

SELECTED INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

- **PREPARE THOROUGHLY:** It is essential for you undertake thorough research, using contacts you have within the company whenever possible. You will be better able tailor your responses and questions to the interviewer's needs by developing a thorough understanding of the company's products or services, organization, successes, failures, goals and problems.
- **BE PUNCTUAL:** In fact, arrive a bit early to give yourself valuable time to gather your thoughts and review your notes and interview strategy. If you are delayed, you have a built-in safety factor. If you find yourself running late, call to advise the interviewer of the situation.
- **WIN IN THE FIRST 30 SECONDS:** The first 30 seconds of your interview are critical. The interviewer will make a quick judgment of you based on your language, demeanor, appearance and eye contact. Your smile, handshake, attire and disposition will all contribute to the first impression. Of course, you'll make a quick judgment of the interviewer as well!
- **ESTABLISH RAPPORT:** The early moments of an interview are ideal for some "small talk" that can put you at ease. It may help the interviewer relax as well. However, be prepared to get right down to the business of the interview.
- **LISTEN ATTENTIVELY:** Apply your best listening skills from the moment you arrive to the moment you leave. Pay attention to everything, including small talk. Be alert to silences, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, and the interviewer's reactions. What you hear, see and feel will help you with the timing and presentation of your responses.
- **BE ALERT, BUT AT EASE:** Your attentive demeanor will demonstrate the *can do* spirit employers seek. You create a certain appeal by demonstrating comfortable poise and self-control in what can be an anxious situation. Being overly eager may convey the wrong impression of your carefully-prepared presentation.
- **BE PATIENT:** Let the interviewer take the lead. Regardless of how the interview begins, remember that your goal is to present and gather information, not to conduct the interview.
- **MATCH YOUR SKILLS TO THE INTERVIEWER'S NEEDS:** Look for opportunities to include your accomplishments in your responses. In the conversation, you'll be asking and answering questions. From this dialogue you can determine the interviewer's needs and describe how your accomplishments, skills, and personal qualities can effectively fulfill those needs.
- **ASK "SCREENING" QUESTIONS:** Just as you are being "screened" by the company, you should ask for details concerning the job and the company. At some point you will have to make a decision as to whether you have an interest in the position and the company.
- **SEEK FEEDBACK:** You can ask the interviewer whether you've provided enough information if you feel an answer is becoming too long or complicated Ask how the interviewer rates you as a candidate for the job. Try to uncover any reservations the interviewer has about your candidacy. For example, you might ask, "*How do my qualifications match the requirements for this position?*"

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- **OVERCOME OBJECTIONS:** Cite one of your achievements if you should uncover an objection. After providing this information, it's reasonable to ask for additional feedback. For example, if analytical skills are an issue, you might ask, "*Is this the kind of analytical background that's essential in the job?*"
- **BE ENTHUSIASTIC:** Regardless of how the interview goes, be sure to remain positive and enthusiastic. Express appreciation for the meeting. The person who receives the job offer may not be the most qualified candidate. The person who interviews the best or has the best chemistry with the hiring manager often gets the job.
- **USE A TRIAL CLOSE:** If you feel the interview is going well, you can attempt a "trial close" to test the strength of your candidacy. You might make a comment like, "*If you feel I'm qualified for the job, perhaps we could set up our next steps.*"
- **ALWAYS GO FOR THE OFFER:** Your "sales" goal is to land an offer, even if the job has some minuses along with the pluses. Don't decide against a job before it's been offered to you. Once you've received the offer, you can evaluate the position in the context of your needs, search results and job market conditions. You could turn it down, or, negotiate for a better deal.
- **UPBEAT FINALE:** Always inquire about the next steps in the process before you leave. Be enthusiastic about the company and the people. Even if you don't get this job, the same company could consider you for another position or consider you at another time.
- **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT:** If you're interviewing with a company outside of your immediate geographic area, ask about their reimbursement procedure *before* the interview. When you arrive, you can submit the required receipts. Ask the potential employer to arrange your travel and lodging and handle the related expenses. (If you schedule two or more interviews in the same timeframe with separate prospects in a given city, never double bill. Arrange for your expenses to be shared by the interviewing companies.)
- **ILLEGAL QUESTIONS:** In the U.S., under Equal Employment Opportunity laws, it is illegal for an interviewer to ask you questions related to race or color, religion or creed, national origin, marital status, political affiliation or gender preference. If questions on these topics are asked anyway, you have every right to refuse to answer them. Before responding, you could say, "It would be helpful to me to understand how this factor is important for this position."
- **SEND A FOLLOW-UP LETTER:** Compose and send your typed follow-up letter promptly after each interview. You can send e-mail follow-up letters to individuals who seem more comfortable communicating in that medium. Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to meet and reiterate your interest in the job.

SELECTED NEGOTIATING GUIDELINES

Negotiating the best possible offer is the critical, final phase of your job change process. Negotiating is simply a skill, and one you already possess to some degree. While you can read books or take courses on the subject, the best approach to improving your negotiating skills is to negotiate and be aware that you are negotiating! You can learn from others who appear to be effective negotiators by observing them in action and asking for their advice.

While every negotiation is unique, all negotiations rely on the same basic competencies and strategies. You may find the following guidelines helpful.

- **KNOW WHAT IS IMPORTANT:** You should decide what is important to you and what is important to your new employer. Needs usually dictate importance. Those needs that you and your potential employer share represent points on which agreement can be reached quite easily. For example, decision-making and budget authority are more important than office size or having your own assistant.
- **CREATE A LIST OF YOUR NEEDS:** To negotiate effectively, you should know what items are critical to you and what items are optional. Position title, compensation, specific objectives, organizational responsibility and budget control are obvious issues to discuss. Administrative support, an employment contract, professional development and memberships may not be as critical to your new employer as they are to you.
- **POWER IS A NEGOTIATING ISSUE:** Once an employer has extended an offer, you are in the best negotiating position you are every likely to be with that organization. You should bring up every issue over which you want to negotiate, regardless of how sensitive the issue might be. Your power diminishes when you say "yes." To some extent, acceptance of the offer is like buying a new car: once you accept the keys and drive off the dealer's lot, you own a used car!
- **TIMING IS CRITICAL:** Regardless of how excited you might be, never accept an offer on the spot! Always ask for time to think it over. You may be better positioned to negotiate a better package once you have considered the details of the offer. You will need to be sensitive to the employer's preferences, as there may be pressure to complete the hiring process and bring the new employee in as soon as possible.
- **THE DILEMMA OF TWO OFFERS:** The best possible position is to have an offer in hand. If another is pending, try to move the second situation along more quickly. If you receive two offers simultaneously, compare them on each of the factors that you are seeking in your next employer and next position. You might negotiate for an improved offer from both and then make your decision on the results, as well as on the cordiality with which your new employer has approached the negotiations.
- **FINALIZE YOUR NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE GIVING NOTICE:** Make sure you have met the new employer's requirements before you resign from your present position or terminate your other job search activities. Reference checking, security checks and a physical examination are examples of pre-employment activities that employers conduct. If something should go wrong with the offer you have received, you will want to remain secure in your employment and other job search activities.

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- **NEGOTIATING COMPENSATION:** Compensation is probably the most important issue subject to negotiations. You will have established goals; the employer will probably have a salary system that dictates the range within which the starting salary must fit. It is always to your advantage to learn the salary range for the position before you indicate your salary information. Here are two important guidelines regarding disclosure of your present salary:

- Try not to reveal your salary to an employer too early in the interviewing process so that you retain some negotiating leverage. (Headhunters, on the other hand, need to know your salary history and requirements in order to represent you to their clients.)
- If possible, don't reveal your present salary at all to the employer. Your value to them relates to the position being discussed and its value in the organization and the marketplace. The salary you seek is related to that position, regardless of your present salary or salary history.
- Negotiate in terms of expected bonus or salary increases, if you are starting with a lower-than-preferred salary offer. You might request a three or six-month salary review with an anticipated increase.
- Set optimistic goals. You can find salary information on most career information sites as well as from others in the field.
- Demonstrate confidence in your salary negotiations. You should go into the negotiations with a sense of your value and the typical ranges for your position in the marketplace.
- To encourage your negotiating partner to be reasonable in considering your compensation needs, explain that you know the employer will be fair with the compensation package.

- **ADDITIONAL SALARY NEGOTIATING TIPS:** There are other aspects of the salary discussion you should prepare to handle. For example, if the question is only about salary, you might respond by discussing compensation and the full package you are seeking. Salary is only one part of your compensation package; other parts may be as important in your discussion, such as incentives, retirement investments, stock options, benefits, relocation provisions, and the like.

You might describe your salary in terms of a range:

“My current base is in the mid 120s, plus bonus potential up to fifty percent of that.”

“My current package is \$200,000, which consists of a \$150k base and \$50k bonus.”

“Because we had very good results this past year, my compensation totaled \$100K.

Of course, my package is based on results, so some years can be better than others.”

If you find that the likely salary range of your target position is lower than your current compensation, you might make a statement like, “While my current compensation is in the mid-\$180s, the position I am seeking could be priced from \$150,000 and up. Of course, we would need to discuss the mix of base and incentive.”