



Tips on Face-to-Face Interviewing

Successful interviewing takes careful preparation. Some of the following information is very basic but most people don't do a lot of interviewing.

Your objective during the personal interview is to present yourself and your qualifications in such a way as to impress the interviewers that you are the person for the job. You not only want to receive a job offer, but the very best offer possible.

Remember that first impressions are critical. Expect each person you meet to have an input in the hiring decision.

Approach the entire interview process with a positive, confident, enthusiastic attitude. Although interview styles differ greatly, most companies are interested in someone who is obviously interested in them and the opportunity they represent. Let them know this is the opportunity you want.

Each person you meet will be probing and evaluating some aspect of your **experience, skills, training, accomplishments, attitude, personality, knowledge, stability, management and work style.** It's not only what you say but also how you say it that is important. During the entire interview, each interviewer will be trying to determine why you should be hired.

Your objective, at all times is to convince everyone you meet, that you are the right person for the position.

Dress and Grooming are Extremely Important

Make sure your clothing is neat and conservative. Taking the extra effort to dress appropriately can give you the job-winning edge. The appropriate dress depends on the type of job for which you are interviewing. If you have any questions as to appropriate dress, discuss it with your First Search America representative. We don't recommend loud ties, strong perfumes or colognes or excessive jewelry. Take the time to make sure your hair is neatly styled and combed and that your shoes are properly shined.

What to Bring to the Interview

Bring a presentation folder with 5 copies of your resume and any support materials -- such as college or trade school transcripts, references, awards, etc., and a pad for asking questions and taking notes. While avoiding stiffness, make sure your posture is correct and you are directly facing everyone you meet.

Be Polite

Greet everyone you meet with a medium firm handshake. Greet each interviewer by his or her last name -- and be sure of the pronunciation. (Ask your First Search America consultant to get you a list of the people, along with their titles, that you will be interviewing.

When shown into the interviewer's office, take a seat only after being invited. Sit up straight with your hands in your lap.

Do not smoke, even if you are invited to do so. Do not chew gum.

Smile, be pleasant and open, and make direct eye contact.

Most interviewers will generally begin with small talk and a question or two designed to put you at ease. Answer them, as you will all the rest --- with thought, directness and enthusiasm. Answer in complete sentences -- not just "yes" or "no" -- but avoid answers that are too long.

Remember, the interviewer is evaluating you. In order to measure up, it is important that you have done your homework.

Know the company:

- Research its size, growth, products, goals and plans.
- Know its culture.
- Know the requirements of the specific opportunity being discussed so that you can relate your knowledge, skills and accomplishments to them.

Make a short list of key questions about the company that show your knowledge and allow you to probe gently for additional information that will help you determine what contributions you can make.

Bear in mind that a company hires you for one of two reasons:

1. To make them money.
2. To save them money.

If you can't do one of the two, they have no basis for hiring you.

Questions You may be Asked and Sample Answers

Always be honest and truthful. If you don't know, or are not sure, say so.

“Why would you like to work for our company?”

Because you are a leader in your field or the reputation you have for developing industry leaders or because you offer me the opportunity for growth and advancement while I am contributing to the goals of the company or because you have a reputation for treating your employees fair.

“What do you know about our company?”

Use your First Search America consultant, the Internet and the local library for information. If time permits, ask the company human resource department to mail you an annual report.

“What is your management style?”

Be honest. Do you lead by example? Do you use a team effort, participatory style? Are you “hands on or hands off” or do you try to use a balance management style?

“What are your eventual career goals and objectives?”

Most people want to advance as far as they are capable while living a balanced life. However if you have achieved the level you desire and want to stay at this level, say so and add that you intend to continue to learn and do the very best job possible.

“Why should we hire you?”

Because I possess the qualifications and skills for which you are looking and I can help you meet your goals and objectives.

“Describe your energy level.”

Most companies want to hire employees with good energy levels.

“How would your friends describe you?”

Be honest but be positive.

“How would your boss describe you?”

Again, be honest but positive.

“Describe a recent major problem, how you addressed it and the ultimate solution.”

Of course you want to choose one with a positive outcome.

“Have you ever fired anyone?” What was the reason and how did you handle it?”

Did you follow company policy, document, verify, etc.? Companies don't want to hire “loose cannons”.

“How do you organize your work? Describe a typical week and day.”

Most companies like to hire people who know how to organize their time and set priorities. You should utilize some type of organizer to remind you of scheduled events and then schedule your work broadly on a weekly basis and then, whenever possible, have a detailed schedule of your work for tomorrow before you leave today.

“What are your strengths and weaknesses?”

Know yourself. List 3 or 4 strengths such as people skills, communication skills, organizational skills, ability to analyze and solve problems, ability to stay calm under pressure, technical competence, etc. List only 1 or 2 weaknesses and downplay these. Something such as you sometimes devote too much time to work or I don't like to chew employees out.

“How do you react under extreme pressure?”

Companies don't like employees who can't handle pressure. Do you stay calm, analyze the situation and choose the best of the available options?

We recommend you prepare answers to these and other questions and practice interviewing with a friend or spouse.

Traps to avoid...

First, last and always...**Never, ever, ever**, complain about your current or previous companies or supervisors, even if encouraged to do so. Such complaints only reflect on you as an individual.

Let us repeat...never, ever, ever complain about your current or previous company or supervisors.

Always express your reasons for considering a change in positive terms: for example, challenge, location, opportunity for growth and learning, a chance to better utilize your skills. Never indicate that you are leaving a bad situation. Always talk in terms of going to a better opportunity, a chance for growth

Second, avoid the temptation to allow the interview process to deteriorate into a discussion about compensation. Never bring the subject up yourself. While your concerns about compensation are very natural, the message you convey by introducing the topic during the first interview is negative and self-centered.

If you are asked about your salary expectations, reply that you are interested in their best offer possible, based on your experience, background, accomplishments and what they feel you can contribute to the company. Then change the subject, saying “But right now, I’m interested in learning more about ...” Or “Tell me about...” . However, if pressed, be honest and realistic.

Third, avoid the trap of letting a stressful interview situation deflect you from your goal of making a positive impression and getting the offer. Most often, a negative interviewer is testing your stress level -- and it is precisely your ability to project a positive and optimistic image under pressure that he or she is trying to measure. Don’t take the negatives personally. By rising to the challenge, avoiding any potential confrontations and staying positive, you are demonstrating both your depth of character and your value as a potential employee.

Finally, close your conversation with each interviewer by thanking him or her for the time invested and by making your interests and intentions clear.

Remember that your objective is to get an offer, even if there are still some questions and concerns that need to be resolved.

By getting the offer, you have something concrete to evaluate. You get to make the decision. So always indicate your interest in the opportunity to the interviewer. Say something like “I’m very interested in this position, “ or “this is the kind of opportunity I’ve been looking for --what’s the next step and when should I follow up?” For greater impact, simply ask, “When can I start?”

If you want the job and you receive an acceptable offer, accept it on the spot. If you have questions or are not sure you want the offer, thank the interviewer for the offer and ask for a few days to ...”give it careful consideration.” Under no circumstances should you close the door by turning an offer down, until you’ve had a chance to review it and your interview in detail.

Now that you’ve handled the interview successfully, take those few extra steps that mark you as a professional. If First Search has presented you to the company, whatever the outcome of the interview, call your First Search Representative as soon possible after the interview is over. Use the first available phone after leaving the interview. Your First Search America representative is a trained professional who can reinforce your strong points with the hiring company and get the additional information you need to make an informed and rational decision about the opportunity -- but only if you give him or her the necessary information to move quickly. Normally, the hiring official calls the First Search America representative shortly after the interview. We want to hear from you first so we know how to proceed.

Next, write a short, personal note expressing your thanks and continued interest to each person you met during the interview process. Again, timeliness is key. In fact, you may want to take along some stationery, envelopes and stamps and write the notes and mail them before you leave town.

In the final analysis, it's not just your skills, background, education or your accomplishments that will win you the position that can make a real difference to your career. Rather, it's how you interview that will get you that key offer -- how you use the talents and information at your disposal to interact with the people you meet during the interview process.

We have discussed a series of steps involving preparation, research, attitude, appearance, interest, consistency, clarity of purpose and follow-up which, if implemented fully, will give you the competitive edge necessary to conduct a successful interview and receive an offer.

Here is a summary of those steps:

1. Approach the entire interview process, from beginning to end, with a positive attitude that projects confidence.
2. Do your homework. Research both your own skills and accomplishments and the company's needs and characteristics so that you can relate the two during the interview process.
3. Be conscious of the image you are projecting. Dress conservatively, keeping posture, gestures, handshakes and eye contact in mind during each interview.
4. Answer questions directly, honestly and economically, using complete sentences.
5. Prepare and ask questions that will help you show how you can make a contribution to the company's goals and objectives.
6. Be prepared to answer technical questions about special equipment or programs involved in the specific job.
7. Avoid the traps of criticizing your current or former company, employees or supervisors, or bringing up the subject of money on the first interview, or taking the interview process personally.

8. Anticipate and mentally prepare for the ‘tough’ questions the interviewer might ask. Work with your First Search America representative to package any negatives you may have.
9. Show interest in the opportunity -- ask for the job-- before leaving. Thank each interviewer for the time he or she has invested in you.
10. Accept an offer if you want it, but never turn an offer down until you’ve had a chance to discuss it and the interview in detail with you First Search America representative.
11. Follow up immediately -- first by telephone with your First Search America representative-- then in writing with each person you met during the interview process.

We at First Search America wish you the best on your interview. We welcome our opportunity to work with you in your search for a better career opportunity, and we are very interested in speaking with you about your meeting. Working together, we will be successful.