

# Orientation to Interviewing Skills

A guide to understanding interviews, processes and the preparation necessary to achieve positive results

# What is an Interview?

- An Interview allows an employer to find out how your skills, work history and educational background match the requirements for the job
- The Interview also determines if your personality fits with that of the organization's culture
- Enthusiasm, integrity, professionalism, sincerity and communication skills are significant factors

# Types of Interviews

- **One on One**-typically a meeting with the hiring authority for a business or organization
- **Panel**-meeting with a group of pre-selected representatives within an organization who each ask you questions and rate your responses
- **Performance**-you will be asked to demonstrate your mastery of a topic, skill or process and be rated on your effectiveness
- **Competitive Panel**-a modified version of the panel interview whereby a group of interviewers rate and rank a group of potential candidates in one interview with everyone participating together and being rated at the same time
- **Phone**-you may receive a phone based interview as a way to pre-screen or even select a candidate
- **Combination**-your interview may consist of any combination of the above styles

# The Interview is Rooted in Examining Your Behaviors

- Research shows that successful candidates genuinely want the job that they seek
- The hiring decision rests in how the interviewer/s perceive you and how you fit with the culture of the organization
- The first few seconds are extremely important as this is when interviewers form an impression about you
- The process, whether you like it or not, is mostly subjective
- Being confident and asserting your skills is important

# How To Prepare For an Interview

- First step: Research as much as you can about the organization using:
  - Company literature
  - Web sites
  - Reports
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Employees you may know
- If you can, find out who will conduct the interview
- How old is the organization?
- Any achievements of the organization
- Future plans

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Research Yourself!

- Review the job description or job announcement and use note cards or a writing pad to make notes on how your skills relate to the essential job requirements
- Identify specific jobs and educational experiences that directly relate to the position
- Understand what your career ladder would look like and be prepared to address your goals for the future
- Have current references ready if asked
- Do research on the salary for the position you are seeking so you will know an appropriate range if asked what your salary requirements are-it is generally recommended to state “negotiable” unless a specific range is requested

# Step 3: Dress Properly

- Like it or not, the saying that “You do not get a second chance at a first impression” is true
- Clothing should be conservative, current and professional regardless of gender
- Grooming should always be attentive and tasteful
- Avoid unnecessary colognes, perfumes or jewelry that will distract your audience
- No Gum, food, smoking or drinking before or during your interview



# Step 4:

- Get Directions
- Make a practice run to the interview site so you will know where to go and reduce your stress finding the location , parking, etc.
- Greet the reception person and sit quietly, turn off your cell phone and do not place or receive calls while at the interview site.
- Try to arrive 5-10 minutes early so you can think through what you are going to say and relax before the interview begins
- Stop by the restroom and freshen your appearance if necessary





# Step 5: What Should You Bring To the Interview?

- Directions from door to door and phone number of the employer in case you have trouble or get lost
- Company information to review while you wait
- Name of person/s conducting interview, if known
- Extra copies of your résumé in a neat folder or portfolio with a nice pen
- List of references or letters of reference if asked
- Copies of awards, evaluations or recognitions (Consider a Career Portfolio)
- List of job related questions to ask the employer
- Personal ID

# STAGES of the Interview

## #1 INTRODUCTION

- Firm and proper handshake
- Wait to be offered a seat rather than assume where to sit
- Be poised, formal and professional
- The employer will tell you how the process will unfold

## #2 EMPLOYER QUESTIONS

- The employer will ask you general and specific questions about your skills, work history and education
- Questions will usually be open-ended requiring you to explain further
- Avoid yes and no answers and try to explain yourself

# TRY NOT TO BE NERVOUS

- Some nervousness is understandable
- Clarity of your statements is very important
- Stay focused on the question
- Provide an example but keep your responses to a few minutes each to avoid meandering

# Stages of the Interview

## #3 APPLICANT QUESTIONS

- Be prepared with a few questions to ask the employer
- Questions should be ones that make you look interested in working there
- Don't ask about salary or benefits unless the employer brings it up first

# Stages of the Interview

## #4 CLOSING REMARKS

- The employer thanks you for your time
- You, in turn, thank the employer and all interviewers for considering you as a candidate

# Stages of the Interview

## **#5 REVIEW AND SELF-EVALUATION**

- Self-Evaluation is the best way to improve your interviewing skills by reviewing and modifying your weak responses before your next interview
- Always take time once you return home to reflect on what went well and how you responded to questions that were asked of you
- Use a post-interview checklist to guide you

## **#6 THE FOLLOW UP**

- Prepare a thank you note as a follow up to the interview and send it by email or mail the same day if possible.



# What Will I be Asked?

## Standard open-ended questions to expect in any interview

- Tell me a little about yourself...(other than what you have stated in your resume) *Most commonly asked*
- Why are seeking to leave your current position?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What are your salary requirements?
- What do you like about your current job/dislike?
- Why should we choose you for this position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Do you have any questions for us?

# Interview Questions Based on Your Behaviors

- Competency based interview questions
- Evidence based answers
- Sample Questions
  - A crisis you have overcome and how you handled it
  - A time in your job where you had to handle stress
  - A work accomplishment you are proud of and why
  - A failure you have had and how you overcame it
  - A time when you had to work with a team and what your contribution was
  - A situation where you had an issue with a coworker and how you resolved it
  - A time you dealt with a difficult person and how you handled it

# How should you respond to behavior based questions?

- Follow three easy steps:
- Set the stage, describe the situation clearly
- Explain the process you employed to solve the situation
- Explain the resolution
- Your story should be genuine, relevant and interesting.

# How Can I Practice Interviewing?

- The best practice is with someone else face to face who can offer you immediate constructive feedback.
- If you can not find someone in person, you may stop by the Career Center and practice using our computer based interviewing tool called Interview Pro TM.
- We also have several quick guides to interviewing, lists of interview questions and various books to help guide you.

# Interviewing Skills Part 2

Considering that nearly three fourths of employers surveyed indicated that a potential employee who exhibits improper or questionable grooming during an interview would not be hired emphasizes the importance of a first impression.

\*  
Based on 2007 NACE research

# Learning to *WORK* Your Image

- Creating a professional appearance to get and keep a job requires knowledge of proper grooming, workplace etiquette and good personal health practices
  - 73% of employers surveyed state that potential employees with grooming issues are likely to be ruled out of the hiring process
  - Nearly 50% of employers surveyed stated that non-traditional forms of clothing would likely rule out a potential employee
  - 33% of employers found potential employees with weak handshakes would likely be ruled out during the interview process
  - Body piercings , unusual hair coloring and/or visible tattoos pose the risk of likely being ruled out during an interview for 30% of employers

(based on 2007 NACE research of US employers)



# The Rules, #1-Good Grooming

- You make a first impression within seconds of meeting your potential employer
  - Grooming should be conservative
  - Always bathe before an interview so you will look and feel your best
  - Females: Makeup must be tasteful and conservative, choose subtle colors for eyes and lips
  - Men should groom facial hair or be clean shaven-if you have an earring remove it
  - Hair style and color should be conservative and age appropriate for men and women; long hair should be pulled back or up to avoid being a distraction
  - Nails should be manicured and clean for men and women with no unusual colors
  - Dry skin or dandruff won't do! Use moisturizers and hair products to correct dry skin before the interview
  - Deodorant with antiperspirant is a must to control perspiration and odor
  - Clean eyeglasses of smudges before your interview
  - Cover up any visible tattoos with proper clothing or concealer if necessary-30% of employers surveyed would consider not hiring a person with visible tattoos\*

# The Rules, #2 Dental Hygiene

- **Dental Hygiene**

- Your smile says it all!
- Teeth should be clean and your breath should be fresh
- Scrape your tongue using dental floss and rinse with mouthwash before an interview
- Floss between your teeth and avoid eating before an interview

# The Rules, #3 Common Scents

- Avoid heavy Scents
- You want your presentation to be memorable, not the smell you leave behind!
- Do not smoke before or after an interview until you are off site-you carry the smell in your clothing and on paperwork which may turn off an employer!
- Perfume or cologne can be overpowering when interviewing in a small confined space
- Use perfume or cologne sparingly only to give yourself a fresh unique scent
- Avoid using perfume or cologne to mask cigarette odors-use a product for eliminating odors such as Febreze or Lysol instead
- Do not eat food right before your interview-it may linger on your breath or on your clothing and leave a negative impression, not to mention the possibility of a food stain or drip on your clothes!

# The Rules, #4 Clothing

- Dress the part
- Conservative not trendy
- Clothing should be neatly pressed with an iron the night before and hung up
- Clothing should be clean, free of stains, wear, pet hair, or household odors
- Shoes should be clean, polished and professional

## **FASHION NO-Nos!**

- For men-no white socks, socks should match your pant color or your shoe color
- No sagging or baggy pants, no denim, no bell bottoms, and belts are expected
- Ties are the general rule for men or a sport coat and pressed shirt with a collar
- No exposed undergarments such as underwear or t-shirts/bra straps
- No tennis shoes, avoid open toed shoes and shoes that are too casual
- Women should not wear colored or fishnet stockings, neutrals are best
- Women should avoid wearing high heels beyond 2"
- Avoid tight fitting clothing or low cut shirts/blouses as well as clothing too loose or too short/long
- No exposed midriffs or short skirts for women
- Avoid excessive jewelry such as rings, bracelets, neck chains or multiple earrings (rule of thumb is no more than one of each)

# The Rules, #5 Be Conservative

- When selecting clothing for an interview, choose outfits that are neutral in color such as beige, blue or black
- Avoid outlandish patterns, colors or designs
- Your skills should stand out, not your outfit
- Avoid wearing clothing that is out of style, too trendy or can call attention to your personality in a negative way( Generally avoid symbolic attire, patches, words or athletic-oriented clothing)
- You will be sized up in the first few seconds so think like an employer...how would you want a potential employee to dress?
- Run your choices for your interview clothing by a few other people before **you** make a choice to be sure you are going to make the right impression

# The Final Piece of Advice...

- A handshake is both a greeting and finale
- Looking the part is as important as conveying confidence
- Greet your interviewer/s with a firm, dry handshake whether you are male or female when you start and end the interview
- A weak handshake leaves nothing to be desired for an employer
- Speak clearly and make good eye contact