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Presents:



Leave Your Cat At Home

Interviewing Advice

Jobipedia.org is a free online resource championed by HR Policy Foundation.

Jobipedia.org is designed specifically for entry-level job seekers looking for advice to support their path to employment, but can be used by anyone looking for honest and reliable career advice.

Every answer is personally written by a hiring or recruiting manager currently employed at some of America's largest companies.

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Introduction

A hiring manager from a large corporation once told a story about an interviewee who brought their cat to their job interview. The hiring manager conducted the entire interview with the applicant's cat on her desk. Nothing says, "I'm the perfect candidate for this position," like bringing your cat to the job interview.

What's interesting is this kind of bizarre story is not uncommon amongst HR personnel. It seems that many people enter into an interview and struggle to appropriately represent themselves. Perhaps this is because the existential terror and ecstasy of a job interviews is unlike any other human experience. Rarely do we enter a situation where we feel as judged and exposed by complete strangers than in this absolutely necessary step in furthering our lives. Everyone approaches an interview differently, but are there certain suggested practices for a successful interview?

This short book was put together to provide a direct take on sound interview practices for individuals attempting to join the workforce. What follows is a compilation of tips and insights from top HR representatives at some of America's largest companies.

Chapter 1: Research The Company



If you go on a date with someone you have some idea of who they are and what they care about. Even if it's a blind date you're going to at least attempt to get some information about that person from whoever set you up on the date. You do this instinctively because you are hoping to impress them, or engage in meaningful conversation, or call off the blind date before it starts.

In many ways, the interview process is no different than dating. It's paramount to know about the company you're interviewing with. They want to know that you're more than just a resume and a graduate of some school, but an invested intelligent individual who can make a positive impact at their organization.

As a hiring expert from Avery Dennison put it, "When researching a company, I would focus on the company's core values, mission statement, leadership team and products."

While finding basic information is good, one of the hiring experts from ManpowerGroup encourages people applying for a job to go a step further.

"I would recommend digging deeper than just general knowledge about an employer. [Find answers to these questions prior to the interview]:

- ① What are the services / products that the company offers?
- ① How large is the company? Other locations? How many employees?
- ① What is their philosophy or mission statement?
- ① Do they have other locations?
- ① Have they won any awards or received recognition?
- ① Do they give back to the community?
- ① Who are their competitors?
- ① Research the executives and the person you are interviewing with.”

“I would recommend digging deeper than just general knowledge about an employer.”

-ManpowerGroup

The problem is you won't necessarily find all of this information on each company's website. It's going to require some searching of the internet to find various sources that obtain the kind of content that will set you apart. The goal is to gather as much information as possible prior to the interview so you can have a clear understanding of the organization before your interview. A great way to impress your interviewer is to know a lot about their company.

Chapter 2: Phone Interviews



In the hiring process it's not unusual for there to be a phone interview prior to a face to face meeting. This presents different issues and advantages to a meeting in person. Our experts still have some valuable dos and don'ts that will help you move to the next interview phase.

When it comes to phone interviews an expert from Textron said simply, "Mentally treat this as an in-person interview."

We all have a routine that we go through before an in-person interview. While these routines may vary, there are some fairly consistent things we all do to prepare ourselves. Physical appearance is an absolute must for an in-person meeting, so get dressed as if you are actually meeting in person. The way you appear can affect the way you conduct yourself over the phone. If you mentally prepare for an in-person interview by listening to a specific kind of music or drinking a cup coffee from your local shop, do those things prior to the phone call.

"Mentally treat [a phone interview] as an in-person interview."

-Textron

Let's say you get to the phone interview stage. What are your chances of actually progressing to an in-person interview?

A hiring expert from Hewlett-Packard estimates your chances on getting to the next phase saying, "This can vary a lot depending on a variety of factors so by no means will the following numbers be absolute. Generally for a phone screen, you could expect 6-10 candidates to be contacted but this can greatly vary. For face-to-face interviews generally 2-4 is a safe guess."

Based off this rough estimate, the good news is if you are able to get to this stage you have around a 40% chance of moving to the next stage.

Chapter 3: Managing Anxiety



An interview can be one of the most anxiety inducing situations in our human experience. No where else are you judged by complete strangers who, depending on how you respond, may offer to compensate you with tens of thousands of dollars every year. The question becomes how can you avoid or minimize your anxiety to present yourself accurately and impressively during the interview process?

“Remember that your interviewer is human too, so be yourself & take your time answering questions. Take deep breaths & don't drink too much coffee!”

-Hershey's

An IBM hiring expert gave this brilliant insight into curbing anxiety, “Prepare everything ahead of time to avoid last minute distractions. Copies of resumes, clothes, directions should all be done prior to the interview day. These small distractions can frazzle anyone on the day of the interview.”

Another hiring expert from Hershey's added this honest and humorous response, “Remember that your interviewer is human too, so be yourself & take your time answering questions. Take deep breaths & don't drink too much coffee!”

Of course some of you will still have an immense amount of anxiety. Remember your interviewer is a real person. Stay away from caffeine because it only increase your anxiety. Even when you plan ahead that anxious feeling remains. Our experts gave another thought that is possibly the most vital key to success. “Practice, practice, practice! As uncomfortable as it can be to play ‘mock interview’ with a friend, family member, or colleague, it’s really the best way to get over the jitters,” said a hiring expert from AT&T.

If you want to manage the very real problem of anxiety during interviews, then prepare like you’re training for an athletic competition. You would get great sleep the night before, be careful of what you put into your body, and practice on a regular basis in order to be ready for any circumstance that may arise. If you’re well prepared you’ll be able to walk into the interview with confidence, which will greatly help you manage your anxiety.

“As uncomfortable as it can be to play ‘mock interview’ with a friend, family member, or colleague, it’s really the best way to get over the jitters.”

-AT&T

Chapter 4: Ink Disaster?



Tattoos have become a widely spread mark of individualism and personal expression. But how are they perceived in the interview space? The overwhelming response from our experts was that if you can cover your ink then do so. The problem is some people simply cannot cover their tattoos. So what should you do if you can't hide your tattoos?

“Focus on the important things and make the tattoos a non-issue.”

-Caterpillar

We got two experts from two different companies to weigh in on this tough topic. Steve, a hiring expert from Caterpillar, recommends not thinking twice about it, “Focus on the important things and make the tattoos a non-issue.”

Ellen, a hiring expert from Hospira, had a similar response, “First impressions are very important so don't let that be a distraction.”

The point here is to let your personality, charisma, and talent speak so loudly that your tattoos are easily overlooked. Being personable and confident will speak louder than any artwork can. It's not an ink disaster; it's all about presenting smarter.

Chapter 5: Prepare To Answer...



Throughout this book we've made sure to emphasize on a continual basis the necessity of preparedness. Whether it's doing thorough research on the company you're interviewing with, maintaining your interview routine, curbing your anxiety, or considering how to address your tattoos, being prepared correlates to success. A great way to be prepared is to have answers to standard questions prior to the meeting. We took the time to compile various questions often asked by recruiters at a myriad of different Jobipedia.org contributing companies.

“Are there any questions you have for me?” This is probably one of the most important questions during the interview process.”

-Hewlett-Packard

An expert from Schwan's offered, “You would most always be asked, ‘Why are you interested in our company/role?’”

One Hewlett-Packard expert said, “Are there any questions you have for me?” This is probably one of the most important questions during the interview process.”

An expert from American Express added the all-important question, “What would you say is your

greatest professional accomplishment to date?”

Finally we had an expert from Pitney Bowes add a few more examples of both general and somewhat odd questions that you may be asked.

“General questions:

- ① Tell me about yourself?
- ① Walk me through your resume, and tell me about each position/educational experience?
- ① What hobbies do you enjoy?
- ① In the work place what stresses you out the most?
- ① What are you most proud of in your career so far?

Wacky Questions:

- ① If you could be any Disney character, who would you be and why?
- ① How many snow shovels sold in the US last year?
- ① What is the funniest thing that has happened to you recently?
- ① How does the internet work?
- ① If you were a pizza deliveryman how would you benefit from scissors?”

The point is to take some time and actually answer some of these questions specifically before each interview. If you can find a friend, sit with them and role-play the interview. Answer questions out loud so you're comfortable with your responses. If you need to write down the questions and then respond to them, then do just that. But be sure you speak your answers out loud. You will always sound great in your own head, so speaking out loud will help you identify awkward phrasing or answers that need to be given more thought.

No, you will probably not be able to anticipate every question you'll be asked in the interview. The important thing is that you prepare yourself for as many potential questions as possible.

Chapter 6: Questions To Impress Your Interviewer



You nailed the phone interview. You made it to the in-person meeting and answered every question with confidence and clarity. Now how do you get the job you're applying for? You want to make a good impression on the hiring manager. One of the best ways to impress any hiring manager is to ask thoughtful questions of your own at the end of the interview.

A hiring manager at Archer Daniels Midland gave a few questions you could ask that will certainly impress an interviewer, "Please explain the company's culture – what are the pros and cons? What made you choose to work for the company? What does the typical career path look like for someone entering this role?"

A hiring manager named Kelly from Merck recommends asking, "How does your company recognize and reward talent in terms of career progression?"

An expert from AT&T suggested this question to make you stand out, "What is the biggest problem that the person in this role will be asked to solve? If I were in this role, how could I make a real impact on profits, productivity?"

An expert from Mutual of Omaha gave more generic questions you could ask, "Questions that impress me the

most are about culture (what's it like here), innovation (how do we develop our competitive edge), and action-oriented (what will I be expected to do within the first 90 days).”

“How does your company recognize and reward talent in terms of career progression?”

-Merck

Whenever the interviewer asks, “Do you have any questions for me?” it's your cue to make an impression with a well worded, non-surface level question.

Don't just go in with prepared questions either. Up the ante and ask a question based on the conversation to show the hiring manager that you were paying attention and are an active listener.

Chapter 7: Appropriate Follow-up



The interview ended. Now the waiting begins. When will you get a phone call or email? Will you hear back at all? If you do not hear back after a few days you think, “Can I call my interviewer for an update??” The time between the interview and when you’re contacted about a decision can be just as difficult as the interview itself.

Luckily our experts have more than a few recommendations on post-interview best practices.

Always send a thank you note after your interview. Francis from Merck says in regards to thank you notes, “It’s a matter of politeness and professionalism.”

People vary on whether a handwritten note is better than a digital thank you. An expert from Cardinal Health believes that a handwritten thank you note is worth the time to craft saying, “Interviewers are typically impressed with handwritten notes because they are usually well thought out, take slightly more effort than an e-mailed note and the card selected can show a glimpse of a candidate’s personality which is sometimes rather difficult to do when following proper interview etiquette.”

When it comes to following up if you haven't hear back, a hiring manager a Praxair expert says, "If there has been more than 5 business day's lapse in contact, it is very appropriate for you to follow up with your contact and inquire about the status of your next interview."

Don't forget, you can ask at the end of the interview what the anticipated timeline for hearing back might be. Hiring managers know you're going to be anxiously waiting for an update, so it's okay to ask.

Courtesy in the workplace makes a difference, and if you take the time and go the extra mile you may just land that job you've been dreaming of.

Final Thoughts

If you found this book helpful pass it along to anyone you think it would help too. There are millions of people entering the workforce each year. If you'd like more useful tips, advice and recommendations about resumes, interviewing, salaries, workplace relations, or a number of other topics visit us at www.jobipedia.org. You can also submit a question of your own to be answered by our hiring experts--for free!

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