5 Steps to an Effective Interview

Step 1 – Before the Interview

- Find out who will be interviewing you
- Review common interview questions
- Generate and rehearse stories
- Develop questions for the interviews
- Remember your references (Make sure each of them have agreed to be a reference and have a conversation with each one ahead of time so you have an idea of what he/she will say. You can even ask each reference to mention specific projects you worked on together or specific strengths they have seen in you.)
- Know where you are going and arrive 5-10 minutes early
- Dress professionally
- Know your interviewers’ names

Step 2 – Positive First Impression

- Show up on time and prepared
- EVERYONE is interviewing you, even the front desk staff
- Use direct eye contact, a warm smile, and a firm handshake with everyone
- Mental connections lead to physical connections – you will radiate a positive attitude if you have positive thoughts
- Remember, small talk is big talk: avoid potentially controversial topics when first meeting the interviewer. Stick to talking about things going on in the town, the décor of the building, how easily you found the location, etc.
- Be aware of nonverbal communication- always sit up straight and smile, during the entire interview.

Step 3 – What information the employer is looking for in your answers

A. Credentials (skills and accomplishments)
   - To answer these questions, name the skill, give an example of how you’ve used it before, and connect the skill to how you might use it in this particular job
   - How? Use the STAR technique (situation + task + action + result) Briefly describe the overall situation in which you used the skill, the specific task you had to accomplish in the situation, what action you took to accomplish the task, and what concrete results you obtained. This technique will enable you to give a full and complete answer for many interview questions without rambling about irrelevant details.
   - Connect your answers to what you can do for the employer instead of what you’re looking for from the employer.

B. Motivation
   - Do your homework: research the company and position and be able to concisely describe what drew you to this job and this company
• Have clear career goals and know how the position supports your career path

C. **Fit (work environment and collegiality)**
• Be able to describe your ideal work environment
• Know your personal strengths and weaknesses
• Know how you address conflict in the workplace
• Be prepared for off-the-wall questions

D. **Salary and Benefits (do your expectations match the employer’s?)**
• Do not bring up these topics until an offer is on the table
• There are specific techniques to use during salary negotiation

Step 4 – **Closing with finesse**
• Briefly reiterate your interest in the position and your top 2-3 qualifications
• Ask the interviewer appropriate questions, show you researched the organization
• Thank the interviewer for his/her time, maintain eye contact, firm handshake
• Ask about next steps (selection process and how/when they will follow up)
• Ask for a business card from all interviewers
• If you’re offered the job, do NOT accept or reject the offer until you’ve had time to think about it

Step 5 – **Interview follow-up**
• Take notes immediately after the interview. This will help you write a personalized thank-you letter and help you remember the specific questions they asked.
• ALWAYS send a thank you letter within 1-2 days. Mention specific information you discussed in the interview.
• Anticipate a second interview and think positively instead of dwelling on any mistakes you think you made in the interview. You are always your worst critic and chances are, you performed better than you think you did.
• Prepare to respond to an offer and carefully review the job posting. Prepare to ask questions about any aspects of the job you still have questions about before accepting an offer.
• Call if you have not heard anything and the deadline has passed.
• Don’t burn bridges EVER. Don’t criticize an employer if you are not chosen for a position. You don’t know what aspects played into the decision and you don’t want to seem like poor sport in case any future jobs open within the company.