

TOP SEVEN INTERVIEW TIPS

This list is based on years of counseling hundreds of candidates through the interview process who have been hired for the best jobs at the best companies.

1 SET CLEAR OBJECTIVES

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up someplace else.” *Yogi Berra*

We have all had those days when we feel rushed, over-tired and unprepared for the day ahead. Do everything you can to avoid that happening on interview day. You know the basics. Get a good night’s sleep. Be on time. Dress professionally. Make eye contact. But what we often forget to do is to make sure we’ve articulated our goals for the interview, in advance. Of course you want them to ask you back. But to ensure that they will, take the time to consider exactly why they might ask you back. What problem are you helping them solve? Think about what you want to communicate about yourself, your working style, and how you might contribute to the organization.

2 BE PREPARED

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the ax.”

Abraham Lincoln

One of the best ways to ensure you won’t get a call back is to walk into an interview unprepared, so make sure you have sharpened your ax. Consider doing mock interviews. Review your resumé. Can you address the gaps if they ask? Draft questions in advance. Research the company online and, if possible and appropriate, the person interviewing you. Your research will serve as a dress rehearsal and will pay off in the interview.

3 LISTEN ACTIVELY

“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.” *Ernest Hemingway*

Well, the quote kind of says it all. You may feel that you’re on stage during your interview, tempting you to be loquacious and perform. However, it’s most critical that you listen actively to what the interviewer is saying. Focus on brief, thoughtful responses and let the interviewer push you for more detail. A good rule of thumb is that you shouldn’t be talking more than 50%

of the time. One way to accomplish this is to take a deep breath before answering a question. If you are attentive to both verbal and non-verbal cues, it will help you focus, relax, and stay on point.

4 ASK THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

“Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.” *Voltaire*

Some interviewers will make a decision about moving you forward simply because of the quality of the questions you ask. You probably know to avoid trite questions or things that you could easily learn about from the company’s website or a quick Google search. But to differentiate yourself, come to the interview with in-depth questions that show your preparation and sincere interest. Great questions say a lot about how you think, how you process information, how you listen, and how you adapt.

5 BE YOURSELF

“Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.”

Oscar Wilde

You’ve prepared thoughtfully for your interview. You’ve done your homework. Now here is where the rubber meets the road. Be yourself, and be candid and self-deprecating. There is no positive outcome from pretending to be something or someone you’re not. One outcome is that the interviewer doesn’t like the façade. Worse is that she sees through it. Even worse is that she doesn’t, you get hired, and you end up in the wrong job. It takes a lot of energy to put on a front, so focus your energy on doing the right things and doing things right.

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6 SAY THANK YOU, THOUGHTFULLY

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.” *Cicero*

So you’ve survived the interview. Now what? Well, there are many ways to say thank you. In today’s technology-paced world, we all expect immediate responses. So you need to follow up promptly, and you have a unique opportunity to communicate one more time in a way that helps you distinguish yourself. Write an email that reminds the interviewer why you can help them solve their problem. Personalize it, but keep it short. And loop back to everyone who helped you to secure the interview – friends, professional contacts, the human resources person, even a scheduling assistant if there was one. Most of your positive outreaches will get back to your NEXTinterviewer.

7 BE PERSISTENT

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” *Thomas A. Edison*

Sometimes, no means no. But more often, the interviewer has many other priorities with which to contend on a daily basis and may welcome a thoughtfully timed reminder of your interest. You would much rather know for sure that it’s a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ than be left scratching your head, waiting for a phone call, or wasting time on a position that’s not a good fit. Remember that there is no perfect candidate; so if you flubbed a particular response, address that objection when you follow-up and use your response as an opportunity to distinguish yourself. Reinforce the positives about your candidacy. And stay positive. Your persistence will ultimately be rewarded.