

Top 10 Interviewing Tips

Remember you are selling an Overall Package: "Yourself". For you to be successful you need to know "Who You Are", "What Skill Sets Are Important", and "Why a Company should hire YOU." Put together what we call a two-minute talk about yourself so it is fresh for the interview. You will want to relay this information to the Interviewer smoothly and concisely.

1. Be Prepared

Interview preparation is one of the most important aspects of a successful job search. Before each interview, Centennial, Inc. will provide you with coaching and detailed information on the company and the available position. However, you should also be prepared to:

- Conduct your own research on the company. Utilize the Internet, get the URL (Web-Site) of the company and study them thoroughly. Understand the history, products and services offered, competition, mission statement, financial performance, recent press releases, etc.
- Think over your accomplishments, skills and experience and how they will benefit the company. Write these down, make some notes, and know what you want to say.
- Be able to explain you're past career moves and why you are interested in making another change. Make sure your career-move explanations show foresight and planning.
- Avoid making negative remarks about your previous job(s) or manager(s). This will only hurt your chances of getting hired. Don't be bitter. Be professional.

2. Make a Good First Impression

- Our research shows that initial impressions are made within the first minute of an employment interview. You can make a positive first impression if you:
- Bring a fresh copy(s) of your resume. Your resume should be outstanding.
- Bring a smart attaché case or a professional binder and a fine quality pen. By all means, take notes during the interview.
- Start the interview with good eye contact and maintain it throughout the interview. Eye contact is key. You will benefit greatly from looking them in the eye.
- Wear professional business attire, preferably a dark blue, gray or black suit with understated accessories and jewelry. Use good judgment if corporate dress code is business casual. When in doubt - ask what's appropriate.
- Make sure your clothing is meticulously clean and color coordinated. Shoes polished.
- Create a more polished appearance by being well groomed with neat hair and nails (go ahead and treat yourself to a haircut or a manicure before the interview).
- Make sure you have a firm handshake.

3. Be Enthusiastic and Confident in Your Abilities

Being enthusiastic about your work, the company and its projects shows the interviewer that you are a viable candidate. During the interview:

- Be confident about your abilities but not egotistical. The "I can do everything" approach will not score you any points.
- Don't be afraid to give detailed information about **HOW** you can contribute when responding to questions. Make sure you answer with more than just a yes or no. Respond to a question with information or possibly a follow up question.
- Whenever possible, anticipate questions and be ready with answers. Some examples of this are: (Know that these are coming...)

Q: Tell me about yourself?

A: Very open-ended question so try and find out more what the interviewer wants to discuss, then touch upon points that emphasize your background. Should include interest, hobbies, and kind of work you enjoy. **Keep it 2 minutes max.** If you are prepared you will be able to do this smoothly and concisely.

Q: Why are you looking to change jobs? and Why should we consider you for the job?

A: Make sure you have logical business reasons why you are making a change and why you left your previous employers. (More \$\$ doesn't cut it). Ideally to advance your skills or position. *Note: When you claim a skill, back it up with on-the-job examples by "how" you did it and be persuasive.*

4. Emphasize your Strengths

Almost every interview follows a basic pattern with the person conducting the interview trying to determine your strengths and weaknesses. You'll want to: Talk about your strengths in terms of teamwork and projects you are proud to have worked on. Bring up your biggest accomplishments and where you have made the greatest impact, but most importantly explain **HOW** you did it.

- Project strength of character and strong work ethics (i.e.: goal oriented, flexible, committed, persistent, self-motivated, ambitious, hardworking, finish projects on time and on budget, good listener, dedicated, intelligent, multi-tasking, work-well under pressure).
- Address the interviewer's chief concerns (i.e.: if an HR Manager conducts the interview you might want to emphasize your interpersonal skills. On the other hand, if you are interviewed by a Technical Manager you might want to emphasize your technical skills).

5. Turn Weaknesses into Strengths

Employers look for people who know their own limitations and are interested in self-improvement. Mention a weakness and then stress its positive aspect, e.g., "I don't like to be over supervised, because I have a great deal of initiative, and I like to anticipate problems before they even arise."

6. Ask Great Questions

It is important for you to leave the interview with a good understanding of the position and company. You are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you. Your goal is to make a good career decision. Therefore, make a list of great questions to ask during the interview, such as:

- What are the responsibilities of this position, and what are the most important?
- What are the top 3 critical objectives that need to be accomplished by the person in this position during the first 6 to 12 months?
- What are the limits of my responsibility and authority?
- What problems and opportunities are associated with this position?
- What are the goals of this company and department?
- What support is available for me to meet these goals?
- Are there any projects currently in motion?
What is their history and status?
- What type of training do you provide?
- Why is this position open? Replacement or expansion?
- What criteria are used for performance reviews?

7. Don't Discuss Salary

If you state a salary figure that is too low or too high, you may not be considered for the position at all. Let your recruiter negotiate the best possible compensation package for you, it is absolutely essential that you do not state salary requirements. Instead:

- Focus on the opportunity and say you prefer to leave the question of salary open for now.
- Tell them what you are currently earning and that you are negotiable. "I know you will make me a fair offer based on what ever the market will bear."

8. Ask for the Job

The close of the interview provides a chance to sum up your qualifications and ask for the job. You can use this opportunity to:

- Ask the interviewer how well your qualifications fit the company's needs. "How do my qualifications fit the position you are looking for?" This makes the employer evaluate your background right there and now. You can then cover anything missed.
- Address anything that was missed to reinforce your candidacy. Clear up any employer concerns or confusion before the end of the meeting.

- Express interest in the position and a desire to proceed to the next step of the hiring process. "I am very interested in this position because (try and mention some reasons) and I look forward to working with you in the future. Who else do I need to meet with to help with your decision?"
- You can get some instant feedback from the interviewer by asking, "How you rank with the other people they have already interviewed?" Be quiet, and listen to the response. In most cases, their answer will indicate how well you just did during the interview.

9. Write a Thank You Note After the Interview

Always write a thank you letter to everyone who interviews you. It should be sent as soon as possible after an interview. It is acceptable to email a thank you note, however, email is not a substitute for the original hard copy, which should be sent via U.S. Mail. Generally, a thank you letter has 3 basic parts and the biggest thing to remember is to keep it brief and well written.

1. Start by thanking the interviewer for taking the time to talk with you. It is generally a good idea to include the actual date on which the interview occurred.
2. Reaffirm your interest in the company by pointing out particular issues brought up during the interview that appeal to you. Try to personalize the letter by referring to the common interest, topics or corporate objectives you discussed during the interview. Resist the temptation to sell yourself by reiterating your resume strengths.
3. Close the letter with another word of appreciation, an offer to provide more information and a statement that you look forward to hearing from them.

Important: Call your Centennial, Inc. contact with your feedback after the interview.

10. Read a Book.

In addition to these ten important tips, there are many good books to help you better understand the interview process and give you an edge over the competition. Here are a few of my favorites:

- "Headhunters Revealed!" by Darrell Gurney, CPC
- "Rites of Passage" by John Lucht
- "How to Turn An Interview Into A Job" by Jeffrey G. Allen
- "What Color Is Your Parachute" by Richard Bolles
- "Dress for Success" by Molloy

Hopefully these tips help you do a better job on your interviews. We cannot stress enough how important it is to be prepared and we want to help you do your best. Please pass these on to a friend. We know it will help.