PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

OK, you are ready. You wrote a fabulous cover letter, attached your resume, and the next step is the interview.

YIKES!!!

You are going to meet people you have never met before. You need to make a good impression. What makes a good impression?

The unwritten rules of what makes a good impression:

- **Arrive on time.** Check traffic, bus, and train schedules. Plan your route to the interview and arrive on time, or even a few minutes early. Allow extra time to arrive in case of a delay in public transportation or excessive traffic.

- **Be well groomed.** That means a clean, neat appearance, without odor: clean teeth, trimmed nails, and clean, combed hair. An individual can write a great cover letter and build an impressive resume, but the interview can be the key to making positive impression. You may have the best skills, be the most accomplished in your field, but if you don’t look professional and smell good, you will not be hired!

- **Pay attention to your appearance.** Appearance is the first thing a prospective employer notices. It is most important to make a good impression and, once employed, maintain an appropriate appearance. This means looking professional, wearing clean clothing, and being properly groomed. People on the job do not want to work near someone who smells bad or who is inappropriately dressed.

- **Use good manners.** Greeting your prospective employer at an interview with a firm handshake, eye contact, and saying “Hi” or “Hello” is expected. Introduce yourself, even though everyone knows who you are. A smile indicates you are happy to be there and happy about potential
employment at this company. Be nice to everyone you meet, including the receptionist and others who may not be your boss if you are hired, but who will be your co-workers. These people may have some input in the hiring process. Your good manners will set the tone for a positive work relationship if you are hired by the company.

Once the official interview begins, what should you expect?

If there is no introductory question, be prepared to make small talk. Small talk is introductory conversation about non-controversial topics. Small talk allows the interviewers to begin to get to know you. Standing and just waiting for the next thing to happen is unnatural and awkward. Small talk can be about the weather, how nice the office looks, the traffic outside, etc. It generally is not about religion or politics (but if these topics come up, it is usually best to keep your comments generic and uncontroversial).

Practice answers for these potential questions:

- Tell me about yourself…. Thinking about this ahead of time and rehearsing what you might say will be a good advantage. It’s often wise to practice and discuss how your background makes you a great fit for this organization.
- Why do you want this position? Do your homework and learn about the organization and be prepared to talk about what you like that the organization does, is known for, and/or produces.
- What do you think you can contribute to the organization? This is the perfect opportunity to talk about why you want this job and the particular skills you have that make you the ideal candidate for the position.

What should you bring?

Only bring a few things with you. The things you may want to bring are the address, phone number, and directions to the office or place of business where you are interviewing, copies of your resume or job application, and a list of references. Keep these items organized and neat in a folder or envelope. It is not a good idea to carry loose papers that could fall out of your hands.

How can you prepare?
• If the organization has a website, take time to review it ahead of time. This will help you learn more about the company and what you might be doing. Also, reading the backgrounds of the people you will interview with may help you remember their names on the day of the interview and may also be helpful for carrying on small talk.
• Practice answering potential interview questions.
• Go to the bathroom right before you go into the interview location. (It is ok to ask to go to the restroom if you need to.)

Related Articles:

• Finding a Job: Measuring Your Interests and Aptitude
• Building Experiences and Developing a Resume

Recommended Link:

• CAR Resource Directory (Select Vocational Programs)

Additional Resources:

• Practical Questions for Your Job Interview
• Interview Dos and Don’ts
• An Autistic View of Employment

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