What Are Interviewers Looking For?

No one can get a job without going through a job interview. Understanding what the interviewer is seeking from a candidate can assist you in answering the interviewer's questions. The interviewer has just a few minutes to decide if you are the right person for the job. Knowing specifically what the interviewer is looking for will help you shine in this most important part of the job search process.

Interviewers are people too!

You're probably not the only nervous one at your job interview. Interviewers are often uneasy during the hiring process because:

- **They're afraid to make a bad hire**. The process of hiring and training people is expensive. An employer needs to make sure they've got the right person for the job before they put precious resources into training them. Also, if the other workers don't like the new employee, the interviewer will feel responsible.
- **They're not trained to interview people**. Most interviewers are people who have risen into managerial positions. They don't have training in how to select new employees.
- **They don't want to have to turn people down**. There are usually a limited number of open positions and a large number of applications. The interviewer doesn't like being put in the position of saying no to someone they really like.

At a minimum, the interviewer is looking to discover the following:

WHAT does the candidate want to do?

The interviewer wants to be sure that you will be happy performing the tasks required to complete the job properly. Few employers can afford to let new employees "try out" for jobs until they find one they like. Candidates need to be focused on what they want to do now and in the very near future. This job cannot be a stopping off point for the candidate.

CAN the candidate do what they say?

Interviewers try to discover how closely your knowledge, skills and abilities match those required for the job.

WILL the candidate actually do the job?

It is every employer's nightmare that they will hire someone who simply will not do the job. You must assure the interviewer that you will show up for work, will be on time and will put your best effort into the task at hand. The interviewer is also concerned about your personality. Will you be easy to work with? Will you cause morale problems among the other employees?

HOW MUCH will the candidate cost?

Do your salary and benefit requirements fit within the range that the employer has budgeted for the position? How long will it take the candidate to become productive?

First impressions

Even before you say anything, the interview has begun. Your appearance, actions toward other people, hygiene and body language all make an impression on the interviewer. Think of how you will appear. The following are hints that can help you make a good first impression:

- **Dress neatly** in clean clothes that are appropriate to the job setting. For an office job, this may mean a suit for men and business outfit for women. For a construction job, less formal clothing makes sense.
- **Be aware of your hygiene**. Shower, brush your teeth, clean your nails and comb your hair before you leave for your interview. Bad hygiene can really turn off an employer.
- **Start the interview before you walk in the front door**. Don't be rude to anyone. If you are, word will get back to the interviewer.
- **Pay attention to your body language**. You need to smile, offer a firm handshake, stand or sit up straight in your chair (see the **JobSearch Guide** ***What Can I Expect During the Interview?*** for more body language tips).
- **Don't smoke or chew gum** at any time during the interviewing process. If you smoke, be sure to chew a breath mint before you enter the building.

- **Mind your manners**. Say *please* and *thank you*. If it's a mealtime interview, pay attention to your table manners.

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The Ideal Candidate - YOU!

At the beginning of the hiring process, an effective interviewer will think about the open position and construct a profile o the ideal candidate for that job. The closer you come to that profile, the greater your chances are of getting the job. The bes way to discover what the employer is looking for is simply to ask them, before or during the interview, "***Can you describe fo me the ideal candidate for this position***?"

If you don't have the luxury of asking this question, or if the interviewer hasn't thought about an ideal candidate, you'll have to figure the answer out for yourself. Before the interview, analyze any information that you have about the firm and the position. Want ads usually describe the knowledge, skills, traits and experience necessary for the job. If you know someone who works at the company, ask them what it's like to work there. ***"What traits are rewarded or discouraged by the company***?"

Review and complete the **JobSearch Guide** *Ideal Job Worksheet*.

We all want to be liked

The interviewer wants to be liked, just as you do. Here are some ways to help you make a connection with the interviewer and make both of you more comfortable in the interview:

- Show an interest in the interviewer. Ask about something in the office - a photograph, poster or award.
- Follow the interviewer's lead and conversation style. Adjust your pace to theirs. Don't interrupt.
- Be courteous. Say *please* and *thank you*. Don't sit until asked to sit by the interviewer.
- Go into the interview with a positive attitude.
- Don't be negative about other people. This makes interviewers wonder what you'll say about them behind their backs.

Some of the common traits interviewers are looking for:

- dedication to the job
- enthusiasm for the task at hand
- a pleasant personality
- honesty
- a positive attitude

Skills and traits that are specific to particular jobs:

- knowledge of specific software programs or equipment
- professional degrees
- job-specific skills such as bookkeeping, carpentry or driving a bus
- licensing requirements such as a Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
- leadership abilities

Once you've discovered what the interviewer is looking for, highlight the parts of your education, experience and personality that fit the profile of their ideal employee. An employer needs to hire someone. They have a job that needs to get done. They would like nothing better than to discover that you are the perfect person for the job. **BE THAT PERSON!**

In your job search...

- No one gets a job without an interview. It's an essential part of any job search.
- Realize that employers are people, too. Your interviewer may be just as nervous as you are.
- Preparing yourself for the interview ahead of time will put you more at ease on the day of the interview. Learn about the company, who you'll be meeting with and exactly where the interview will take place.
- The interview isn't just for the interviewer to get to know you, it's also for you to learn about the job, benefits, the company, and the people with whom you will be working. Feel free to ask questions that will help you evaluate whether you want to work there. Is travel required? Is overtime typical? Is there a dress code? What would a typical day on the job look like? Will you be working alone? Or as part of a team?
- Be positive about yourself, the job and the interviewer.

Internet resources

www.askmen.com/money/career_200/234_career.html -- Interviews from the interviewer's point of view.
www.dummies.com/how-to/content/addressing-an-interviewers-concerns-during-a-job-0.html -- Insight into interviewer's concerns.
www.job-interview.net/ -- Interviewing questions and tips for interviewers and job searchers.
www.crfonline.org/orc/ca/ca-14.html -- Job interviewer techniques and script.
http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2009/09/28/15-ways-to-annoy-your-job-interviewer.html -- 15 ways to annoy your interviewer.