and a possible job offer. All this happened while your resume sat, forever lost in the crush of paper and electrons as you waited by the phone. So how do you get past the pile of resumes and in the door? After you send a resume or an introductory letter, always make a follow-up call. Remember, it's the conversation that gets you the interview. Here's how to get on the phone and into the interview process.

Why Should You Follow Up?

Consider this scenario: Yours may be one of more than 100 resumes sent in response to a job posting. Three days later, you call the manager to follow up. You are most likely the only candidate with the initiative and drive to do this. With a decent presentation, you could win an interview for later that week. Meanwhile, your resume might have stayed buried in a huge stack and never discovered. Don't leave this to chance. This is no time to be bashful about initiating these calls.

Whom Do You Call?

Never call human resources or an in-house recruiter. These people have no vested interest in talking with you. In fact, they don't want to talk to you. You'll only foul up their process. If you want to get hired, you need to talk with an actual hiring manager. If that's a midlevel project supervisor or the vice president of engineering, so be it. Find out who this person is before you send your resume anywhere. In short, your job search is just that: Your job search. Take control and drive the process yourself. Don't play by others' rules, putting your future in the hands of search industry bureaucrats. Get into the driver's seat and make their phone ring with a follow-up call every time you send a resume or introductory letter