

## Are you ready for the Interview?

Your resume is updated, polished and focused on your career field. You have a cover letter that gets you phone calls for interviews. But...what do you say, what do you wear, what do you do afterward?

Businesses that need to hire individuals use a number of methods to screen for potential employees. If you have made it beyond the application/resume process and possibly the screening phone call interview and are ready for the initial face to face meeting, you have some of the qualities the business needs to continue its success. The face-to-face interview helps hiring managers make their decisions through an exchange of information between yourself and the employer. It gives you an opportunity to “sell” yourself as the right person for the job.

There are a variety of interview formats but for this writing we will assume the one-on-one non-directed format in which there are broad general questions in a loose format.

Some things that you will want to do prior to arriving at the interview:

- Research the company**
- Research your skills**
- Practice**

**Research the company** – Do your homework on the company to which you applied. In the long run it will help you with your decision about working at the company should a job offer be made. All big companies have researched the competition before they market their products. Remember knowledge is power, and the more you know about the company and your industry could give you the competitive edge, especially if you are asked, “What do you know about us?” Some sources to complete your company research include: annual reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, business directories, corporate web sites, news articles, company issued press releases, local newspapers, national newspapers, business or industry journals or professional journals.

**Research your skills** - You should have already assessed your job related skills and your “soft-skills” – those skills that you need to be a good employee like communication, problem solving, and time management. Often an interviewer will ask you about your weaknesses. Having taken the time to inventory those will help you efficiently and effectively answer a potentially dangerous question with a very positive response. This also gives you the opportunity to reflect on your past experiences and how they relate to the job for which you are applying.

**Practice** – This (practice) gives you the opportunity to appear self-confident during the interview. Take time to rehearse how you will answer some of the normal interview questions (look at the end of this article for a list of potential questions). Spend some time with a friend role playing your interviewing skills or use a video camera or mirror to practice your responses. Interviewers will appreciate your concise and pertinent answers. Knowing what and how you will respond to questions will help increase your comfort level during the interview.

Now that you have done all of your prep work, you are ready to go to the interview and win the spot, or are you? You have done all the homework, but now it is time to prepare yourself. Some key aspects are:

1. **Appearance.** During your research you may have learned how the other employees dress on the job. If the employees wear suits, plan to wear a suit to the interview. But if the attire is casual, you as the interviewee should still wear dress shirt and pants or skirt and blouse. Always take your attire up a notch from the norm. Along side proper dress is good grooming. Clean, neat and neutral are the key words to remember about all aspects of grooming.
2. **Attitude.** You only have one chance to make a first impression. Let the interviewer set the tone, but you should practice a strong professional greeting and handshake. Use good manners. Use proper English – avoid slang. Show enthusiasm for the job.
3. **Logistics.** Be certain of the time and place of the interview. Take a dry run to the location so that you will be able to arrive early and not get lost.
4. **Punctuality.** Arrive early and if there is an unavoidable delay, call and ask if you can reschedule.
5. **Professional Decorum:** Turn off your cell phone. Listen carefully, and speak clearly and distinctly. Use body language that will say you are interested. Maintain natural eye contact. A smiling, relaxed face is very inviting. Rest your hands on your lap instead of crossing your arms at your chest. Try not to appear too stiff or like you are a bundle of nerves.

Answering the questions is the real reason you are at the interview. Listen carefully, pause before you answer, speak clearly and distinctly. This gives you a chance to collect your thoughts and make your answers seem less rehearsed. On the other side, when it is your turn to ask questions of the interviewer, encourage the interviewer to share some information about the company and what a typical day would entail, if there are any special projects upon which you would be working. Don't ask about salary, benefits, or vacations unless a job offer is made.

Once the interview is over, be prepared to send a typed letter of appreciation reaffirming your interest in the position. This gives you a chance to reiterate something you mentioned in the interview, update a response or mention something pertinent that you may have overlooked.

### Sample Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you want from this job?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person.
- What are your strengths?
- Describe the type of work environment in which you would be most effective.
- Why do you think you can do this job?
- How did you prepare for this interview?
- Describe how you would handle a deadline project that is given to you at the last minute.
- What qualities do you think a person who is successful in this position must possess?
- What do you know about our company?
- Tell me about a time when you had to solve a difficult problem.
- Why should I hire you?
- What do you consider your biggest accomplishment? Why?
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer.
- Describe the ideal job for you.
- What two or three things are most important to you in a job? Why?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What motivates you to do a good job?
- What do you see yourself doing two years from now? Five years from now?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with a team member with whom you did not get along.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.

**How we can help** - There are many resources available to help you figure out how to find a job. **Kane County Department of Employment and Education** can help you find all the information you need to arrive at your interview armed with the information to help you win the position. Call to sign up for our next session of *Uncover Your Job Search Potential* that will help you learn and practice all of the skills addressed in this article.

#### Four Offices to serve you:

<b>Elgin</b> – 30 DuPage Court	847-888-7900 x 230
<b>N. Aurora</b> – 2 Smoketree Plaza	630-844-6640 x 203
<b>DeKalb</b> – 1701 E. Lincoln Hwy.	815-756-4893 x 240
<b>Yorkville</b> – 811 W. John St.	630-553-8304

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