



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Congratulations! You have reached the interview stage of your job search. The time, effort and investments you have made to develop your skills within your chosen field have opened the door with our client for a face-to-face interview. Just as there are specific resume writing techniques to best present your skills to potential employers, there are also many interviewing strategies which can help you to get to your ultimate goal, an offer.

While your technical skills are important, there is much more involved to get yourself to the offer stage. This is the point when the “human element” becomes crucial. A face-to-face interview gives you a chance to show how well you can relate with people. Everyone you meet with at that company, both technical people and non-technical people, are looking at you trying to determine, “Would I want to work with this person day in and day out?” If you find yourself speaking to a non-technical manager, HR person or an administrative assistant, speak to them in terms they can relate to (making sure not speak down to anyone). People want to work with people they like. So throughout your interview, keep this thought in the back of your mind, ‘They may or may not remember what you say, but they will always remember how you made them feel.’

Every company’s corporate environment is different. Your Career Coach with DriveStaff will help you to develop the most effective strategy for the specific company you are about to interview with. However there are some essential interviewing techniques that are always useful to know prior to going into any interview:

- 1.) Get focused. Understand that the goal of any interview is to get an offer. Even if you have already determined that this may not be the best place for you to work, you will be wasting your time unless you give yourself an opportunity to see what they can offer. They may surprise you! If you are trying to determine if you would like to work there *while* you are interviewing, that will be visible to the interviewer. Go into the interview with the mind-set that this *is* the job for you! **Always remember, YOU CANNOT TURN DOWN AN OFFER THAT YOU DO NOT GET!**
- 2.) Do your homework. The Career Coach at DriveStaff should be able to tell you about the people who you will be interviewing with, their personalities and the best methods to approach them. However you should take some time to gather any information about the company that you can. Check out the company’s website and any articles that have been written about them recently. Having specific facts about the company you’re interviewing with opens opportunities throughout the interview to express why you are interested in working there.
- 3.) Dress appropriately. Your Career Coach will tell you what to wear to make the best impression in a particular company’s environment. In general, interview attire should be professional and conservative. Men and women should wear business suits and be clean and well groomed. There is almost NEVER a good occasion to have a cartoon character or sports team logo on your attire! Many, many, many applicants have been passed over for that very reason from a variety of different industries.



- 4.) Complete the application in detail and be truthful. Never write “see resume” anywhere on the application. The education level, work experience and salary history you list on the application will be verified for accuracy, so never misrepresent yourself.
- 5.) Make a great first impression! The outcome of many interviews is decided during the first five minutes of meeting the applicant. Be sure to have an answer to “So, tell me about yourself.” Offer the interviewers a firm handshake, a smile, good eye contact and enthusiasm! An easy opening line is always, “Hi! It’s very nice to meet you. Thanks for taking the time to see me.”
- 6.) Try to begin the interview by having the client explain the position to you. You can do this by saying, “DriveStaff told me a little about this position, but can you tell me exactly what YOU would be looking for from the ideal candidate for this position?.” You’re asking for their personal opinion about the skills, not just the skills needed for the job. Once they tell you what they want, you will then have a benchmark to sell yourself at for the rest of the interview. While talking about your skills, focus only on the details of your experience that best fit the specific needs of the position. Again, always be truthful!
- 7.) Use your body language to your advantage. Body language is as important as your verbal language throughout the interview. Sit up straight, leaning forward slightly to express interest. Maintain eye contact and smile! This shows alertness, confidence and interest. Never cross your arms over your chest or lean back and slouch in your chair. Politely refuse offers of coffee or sodas, they will only serve to become distractions. Also, be aware of the interviewer’s body language. If they are shuffling papers, fidgeting or looking out the window, pull them back into the interview by asking them about why they like working there, or how they found this company. This will grab their attention for you to focus them back in by your follow up question of “What else would you like to know about my qualifications for this position?”
- 8.) If they ask you a negative question, such as “What is your greatest weakness?” use that as an opportunity to show them you are a problem solver. Put the weakness in the past tense, and finish by explaining how you solved that problem. This formula works for all negative questions. “My greatest weakness used to be that I just couldn’t say no to people, but by creating a prioritized schedule for my week I found I was able to either schedule time to get it done, or realize that I simply have to say no.” Identify the problem then show them how you solved it. If they say, “If that WAS your greatest weakness, what IS your greatest weakness?” Easy fix: “It’s something I always need to be conscious of or it can catch up to me, so I need to stay focused on it.”
- 9.) At the end of the interview, ask the interviewer, “Does it look like I’m a fit for this position?” If they answer yes or maybe, your answer should be “Great! What’s the next step because I’m very interested in the position? Do you have an idea of when I should expect to hear something from you?” If their answer to your initial question is no, then at this point you have nothing to lose, so ask them “why not?” or “what makes you feel that way?” If it comes down to a technical aspect that you have, that they just don’t know you have, now you can explain yourself. However if you never give them an opportunity to tell you that you’re not a fit while you are still there, you will just walk out, not get the job and never know why! Always ask, “Does it look like I’m a fit for this position?”
- 10.) Make sure you collect business cards from everyone you interview with. Many times you can tip the scales in your favor by sending a well written thank you note.

These are just some of the basics of interviewing. Since the interview is primarily about human relation skills, be sure to project your enthusiastic, professional image right from the beginning. Know you’re ready, put a smile on your friendly personality and get that offer!!



HALLWAY SKILLS

From the minute you get in your car, on the train or in the cab you need to take the mind set that your interviewer is watching you! Don't drive down the road with your radio blaring as loud as it goes, cut people off while picking your nose! The person you just offended with your music too loud, who you then cut off and disgusted with your poor hygiene could be the person you're about to interview with! Some hiring managers watch you from the time you get out of your car, watching to see if you took your suit coat off before you got in the car or if you kept it on, not thinking about how it will present poorly when you get out of the car. Some hiring managers will actually sit staff members in the waiting room with you to see how you react, or how you conduct yourself with strangers. Picture this conversation:

"Hey John, I'm supposed to interview the person in the lobby. Do me a favor, take a quick walk through there and let me know what I'm in for."

"Well, I walked through, said hello and it was as if I wasn't in the room at all. Your candidate didn't say a word! What kind of people are you looking to bring in here?!?"

That is a very realistic, probability of what will happen in your next interview. It's important to acknowledge everyone as you pass them in the hall, if they pass through the lobby where you are waiting, if they're washing their hands next to you in the washroom or if you pass by their cube on the way to the office where you will be interviewing. It can be a warm smile with a head nod, it can be a "Hi, how are you?" or if you don't care how they are doing, "Good morning" or "Good afternoon" with a warm smile. It just needs to be something to let the other person know that you know they are there, and you're glad they are there. By doing that, you're telling them that you are a good person. People only hire people they like. Period.

Receptionists, custodial staff, the person bringing the mail by, the kids of any of the above who happened to stop by the office that day...any and all of these people may have a close relationship with the very person who you will be interviewing with. If any one of them go to that person with a comment like, "That person in the lobby was really rude to me..." then you might as well not even bother going through the process. All the credentials in the world won't sidestep the fact that you're not someone they want to work with.

Always remember, they may or may not remember what you say, but they'll always remember how you made them feel.



12 FREQUENTLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It is always a good idea to be prepared for any question, regardless of whether or not you think it will come up in the interview. Below is a list of questions that have come up in previous interviews and may be asked of you in your interview. Keep in mind that employers look at interviews not only as a way to measure your abilities against other candidates, but also as a means of assessing your attitude, personality and mental agility.

There is no need to be modest in an interview. This is your chance to sell yourself and really explain why you are qualified to do the job. Having strong self-confidence will make a tremendous difference.

Read these questions and practice your answers aloud. If you have any questions on the best way to approach any of them, please feel free to call your Career Coach right away.

1. So, tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you leave your last job?
3. What is your greatest weakness?
4. What can happen in the workplace that would really get you angry?
5. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?
6. Why should I hire you?
7. How do you work under pressure?
8. How would you describe your ideal job?
9. Tell me about a major problem you've encountered in the workplace and how you overcame it.
10. What do you know about our company?
11. Why did you choose the field you are in?
12. How much money are you currently making? How much money are you looking to make here?



TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

This is the most commonly asked question in any interview. It is also the most poorly answered question of any interview question asked. It's important to have an answer. I know a recruiter who had a candidate earning \$180K who was good enough to the point where the company asked him to just send the invoice along with the resume! As a formality, even though they already knew she was who they were looking for, they brought her in to interview her for their director level position. They started with the typical "So, tell me about yourself" as she walked into the office. She responded by saying, "Well, as you can obviously see, I'm about 15 pounds overweight." While she meant the comment to bring an element of levity into the interview, the first thing they heard her say was a comment about her lack of self-confidence! That's not the sort of thing you want to hear from a future director of the company! She had the skills and experience to do the job, however she didn't get an offer specifically because of her answer to a question meant to be an "ice-breaker".

It's important to have an answer ready for that question; you should anticipate it being asked. First tell them what you do professionally and how long you've been doing it. "I'm a C++ programmer with 4 years of experience." Next give them a statement summing up a notable accomplishment. "Just to give you a quick example of my experience, when I was at ABC Company I initiated and developed a program that tracked consultants 'reported hours worked' in comparison to their 'actual hours worked.' It saved the company \$10K that first quarter it was implemented and is still in use to this day." Follow that up by explaining what you are looking for. (NOTE: This description should be different for every interview as you describe only the position you are interviewing for specifically.) A primary concern that interviewers have about asking this opening question is that the candidate will ramble on for way too long. So now you need to give control back to the interviewer by asking a question. "My Career Coach has told me a little about the position, can you tell me exactly what the responsibilities are?" Once the interviewer explains the answer to that question, you now have a target to sell at for the rest of the interview. You know what they want, so now you can more accurately bring up the relevant experience in your background to fill their needs. It should go without saying that the experience you bring up should always be truthful! Never fabricate experience to fit the position, it will only hurt you in the long run.

Here is an example of this opening conversation: "So, tell me about yourself."

"I'm a C++ programmer with 4 years of experience. Just to give you a quick example of my experience, when I was at ABC Company I initiated and developed a program that tracked consultants 'reported hours worked' in comparison to their 'actual hours worked.' It saved the company \$10K that first quarter it was implemented and is still in use to this day. I'm looking for an opportunity to work on full life cycle projects with C++ in a fast paced financial trading environment. My Career Coach has told me a little about this position, can you tell me exactly what the responsibilities are?"

Not only does this response answer the interviewer's question completely and help you to better understand the exact position you're interviewing for, it will show that you're serious about getting this job! You'll be more prepared, and the interviewer will know it. Good luck and happy interviewing!



THE MONEY QUESTION

Negotiating salary is an event that many people do not know how to approach and handle correctly. As a result, they end up earning less than they could have, or they're passed over entirely for an opportunity where they could have truly excelled.

Obviously, everyone wants to make as much as they possibly can. As one of the select candidates represented by DriveStaff, you should realize that an important part of our service is to provide assistance as a third party to negotiate the best offer possible for you. DriveStaff has a mutually beneficial interest in ensuring you are getting the highest possible salary your skills can command.

The key point to remember throughout this process is that you have an agent working for you, DriveStaff. By allowing your Career Coach from DriveStaff to handle the salary negotiations for you, not only will you be able to keep your focus on the position at hand, but you will also have the confidence that you've received the best possible offer that our client can present. We will negotiate more salaries each month, then you will most likely negotiate for yourself over the course of your entire career; so let our experience work for you.

Even with DriveStaff handling the negotiations, you will still be faced with the money question, and you'll need to be prepared with an answer. Many people believe salary negotiation happens at the end of the interview process, but it actually starts at the very beginning, when you fill out the company's application. It's important you never write a figure down. Instead write "Negotiable" or "Open" in that space. Writing a number on the application could rule you out before the interview even begins!

The attitude to convey during the interview is that you are excited about the position, eager to do the job and willing to work hard. Express your interest and enthusiasm about the opportunity to contribute to the company. It's important not to create the impression that you are only interested in personal gain by saying, or even implying, that the highest dollar offer is your primary concern. That attitude will only get you labeled as "money motivated" as well as get you an escort to the door. Money motivated individuals are easily recruited away, which is an investment too risky for any company to gamble on.

Be prepared to respond to the question with a couple of answers. Knowing that DriveStaff will represent you in this area, take that opportunity to make yourself look more attractive to them. A great response is to the money question is, "For me, it's more about the opportunity than it is about the money, and if you feel I'm the most qualified for the position (which I hope you do), I'm sure you'll make me a fair offer." If they ask a second time, that's a signal that they are interested, now it's time to throw the ball back in their court. "As I mentioned, I'm very interested in the position and I'd like to earn as much as I'm qualified to earn. How much would you offer someone with my qualifications?"

If the employer gives a figure, ask if it is a firm offer, and if it's acceptable and you want the job, accept the offer on the spot. Don't be concerned with waiting to go through DriveStaff. Nothing gets an employer more excited, and sets the stage for a great working environment, than having an offer accepted on the spot.

If, however, the employer doesn't give a figure and instead, presses you for one, tell the employer what you are currently making. You still want to avoid giving a figure that you would accept for this position. Telling them you would like something comparable to your current salary, will get you your current salary. Giving a range, will give you the lowest number in the range. Avoid giving a number.

Finally, never refuse an offer of employment until you've had time to think about it and discuss it with your Career Coach. If they make you an offer that's not acceptable, be appreciative of the offer, let them know you need to think about it over night, and immediately call your Career Coach to discuss what needs to be done.

Remember, we are here to help. Your best interests are our best interests. Our goal is help you get the best possible offer your skills can command.



REASONS WHY SKILLED PROFESIONALS DON'T GET A JOB OFFER

Poor personal appearance

Lack of tact and manners

Lack of interest and enthusiasm; passive and indifferent

Lack of interest in the position or company

Money motivated; only interested in if the offer will be enough

Lack of maturity

Talking poorly of former employers

Indecision

Limp, fishy handshake

Merely shopping around

Makes excuses, covering factors in past record, evasive

Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited "know it all"

Late to interview

Wants job only for short time

Interviewing here because they can't find a better job elsewhere

Lack of confidence and poise; nervous; ill at ease

Not asking questions about the job

Vague or rambling responses to questions

Unable to express self clearly

Lazy

Intolerant; strong prejudices

Inability to take criticism

Lack of planning for career; no purpose or goals

Asks about hours, time off and benefits

Low moral standards

High-pressure type

Narrow interests

Poor eye contact

Answers cell phone during interview

Rude or impolite to receptionist, random people in the hallway



Interview Preparation Work Sheet → Since interviews add an element of pressure, it's not always easy to recall the ideal project to properly answer every question. By jotting your experiences down ahead of time, they will be fresh in your mind and you will be less likely to walk out of the interview kicking yourself because you forgot to tell them about that one time when you...

In reviewing your professional achievements, start with your most recent Employer. Focus on the issues that will relate to this position.

Company:_____ Position:_____

List your accomplishments, achievements, and any awards you may have received. Did your efforts help them make money, or save money, or change a process which helped to effect the bottom line? Don't forget to include relevant strategies used, personal initiatives taken, or development processes you used.

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Last but not least, go to www.drivestaff.com/tableofcontents to hear 5 audio tracks with interviewing tips.