

## **Career Builders**

By Mary-Alane Wiltse

### **Enjoying Job Interviews**

If you are like most people, you probably cannot imagine enjoying the experience of going on a job interview. You have to get all dressed up just so you can go and have a stranger judge you. True, your potential employer will be evaluating you, but this is also your chance to form some opinions about the company and the people who work there. A job interview can be a much more pleasant experience if you view it as a two-way conversation. You want to convince the interviewer that they want to hire you, but you also want to determine if the job is something you really want.

A good way to approach an interview is to look at it from the employer's point of view. You need to figure out what the company wants from their employees. Prior preparation and research about the company can give you insights about their corporate culture, products or services, and goals for the future. This will not only impress your interviewer, it will also help you evaluate your skills as it relates to the job opening. You will be more prepared to answer their questions. Using the internet is the quickest and easiest way to find the information you want, and if the specific company is not yet on-line, you should still be able to find vast resources about similar businesses.

You also need to remember that first impressions are very powerful. Employers will often base their hiring decisions on how you first present yourself. Make sure you dress appropriately for the job for which you are applying. A good rule is to dress one-step "classier" for the interview than you would normally dress for the job. You should also avoid perfumes or colognes, hide any body art or piercings, and wear only simple jewelry.

First impressions are not just about what you wear, but also about how you behave from the minute you walk in the door. You must go to the interview alone and you should arrive a few minutes early. Treat everyone you meet as if they were the person interviewing you. Introduce yourself to the receptionist and do not be afraid to smile or engage in "chit-chat". Trust me, the receptionist will share their opinion with the boss about who they liked the best.

It does not matter if you are applying for an entry-level job or a highly skilled position; all interviewers are trying to answer the same three questions. First, they want to determine if you have the skills to do the job, or learn how to do the job. Secondly, they will try to determine if you are a hard worker and are motivated to do well. Finally, they will want to know if you will fit in with the culture of their company. So, no matter what actual questions are asked, your answers should let them know that you have the abilities that are needed, the enthusiasm they are looking for, and the temperament to get along with co-workers and supervisors.

It is also important for you to have questions prepared to ask the interviewer. These questions should center on the responsibilities of the job, on the goals of the company and on the opportunities for you to develop additional skills or grow with the company. Let the employer know that you are interested in more than just a paycheck and that you are looking for a job that will interest you and further your long-range goals.

In fact, you should, avoid asking any questions about salary. If the employer does not provide that information during the interview then you should wait until they

offer you the job. You can then discuss the pay scale and benefits package. At that point, you are in a better position to negotiate a higher rate if you do not like what they are offering.

Another important point to keep in mind is never to bad-mouth a former employer. Even if you had the worst boss that ever lived, you have to keep it to yourself. If, in your past, you have been fired from a job or have quit a job without giving notice, you will need to prepare an explanation that will satisfy the interviewer. You should give a brief explanation that avoids blaming your previous boss. The key is to point out what you learned from the experience, what you did to improve yourself, and focus on those positive things in your answer.

The close of the interview also provides an opportunity to impress the employer. The interviewer will usually ask if you have any final questions. You should tell them that they have done a good job explaining what the position entails. Tell them you are confident you could do well, and state your interest in being hired. When you get home, send a thank-you note. Thank them for their time and reiterate why they should hire you.

When you are properly prepared for the interview process, you will feel more in control. It will be easier for you to view the interview as a conversation with a potential new friend. A new friend that will pay you money - and that is how you learn to enjoy the job interview.

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