

## INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Although the interview process is an anxiety-provoking experience for many people, it is actually nothing more than a mutual exchange of information. Viewing the interview as a conversation, rather than as an interrogation, may certainly help to put you at ease.

Your role during the interview is to promote yourself and learn about the organization and the position, while the interviewer's job is to learn more about you. It helps to remember that the interviewer was once in your shoes and therefore can empathize with how you may be feeling. Preparing carefully for the interview will generally increase your confidence level and, as a result, make it easier for you to relax.

### PURPOSES OF INTERVIEWING

It's important to keep in mind that the purposes of interviewing are to:

1. Discover information
2. Provide information
3. Ask and answer questions to become more informed
4. Learn more about the job, position, company, person
5. Discover the needs of the interviewer, company, department
6. Make the interviewer feel comfortable with her/his decision
7. GET ANOTHER INTERVIEW

### PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

You should be doing two kinds of research in preparation for your interview:

**SELF-ASSESSMENT:** This is the most important kind of research. You must know yourself: your strengths, weaknesses and career goals. Make some notes to yourself beforehand so you will be able to communicate these clearly to the interviewer.

**EMPLOYER RESEARCH:** Make sure you know something about the organization with which you are interviewing as well as the position for which you are interviewing. Obtain an annual report, company brochure, and identify recent newspaper and magazine articles written about the organization. It is also helpful to visit their offices and observe their work environment. After researching the organization, you should formulate several questions about the nature of the company and the position for which you are applying. You may ask these questions during your interview.

Self-assessment and employer research are two very important steps in preparing for your interview. Do not overlook them!

### DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Depending on the organization you are interviewing with, you should be prepared to wear professional business clothes or business casual attire. Unless you are informed to interview in business casual, stay on the conservative side and wear business attire.

## PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

Both men and women should wear a suit. The kind of suit worn will be determined by the nature of the organization. A conservative color, such as navy blue or charcoal gray, is usually recommended for the greatest flexibility. Men should wear a tie and pressed shirt. Women should wear a matching jacket and skirt (hemline slightly above the knee) or a pantsuit. Women's stockings should be a neutral color. Low-cut or revealing clothing is unacceptable. Be neat and coordinated in appearance.

Be conservative with makeup and jewelry. Men should take out their earring(s) if they wear one. Avoid perfume or cologne as the interviewer may be allergic.

Bring a briefcase, portfolio, or some type of presentable folder, not a backpack or bulky bag.

## BUSINESS CASUAL

Think of your business casual clothes as a relaxed version of your business attire. For men, casual business wear means casual pants (khakis with a woven shirt and tie, sweaters and no sport coat required). For women, it means slacks (khakis), mixed separates, sweaters, and tights or socks. No jacket is required, but a casual blazer is acceptable to wear.

Among the banned items in business casual wear are: shorts, blue jeans, t-shirts, flannel shirts, mini-skirts, spandex, team logo shirts, halter tops, tank tops, leggings, sweat suits, hats, athletic shoes, sandals, outdoor boots and provocative or revealing clothing of any kind.

## **ON THE DAY OF YOUR INTERVIEW**

Know where you are going. Write down the name, address, and phone number of the person with whom you have the interview, and bring it with you. Determine, at least a few days in advance, how you will get to the interview. You may even want to make a practice run to make sure you leave enough time to arrive at your destination.

Bring extra copies of the latest version of your resume and a list of references on a separate sheet of paper. Arrive at your destination approximately 10 minutes early. This will give you time to catch your breath and relax for a few minutes before the interview. The organization may also require you to complete an application form during this time.

## **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

When the interviewer calls your name, stand up, establish eye contact, smile and shake his/her hand firmly (but don't break it). The handshake is the same for men and women. Remember to smile, be enthusiastic and show your self-confidence. You want to leave the recruiter with a positive impression. Most importantly, be yourself! Let your own personality shine through.

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
3. Why should I hire you?
4. Why do you want to work for us specifically? Who else are you interviewing with?
5. What are your short- and long-range goals? How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
6. Describe how you dealt with a major conflict in your life. What was the outcome?
7. Describe a mistake you made and how you learned from it.
8. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself?
9. What do you really want to do in life?

10. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
11. Why did you choose this career path?
12. How would your best friend describe you? Previous employer?
13. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
14. How has your NYU experience prepared you for a career?
15. What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in your career?
16. How do you determine or evaluate success?
17. What do you believe it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
18. In what ways can you make a contribution to our organization?
19. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinates.
20. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
21. Describe your most rewarding NYU experience.
22. If you were hiring a candidate for this position, what qualities would you seek?
23. Why did you choose to attend NYU?
24. Why did you choose your major?
25. What academic subjects did you like best? Why?
26. What academic subjects did you like least? Why?
27. If you could, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
28. Do you have plans for graduate school?
29. Are your grades a good indication of your academic achievement?
30. What changes would you make at NYU?
31. What have you learned from participating in extracurricular activities?
32. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
33. How well do you work under pressure?
34. What do you like to do outside of work?
35. How would you describe your ideal job following graduation?
36. What do you know about our organization?
37. What two things are most important to you in a job?
38. Do you prefer small-, medium-, or large-sized organizations? Why?
39. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
40. Who do you admire most? Why?
41. Would you consider relocation?
42. Are you willing to travel?
43. Are you willing to spend at least 6 months as a trainee?
44. Tell me about a time that you had a conflict with a supervisor and how you resolved it.

Remember, you must be able to respond to these kinds of questions in a convincing way and always support your responses with specific examples.

## **QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK**

An interview should be an exchange of information. You should have questions formulated to ask an interviewer in order to demonstrate that you have taken an active role in approaching your interview. If you do not get a chance to ask questions during the main portion of the interview, you will likely have a chance at the end of your discussion. The specific questions you should ask will vary from one organization to another, but be sure to ask questions that focus on the job, its responsibilities and opportunities. Questions about salary, fringe benefits, vacation days, and health insurance should **not** be asked until you receive the job offer.

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWERS**

1. What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this position?
2. Do you have a formal training program? If yes, could you describe it?
3. How will my performance be evaluated, and how often?
4. What is a typical career path for an employee entering your organization?
5. How is the present economic situation affecting your organization?
6. What are your plans for expansion in terms of products, service, new branches, etc.?
7. How would you differentiate your organization from your major competitors?
8. What do you consider to be the major problems facing your industry/field today?
9. What are the challenges your office faces?
10. Who would I be working with? Who would I report to?
11. What qualities does a person need to do well in this position?

## **CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**

Ask if there is anything else the interviewer wants to know about your skills or experience. Reiterate your interest in the position. Ask what the next step will be, and when you may expect to hear a decision. Make sure to get each interviewer's business card. Thank the interviewer for his/her time. Send a thank you letter within 24 hours. Follow up with the interviewer by phone if you haven't been notified of a decision within a few weeks.

## **15 INTERVIEW SINS**

These are some reasons why candidates receive rejection replies after an interview:

1. Lack of proper career planning – purpose and goals not clearly defined.
2. Lack of knowledge of field of specialization – not well qualified.
3. Inability to express yourself clearly.
4. Insufficient evidence of achievement or capacity to motivate action in others.
5. Not prepared for the interview – no research on company
6. No real interest in the organization or the industry – merely shopping around.
7. Narrow location interest – unwilling to relocate later.
8. Overbearing – overaggressive – conceited.
9. Little interest or enthusiasm – indifferent.
10. Interested only in the best dollar offer.
11. Asks poor questions about the job or asks no questions at all.
12. Unwilling to start at the bottom – expects too much too soon.
13. Makes excuses – evasive answers – hedges on unfavorable factors in record.
14. No confidence or pose – fails to make direct eye contact with the interviewer.
15. Poor personal appearance.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING**

1. Prepare your responses: work experience, strengths, and examples of accomplishments.
2. Learn all you can about the industry, company, position and person who will be interviewing you.
3. Bring your own set of questions for the interview.
4. Do not try to “control” the interview. Have a conversation.
5. Let your “value” show and shine and sparkle.
6. Listen, listen, listen.
7. Relax and take your time...breathe!

Rehearse with a friend, tape record and/or do a mock interview.