

# Interviewing

## **NETWORKING**

Networking plays a critical role in an effective job search.

The more people that you talk to the greater your odds of being at the right place at the right time.

Combining networking with traditional sources, such as classified ads, college placement centers and employment agencies, will be the key to your success.

### **Network Realities**

*Up to 85% of all job openings are never advertised through traditional sources, i.e. classified ads, Job Service, etc.*

*Employers are becoming increasingly more cautious with new hires, and a recommendation from a co-worker is most welcome.*

*The average cost of hiring and/or recruiting one individual is \$4,000.00.*

*This cost continues to increase.*

*Employers must make appropriate hiring decisions.*

*The purpose of networking is to gain insightful information and advice, not to acquire job leads.*

*In turn, the contacts you make may lead to job referrals.*

*Telephone calls are likely to be more effective than letter writing in obtaining an informational interview or a potential job contact.*

*Targeting a specific market is more effective than randomly sending out resumes.*

### **How To Network**

The first step in networking is to make a list of all possible leads.

Start with classmates, friends, relatives, neighbors, instructors, members of organizations, associations and others related to your career.

Next, consult the reference clerk at your local or college library.

Reference guides and directories are important tools in preparing your list of contacts.

Most professional associations have job banks for members and will often release this information to other professionals.

Now that a solid list of contacts has been prepared, it is time to start making phone calls.

For many, cold-calling is not easy.

Before phoning, write an outline briefly describing your qualifications, remember, an indirect approach (i.e., soliciting your advice) is more effective than a direct demand (i.e. "Please help me find a job or some leads.").

Individuals become defensive when you place demands on them.

You gain much more by establishing relationships with individuals who have information to share.

### **Selling Your Skills in the Interview**

The key to successful interviewing is doing adequate research and preparation.

Please give careful consideration to the many aspects of interviewing before meeting with an employer. The interview is a major factor in determining whether or not an applicant will be offered a position.

### **Research the Company**

Recruiters and hiring personnel are impressed with candidates who have taken the time to research their company.

What does their company do?

What is their corporate philosophy? What are their future plans/goals?

Much of this information can be found by reading the company's annual report.

These reports and other pertinent information can be found in your college and local libraries or by contacting the company directly.

### **Plan the Logistics**

After becoming familiar with the company, the next step is to plan the logistics of the interview.

Make sure you know the route and distance to the company, and where to park.

Call the Personnel or Human Resources Office to ask for directions if you are unsure.

Find out in which room you are to meet, the correct way to address the interviewer and how to pronounce his or her name.

### **Preparing Your Answers**

One of the most important steps in preparing for the interview is to practice answering commonly asked questions.

A thorough assessment of your skills and abilities will assist you in your preparation.

Briefly outline the information you plan to cover for each anticipated question. Once you are confident with the material you plan to include in the interview, you need to practice.

The most effective way to practice is to role play or recite your answers in front of a mirror, arrange to do a "mock interview" with a friend or counselor. Video taping your interview style can be a very effective approach to prepare for interviewing.

The Placement Office may be able to assist you in this endeavor.

### **Overcoming Interview Fright**

The interviewing process can be intimidating, but the key to successful interviewing is being prepared. When you have adequately researched the company, prepared and practiced answers that are based on your research and an assessment of your skills, you will feel more confident when you walk into the interview. Most interviewers expect a certain amount of nervousness. However, an inordinate amount of nervousness will prove to be detrimental to the interview.

Here is a list of helpful hints to assist you in overcoming nervousness.

### **Muscular Relaxation**

When you are worried about something or are fearful of the unknown, your muscles become tense.

There are several ways to relax your muscles.

One method is to practice a form of meditation.

Sit quietly for 10 to 15 minutes, think of pleasant things, and breathe deeply.

This is the same state that you are in just before you fall asleep; it is a calm, relaxed state.

Another powerful way to relax your muscles is to engage in physical exercise.

Once your body has shed the nervous energy, you can better concentrate on your objectives.

### **A Good Night's Sleep**

Nothing is worse than combating nervousness when you are exhausted.

If you find it difficult to fall asleep the night before the interview, try muscle relaxation exercises.

Sometimes a hot meal or a glass of warm milk can cause drowsiness.

### **Focus of Activity**

Focusing your attention on the interview questions rather than the symptoms of nervousness can be a successful technique to overcome fright.

If you realize that you are getting wet palms or perspiring, realize that these are just symptoms that everyone gets.

Consider these symptoms as regular body functions, and move on to what has to be done.

### **Visualization**

Another way to fight nervousness is to use the energy within you to visualize a desired outcome.

Project yourself as having a successful interview.

How you think about a situation or event affects the outcome of that event.

Some people believe that this happens because you psychologically influence the outcome.

Athletes have used this technique for years.

### **Breathing Exercise**

When you get nervous, your heart rate increases and your breathing becomes irregular and more rapid. These fast, short breaths of air can cause your voice to crack.

When you feel this symptom coming on, start to breathe at a slower, deeper rate.

This will control your voice and reduce your heart rate.

Nervousness and lack of confidence are often caused by the fear of losing.

But, what do you have to lose? You did not have an offer prior to the interview.

Set aside your fears, and prepare yourself for a successful interview.

If you are prepared in the ways previously mentioned, the interview should be a very smooth process. After all, you are going to tell the interviewer about yourself, and you are the expert in that area.

## **STAGES OF THE INTERVIEW**

An interview consists of three stages, each is of equal importance to the overall impression you make and whether you will get a job offer.

### **1. Rapport Building**

Prior to the interview, you are making lasting impressions with clerical staff.

Therefore, it is imperative to treat all individuals with courtesy and respect.

Many times hiring personnel will ask for staff input as to what they felt about the individual interviewed. During the first few minutes of the interview, you are making your critical first impression. First impressions are very important in an interview because they are usually lasting impressions. The interviewer must rely strongly on the initial feelings that you impressed on him or her. The remaining interview will confirm that crucial first impression.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer will probably initiate small talk as an attempt to get to know you, as well as to make you feel more comfortable.

It is important to be responsive and friendly. Displaying an aura of confidence and enthusiasm without appearing to be overly confident or boastful throughout the interview are important characteristics that most interviewers seek in a candidate for employment.

## **2. Question and Answer**

The second part of the interview covers “what, when and where.”

It is your chance to explain your background and experience, as well as to tell the interviewer, through the questions he or she poses, what kinds of values, aspirations and motivation you possess. You will not only be asked questions about what you have done or accomplished at previous employment, but you will also be asked what you liked or disliked about your previous employment. Always speak positively about prior employers or schools. The interviewer will ask questions about your goals, what motivates you and how you interact with staff and management. Employers seek answers to three fundamental questions: 1) Can you do the job?, 2) What motivates you to do your best? 3) How well will you fit into the corporate/office structure? It is important to give complete answers without leading into unnecessary territory.

## **3. The Close**

Before approaching the close of the interview, the employer will probably ask if you have any questions. This is your opportunity to turn the interview into a conversation about the job that they need to fill. This is also where your research on the company comes into play. You should have several questions prepared to ask the employer. Write them down, and take them with you to the interview. See lists of sample questions toward the end of this booklet.

## **HOW TO HANDLE ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The federal and many state governments have enacted laws that prohibit employers from asking certain questions of potential employees. The purpose of the laws is to protect job applicants from being denied employment based on unfair discrimination. To assure equal employment opportunity among all applicants, employment may not be denied for reasons based on the person’s arrest record, citizenship or national origin, disability, marital or family status, race, religion, age, or sex/gender.

In fact, legislation makes it illegal for an employer even to ask questions about these subjects if the information sought has no bearing on the person’s ability to perform the job.

What options are available in response to illegal questions?

The vast majority of interviewers are honest people, legitimately trying to find the best employees for their companies. While their intentions are usually good, many do ask questions they shouldn’t. So how do you respond to questions for information that you know has no bearing on your ability to perform the job?

There are three basic ways you might respond.

### **1. Simply Answer the Questions**

This is the option most job applicants choose. Just tell them what they want to know. Many applicants don’t know their rights, and even when they do, they may want a particular job badly enough to reveal protected information. They feel that if they do not simply answer any question asked of them, they risk losing the opportunity to be hired. This is a legitimate concern, but it works both ways. They also may be risking the job opportunity if they do provide such information.

## **2. Refuse to Answer the Question**

Another possible response to an illegal question is to refuse to answer it, or to actually confront the interviewer about the legality or appropriateness of the question, perhaps, even with a threat of reporting the company to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. If you choose this strategy, you will almost certainly end any chance of getting a job with that organization. Such a response will make you appear confrontational and uncooperative, traits few employers want in their employees. You could ask the employer how the question relates to the actual duties of the job. Try to be diplomatic in your response.

## **3. Try to Answer the Concern Behind the Question**

This type of response gets at the concern behind the interviewer's question and answers that concern without divulging information that you have a right to keep private.

For example, when asking the question, "Do you have plans to raise a family?" the interviewer likely is not really interested in whether you plan to have children.

The real concern is whether you will be a reliable, committed employee who will stay with the company.

Using this type of response strategy, you would answer the question without revealing your intentions about marriage and family.

Something like, "I appreciate your concern. I can assure you that I am a professional and would be committed to the responsibilities of the job."

## **EMPLOYMENT INQUIRES**

The following is a guide to appropriate pre-employment inquiries to help you understand what is legal and what is illegal.

### **Inquiry Area**

National Origin, Age, Marital and Family Status, Organizations, Handicaps, Arrest Record, Personal.

### **Undesirable Inquiry**

Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were your parents born? What is your "native tongue?" Where were you born? How old are you? What is your date of birth? What is your marital status? How many children do you have? What child care arrangements have you made? List any clubs or social organizations to which you belong. Do you have any handicaps or disabilities? Please complete the following medical history. Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list and give dates. What was the date of your last physical exam? How is your family's health? General inquiries that would elicit information about handicaps or health conditions that do not relate to job performance. Have you ever been arrested? What is your sex? What is your height and weight? If you have been in the military, were you honorably discharged?

### **Recommended Inquiry**

Are you lawfully employable full-time in the United States either by virtue of being a U.S. citizen or by having authorization to be employed from the Immigration & Naturalization Service and the Department of Labor? What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (if related to job performance)? Are you over the age of 18? Travel is an important part of the job for which you are interviewing.

Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.

Is there anything that would prevent you from performing the essential functions of the job? If yes, based on a description of the available position, which job duties would you be unable to perform?

Please describe for purposes of assessing any accommodations or recommendations that could be made.

Are you willing to undergo a pre-employment physical exam?

### **Recommended Inquiry**

Do you understand that any offer of employment is conditional based on the results of a pre-employment exam? The results of such an exam will be kept strictly confidential, except that 1) medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and 2) supervisors and managers may be informed regarding any necessary accommodations that may be made to your job duties because of the results of the medical exam. Have you ever been convicted of \_\_\_\_\_? (a crime that is reasonably related to the performance of the job in question). Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that will be part of the job for which you are interviewing. In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

Always allow the interviewer to initiate the close of the interview.

The interviewer should explain the process in which they will make their hiring decision. Should this information not be stated, it is appropriate to ask when a decision will be made.

Before leaving the interview, make sure you convey your desire for the position with grace and enthusiasm.

Next, shake the hand of the interviewer and express your thanks for his or her time and consideration.

### **THE FOLLOW-UP AND THANK YOU LETTER**

After the interview, follow up with a thank you letter.

Send the letter as soon as possible, addressed to the person who interviewed you.

If you interviewed with more than one person, send a separate letter to each individual.

Type it in the same format you would use for a business letter, and make sure it is on high quality paper which matches your resume and cover letter paper.

The contents of the letter should begin with a reminder of the position you interviewed for and the date you interviewed.

It should restate your interest in the position, with emphasis on any facts that you found especially interesting or closely related to your past experience.

If you wish to clarify anything stated in the interview, now is the time to do that as well. Close the letter by thanking the interviewer again for his or her time.

### **SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER**

July 19, 20XX  
Joe B. Smith  
1234 Main Street  
Davenport, Iowa

Ms. Janice Fine  
Human Resources Director  
Compu Soft, Inc.  
1111 State Street  
Detroit, MI

Dear Ms. Fine:

It was a pleasure meeting with you on July 18, 19xx, to discuss the qualifications for the position of Corporate and Technical Editor. I was very impressed with your organization's commitment to excellence and dedication to customer-oriented results. As discussed in our meeting, I place great importance on staying current in the computer industry. My educational background in computers, together with practical experience in new product design and technical knowledge, solidify my career goals. These strengths coupled with my journalism experience would result in an excellent match and successful working relationship with your company.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Joe B. Smith  
(319) 322-6543

## HOW TO ANSWER TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### 1. *"So, tell me a little about yourself."*

This question is probably the most difficult to answer.

It shows how prepared you are for the interview.

This question gives you the opportunity to show the interviewer four traits which are important in selecting a candidate: enthusiasm, confidence, dependability and intelligence. Outline a presentation which consists of 250 to 450 words (roughly 1 to 3 minutes) that covers your strongest skills and knowledge, your strongest personal attributes, your major accomplishments, and your educational background.

### 2. *"Why are you thinking about leaving your current job?"*

Emphasize that you enjoy your current position, but that your personal development and growth are limited. Employers want to see what your vision is for career advancement.

### 3. *"What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?"*

Mention all your technical skills and personal strengths that relate to the job.

Give examples of how you have demonstrated these skills from past experiences.

For the weaknesses part of the question, there are several ways to handle this area.

Mention something that can be interpreted as a possible strength, such as "perfectionism to get the job done right." Or, you may indicate a weakness that the employer is already aware of, i.e. "no experience in supervising employees." Explain what you are doing to turn around the negative. Start by listing your strengths, and limit your weaknesses to one or two.

### 4. *"What experience have you had?"*

Briefly summarize all of your education and job experience that relates to the position.

### 5. *"What can you bring to the company?"*

Summarize your main technical skills and personal strengths in the context of the related position. Cite examples of accomplishments from previous experiences (training and jobs) that can be valuable to this particular employer. State, through examples, why they should hire you.

### 6. *"Why do you like the kind of work you are applying for?"*

Talk about how the nature of the position (its variety, challenge, specific responsibilities) fits your strongest personality strengths, i.e. your flexibility, ability to work well with others, your enjoyment of the particular responsibilities, etc.

### 7. *"What kind of manager do you prefer to work with?"*

Because you might not be sure of what kind of new manager you will be working for, be careful. Mention that you can work with a boss who supervises people closely or one who gives minimal supervision (cite examples from your previous experience, if you can). Another approach is to comment that you do not have a strong preference, as long as the manager is fair and communicates his or her expectations to you.

### 8. *"Why did you leave your previous jobs?"*

Keep your answers positive, in terms of the causes for your leaving.

If you left a job for a better opportunity, mention why it was better (pay, hours, location, etc.). If there was a company layoff, be sure to mention that you were not the only one laid off. If you were fired, ask professionals for suggestions. Never say you left because you disliked your manager, or the job.

9. *"What would your previous bosses say about you?"*

Summarize all the personal strengths that you used in previous jobs that relate to the current opening. Review past performance reviews before the interview. Indicate the superlative comments that were listed in your evaluations and give examples of these accomplishments.

10. *"What five words describe you best?"*

Tell the employer five top personal strengths with confidence and sincerity. Mention personal qualities such as positive attitude, friendliness, flexibility, dependability, responsibility, team player, organizational skills, etc.

11. *"How do you spend your spare time?"*

Talk about your hobbies, athletics or other interests that show your self-motivation and active involvement in outside activities. Avoid mentioning "passive" pursuits, such as TV watching, which would imply lack of motivation or lack of stimulation. Reading is an acceptable answer because you are using your mind. Avoid mentioning too many outside of work activities, in case the employer might want you to work overtime occasionally.

12. *"What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?"*

Mention the importance of an employee's ability to communicate effectively with their manager and co-workers, their ability to learn quickly and to constantly update their skills. Then, cite examples from your experience where you have advanced using these skills.

13. *"Do you work well under pressure?"*

Mention confidently that you can handle pressure. Then give specific examples from your past training or jobs. Use examples that relate to the current opening's responsibilities, if possible.

14. *"What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?"*

Mention projects, work assignments, overtime, work that shows you don't quit until the job is done (initiative). Mention times when you have helped others or have worked as part of a team to accomplish something outside your particular job duties (willingness to work).

15. *"Give examples of how you've coached a peer or provided peer leadership."*

Some have been thrown by this question. They were prepared to talk about leading and coaching subordinates, but not peers. Peer leadership and peer coaching are an outgrowth of team-mindedness and you need to understand their importance. Another manager was having trouble with his budgets and I showed him what I'd done so he could duplicate it. I knew he did not want to ask for help, so I suggested we go for coffee and compare notes."

16. *"What kind of work interests you?"*

The employer knows that if you are interested in your work, then you will be more likely to successfully accomplish projects on the job. Mention the kinds of responsibilities that interest you and relate them to the responsibilities of this job. Give examples of similar kinds of jobs that you have liked in the past.

17. *"Why should we hire you?"*

Summarize specifically the job responsibilities and other aspects of the company and work that you would enjoy. Next, reemphasize the main technical and interpersonal skills that would make you a good employee in that position. Match as many of your skills with as many of the employer's needs as possible. Again, this is where a thorough assessment of your skills pays off.

18. *"What are your salary requirements?"*

Do not give a direct salary amount if at all possible. Ask: "What is the salary range for this position?" and listen closely. If the employer states a pay range that matches your requirement, indicate that the salary range is appropriate. Then negotiate for an amount within the range, based upon your research of the "going rate" for that position in this geographic area. If the employer does not give their salary range, mention that the market is \$x to \$x (range) for this position, and negotiate for an amount within the range.

Never cite a specific pay amount. You may be selling your skills too cheaply or be ruled out for stating too high a figure. Do not ask about salary or benefits until after receiving an offer, unless the employer asks you directly.

19. *"What do you know about this company?"*

Here's where your research can really pay off! It is very important to have done research on the company (through the library, the Placement Office, or through your own informational interviewing). Show that you were motivated to find out about the company, and state what you like about them. Tell them specifically why you want to work for their company.

20. *"What interests you about our product or service?"*

This question is a more specific example of the "Why do you want to work here?" question. From your research, you know at the very least what their product or service is, so think about what you like about it. Have you ever used their product or service (or a similar one)? If so, let them know of your satisfaction and why.

21. *"What are your future career plans?"*

The employer really wants to know: If I hire you, will you stay with the company once trained? The employer cannot afford to be your six-month training ground for that job you really want. Since this is a hypothetical question, answer with a hypothetical response that indicates your interest in advancing in this field within the company. Follow this statement with a question of your own about their advancement opportunities.

22. *"Where do you want to be five or ten years from now?"*

This is a variation on the previous question, so answer it basically the same way. Indicate, in general terms, that you want to still be with the company, that you enjoy this kind of work, want to update your skills, expand your duties, and advance if the opportunity presents itself.

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TYPICALLY ASKED BY EMPLOYERS**

Prepare for your interview by being able to answer questions in a way that highlights your job qualifications. The following three questions are used most often by employment interviewers. Each question sounds deceptively simple, but may turn out to be a stumbling block for applicants.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want to work for this company?
3. What is it about this job that interests you?

You can count on being asked, in some form, many of the following questions. Employers look for well-adjusted candidates who are self-starters, willing to take the initiative and assume responsibility, and who are not afraid to work.

1. What do you know about our company?
2. What are your long range career objectives?
3. When and why did you establish these goals?
4. How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
5. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
6. What lead you to choose your college major?
7. What courses have you taken that would relate to the responsibilities of this job?
8. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
9. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
10. How would you describe yourself?
11. How would a friend or a professor who knows you describe you?
12. What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?
13. How has your college experience prepared you for your career?
14. Why should I hire you?
15. What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this business?
16. How do you determine or evaluate success?
17. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
18. In what ways can you make a contribution to our company?
19. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
20. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
21. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
22. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
23. If you were hiring someone for this position, what qualifications would you look for?
24. What college subjects did you like best?
25. What college subjects did you like least?
26. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
27. Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
28. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
29. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
30. How well do you work under pressure?

31. In which part-time or full-time positions in your job history have you been most interested?
32. What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
33. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company you hope to work for?
34. Are you willing to relocate?
35. Are you willing to travel?
36. Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
37. What major problem have you encountered either on the job, or in school, and how did you deal with it?
38. What have you learned from your mistakes?
39. What have you learned from the jobs you have had?
40. What did you do well in your past jobs? What duties were troublesome?
41. How would you rate yourself as a leader?
42. Give me an example of a time when you worked as a part of a team. How would you rate yourself as a team leader?
43. What would you do if...? (A situational question that calls for an evaluation and judgement).
44. How long do you expect to work for us if we offer you the job?
45. What are your ideas on salary? (Be prepared with a range for the type of work you are targeting?)
46. Is there someone we might talk to who is familiar with your previous work and accomplishments? (Bring reference list with you)
47. Do you have any questions about the company? This position?
48. Is there anything you would like to tell us about yourself that we have overlooked?

**HINT!**

Make a list of questions you would hate to be asked, and come up with some terrific answers!!

**QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK AN EMPLOYER IN AN INTERVIEW**

Prepare questions to ask before the interview, write them on note cards or type them on a piece of paper, take them with you to the interview.

Listen well during the interview for the answers to your questions.

If they are not answered, ask!

Employers who appreciate applicants who participate in the interviewing process by asking questions.

1. Is there any part of my resume that isn't clear?
2. Describe what my job responsibilities would be.
3. How did this position come to be open?
4. What is the last person who held this job doing now?
5. If they resigned, why?
6. If they were promoted, what contributed to his/her advancement?
7. What do you consider to be the most difficult or challenging parts of this position?
8. Would you describe a typical work day, and the things that I would be doing?
9. What are the lines of authority for this position?

10. (To the supervisor) Since you have found out quite a bit of information about me, can you tell me something about yourself?
11. Who are the people I would be working most closely with, and what do they do?
12. What are the department goals for the next five years?
13. How would I be trained or introduced to the job?
14. How is this job important to the company? How does it contribute?
15. How much responsibility is given to a new employee in this department?
16. How is the growth of the company affecting the responsibilities of people working in the department where I would be working?
17. What are the strengths of the department? What things about the department would you like to change, or try to improve?
18. (To the supervisor) How do you manage and motivate employees?
19. (To the supervisor) What are your goals for this year?
20. Upon what criteria are employees in this department evaluated? When are employees evaluated?
21. What types of people succeed in this department? What type of person would succeed in this position?
22. What are the opportunities for advancement within this organization?
23. How will I get feedback on my job performance?
24. Can you describe in detail what your training program is like?
25. Does your company believe in, and support, continuing education?
26. Has the company had a layoff in the last three years? Ever? How long was the layoff? Was everyone recalled?
27. Is this company owned by another corporation?
28. What major markets does this company compete in?
29. Are sales up or down over last year?
30. If you were to offer me this job, where could I expect to be five years from today?
31. Could you show me where I will be working?
32. How much decision making authority is given with this position?
33. What could I say or do to convince you to offer me the job?
34. I want this job. Could I have a 30 day trial period to prove myself?
35. When do you expect to be making a hiring decision?

**You may ask the following questions AFTER you have had a job offer:**

1. What is the salary range the company is considering for this position?
2. What benefits does the company provide?
3. What is the cost of living and housing situation where I will be working? (If relocation is an issue).

## **Final Points**

\*In addition to your prepared questions, you should try to ask a question or two directly related to what the interviewer says or asks in the interview. This shows that you were paying attention and care about what the person has been saying. Be sure to have at least 10-15 questions written down to take to the interview.

\*Important Note: Employers usually hire the applicant who:

1. Asks the most questions.
2. Asks the most intelligent questions.
3. Interviews them (company and people).
- 4.

## **SALARY NEGOTIATIONS**

The thought of negotiating a salary can make the most confident job seeker's knees weak, mouth dry and palms sweaty. It is perhaps the least talked about and most often overlooked skill in the job search process.

Treating a salary negotiation properly can earn a candidate thousands of additional dollars in compensation. A poor bargaining strategy or the lack of it, might give the impression of low self-esteem or indicate a lack of preparation in this aspect of the job search process. The key to success is research. Remember, research, writing a good resume, setting up a network of contacts and learning proper interview techniques helped get you the job offer in the first place. Research also ensures negotiation success.

First, some facts about salaries. It is easy to assume that a company will offer the right or fair amount. The truth is, most firms will offer a salary at the low end of the predetermined range. Just as someone wouldn't pay sticker price for a new car, an employer will not immediately offer top dollar for your services. Interviewers agree that negotiating a salary is an important part of the job search. Salaries are expressed in ranges, based on the market for the position. The market is determined by five factors, according to employment consultant Marilyn Moats Kennedy.

### **1. The Talent Pool**

When the market is flooded with candidates salaries are typically lower. In contrast, greater demand often equals high ranges.

### **2. The level of Job Difficulty**

Positions requiring more education and precise skills pay more.

### **3. Prestige of the Company**

In general, "name" firms can often offer a lower range, counting on employees wanting to be identified with their organization.

### **4. Interchangeability of Skills**

If more people can do a particular job, it will pay less.

## **5. Competition**

What are other companies paying? Employers will not pay more than is necessary. Firms also will not increase an offer based on intangibles such as “I will work harder” or “I can do a better job.” What will effect an offer is concrete salary scale information gathered through a market survey. Note: During times of economic difficulties, salary negotiations can be viewed unfavorably by employers. Test the waters prior to jumping in full force. Keep in mind the factors previously mentioned, and make a conservative move.

### **HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL ON THE JOB**

Webster defines “crisis” as a turning point; a crucial time. The first months on your new job represents a big change in your life. Your attitude toward this change can have a great deal to do with your success or failure in handling this crucial transition.

These basic guidelines, if practiced, will contribute to job success.

#### **Attitude**

Attitude toward the job can make a day at work either a positive or a negative experience. We choose the kind of experience we want. Being enthusiastic, eager and positive leads to job satisfaction which is essential for job success.

#### **Ask Questions**

Understanding a job helps reduce errors, saves time and ultimately increases chances for advancement.

**Hard Work** Accept responsibility. Become involved with your work, and perform to the best of your ability.

**Cooperation** Treat managers and co-workers with respect and courtesy.

Be a team player by learning to get along with all types of people. It may be difficult, but it is essential for job success.

**Resolve Problems** Use assertive communication techniques to resolve conflict situations. Talk to the person directly, control emotions, talk things out, be willing to cooperate and maintain a positive attitude.

**Get Feedback** Meet with your manager and find out how your work performance is viewed. Use the feedback as an opportunity for making any necessary changes.

**Attendance** This is a critical part of your job performance.

Try to make every effort to be at work consistently.

**On-time Performance** Forget about the “9 to 5” mentality. Arrive early in order to get settled, and give a full day’s work for a full day’s pay. Also, be willing to work extra hours, without compensation if necessary. Make a good appearance by dressing neatly and appropriately for the job. This demonstrates self-confidence and projects a positive image.

#### **Allow Time For Adjustment**

Allow yourself time to ease into the situation of a new job, new manager and new co-workers. Try not to be too critical of yourself and others.

**Be Discreet** Confidential company information such as salaries and employee relation problems should remain confidential!

**Learn About the Organization** Learn as much as you can about the company’s history, organization, products and policies. Ask your supervisor what information he or she feels is important and how it relates to your job and your department.

**Stay Current** With the information explosion taking place, it makes “keeping up” on career-related knowledge nearly impossible. You must respond to this challenge through continued education, readings, seminars, etc.

### **WHAT UPSETS EMPLOYERS MOST**

In a nationwide survey of Fortune 1000 company vice-presidents, a temporary personnel service identified the following employee traits and attitudes as most likely to cause serious on-the-job difficulties.

*Dishonesty and Lying* If a company believes that an employee lacks integrity, all of that person’s positive qualities - from skill and experience to productivity and intelligence - become meaningless.

*Irresponsibility, Goofing Off and Attending to Personal Business on Company Time*

An employee who appears to be frivolous, unconcerned or unreliable does not inspire trust or confidence and is not likely to be a long-term employee.

*Arrogance, Egotism and Excessive Aggressiveness* There is nothing attractive about employees who spend more time boasting than actually doing their jobs, who act as if they deserve special treatment or privileges or who think that being loud will have a positive effect.

*Absenteeism and Lateness* When employees are chronically late or absent, do they really deserve to be paid for the time they were not at work and the work they did not do?

Not following instructions or ignoring company policies also made the list.

Clearly, people who don’t do what they are supposed to do should not be on the payroll. A whining or complaining attitude toward the company or the job is a sure sign that the complainer should be working elsewhere. Absence of commitment, concern or dedication is often grounds for denial of raises and promotions. Finally comes laziness, lack of motivation and enthusiasm. If the employee does not care about the company, why should the company care about the employee? Other behaviors that disturb employers are lack of character, disrespect, making ill-formed decisions and taking credit for work done by others.

### **HOW TO RESEARCH THE JOB MARKET**

Once you have identified careers in which you have an interest, it is time to research the marketplace.

Your research should find answers to the following questions:

What responsibilities does each field entail?

What qualifications and/or education is required?

What are the advancement opportunities?

Does the salary structure meet your expectations?

Will these occupations withstand advances in technology?

Are the jobs what you expect?

The more thoroughly you research your desired occupations, the more realistic your expectations will be of these fields.

## **References**

The Occupational Outlook Handbook, is produced by the U.S. Department of Labor every two years. This publication lists 600-700 different occupations and gives vital information for each career field; including nature of the work, working conditions, employment, training, advancement opportunities, job outlook, earnings, and sources of additional information. The handbook is available in the Placement Office, and in the reference section of most libraries as well as on-line at <http://stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm>. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles, is also produced by the U.S. Department of Labor. This directory lists more than 20,000 occupational titles and gives a brief description of the title.

Conducting research on employers of interest can pay off for you in a variety of ways. First, this research will give you some help in determining whether or not this particular employer will be a good match for you. Second, researching the organization shows the employer that you are enthused about what they have to offer and that you are willing and able to fill the position. Finally, the knowledge you gain by doing this research will make you feel more confident in an interview and will allow you to ask the interviewer more sophisticated questions. Before you begin your research, keep the following points in mind:

It is easier to find information on publicly owned companies than on privately owned ones. It is easier to find information on nationally known companies than on local or regional ones. No single library will have everything you need; consult your local college and public libraries, the Chamber of Commerce, government and trade organizations. Some specific resources available to help you research national organizations are listed below:

Directory of Companies Required to File Reports with the Securities and Exchange Commission, U.S. Government Printing Office. Determine whether or not the company is publicly owned.

Ward Business Directory, Information Access Co., Belmont, CA. Determine whether or not the company is privately owned. Useful for finding address, telephone numbers, and names of top executives for public and private firms.

Directory of Corporate Affiliations, National register Publishing Co., Wilmette, IL. Indicates ownership of divisions and subsidiaries. Provides addresses, telephone numbers and the name of the president or CEO.

Who Owns Whom, North American Edition, Dun and Bradstreet. Indicates ownership of subsidiaries and subdivisions.

Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives Volume I provides address, officers, and stock exchanges and annual sales. Volume II provides biographical information on directors and CEOs. Volume III indicates ownership of divisions and subsidiaries.

America's Corporate Families and International Affiliates, Dun and Bradstreet. Indicates ownership of subsidiaries and subdivisions. Provides addresses, telephone numbers and name of president or CEO.

Directory of Foreign Manufacturers in the U.S., Georgia State University. Provides names and addresses for foreign owned U.S. companies in manufacturing, mining and petroleum.

Principal International Businesses, Dun and Bradstreet. Determines whether or not the company is foreign owned. Provides addresses, telephone numbers, major product and the name of the president or CEO.

Major Companies of Europe, Graham and Troman, London. Provides brief information on Europe's companies. Three volumes.

Million Dollar Directory, Dun and Bradstreet. Provides addresses, products, approximate sales, number of employees and top executives for public firms.

Thomas Register of American Manufactures. Twenty volumes with addresses and telephone numbers for American manufacturers as well as trade names and company products.

Moody's Manuals Provides a brief corporate history, subsidiaries, plants, products, officers and income for companies listed on the U.S. Stock Exchange.

Standard and Poor's Corporation Records. Includes financial and narrative profiles of publicly owned U.S. companies.

Standard and Poor's Industry Surveys, U.S. Government Printing Office. Current trends and outlooks for 200 industries.

Moody's International Manual Provides a brief company history, officers, product line, and financial information for the company as a whole, not just U.S. operated.

If you have determined that your potential employer is local or regional in scope, check the following places for information: The organization itself, State industrial directories, Local newspapers, Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau, Public Library

## **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

Once your library research is complete, your next step is to contact people who work in the field. Recent surveys suggest that the best way to get information on a particular field is by talking with professionals in the field.

Informational interviewing is based on the premise that you have already researched several fields and now want to confirm your research and/or make a final decision on a particular field. You want to understand what this field is like before you commit your time, energy, and money to its pursuit.

Informational interviews may lead to contacts and job interviews at a later date.

### **Suggested Questions for an Informational Interview**

What was your major in college?

What academic degrees have you received?

Would you suggest that a person pursuing this career get additional education?

What was the first job you had after graduation?

Tell me about your career path.

How many different positions have you held?

Did you have any practical experience, other than college, before starting your current position?

What is a typical workday (week) like for you?

What kinds of specific activities are you responsible for carrying out?

What are some of the typical pressure situations that you deal with on the job?

How many hours do you work per week?

Do you travel in your position?

Is relocation frequently required for your field?

What are the major rewards of your job?

The major frustrations?

How much flexibility do you have in your job?

What is the current demand for this occupation?

How is this field likely to be affected by technological changes?

What personal qualities do you consider important for someone in your field?

If you could start all over again, would you do anything differently?

Do you know of any other people in this field who might be willing to visit with me about their experiences?

Do you know of any other people in this field who might know of current job openings that I might qualify for?

### **How to Contact Employers**

The traditional method of employer contact involves going from door to door with resume in hand, requesting an interview.

This method may prove to be frustrating and ineffective. Frequently, employers are too busy to meet with you, so your rate of rejection is high. Sometimes, employers interpret this “drop in” method as a lack of respect on your part, and do not have time to stop and chat with job seekers who do not have an appointment.

However, you may get lucky, and find an employer with a current need who will talk to you, or schedule an interview appointment, when you come in to fill out an application, and leave your resume.

Another productive method of contacting employers is to send a letter of inquiry and a resume. For more information on how to write a resume, contact the Placement Office.

Before you send out cover letters and resumes, find out the name of the Human Resources Director.

You can get the name of this person by calling the company.

Once you have the name of the Human Resources Director, send him or her a letter inquiring about job openings and application procedures.

Your second task is to identify the person in the organization who has the power to hire you. Who will be your supervisor should you be hired by this employer?

You can obtain this person’s name by calling the company?

Frequently, this person is a department head or supervisor.

Send a copy of your resume and a cover letter to this person as well.

Why send the same material to two people in the same company?

While the Human Resources Department is aware of current openings in the organization, they may not be aware of anticipated openings.

Department heads and supervisors are often privy to that type of information.

This person can give you valuable information the industry and your career of choice.

Your next step is to follow up with all of the employers to whom you have sent letters.

### **How to Follow-Up With Employers**

You have sent your cover letter and resume to several employers, now you can sit by the telephone and wait for the job offers to come rolling in, right? Wrong! A study by The National Business Employment Weekly found that in the typical broadcast mailing only five to six per cent of the letters are read by the proper personnel. Letters get lost in route,

sit in the mailroom, or are screened out by a secretary. Others are sent to the wrong person, who often does not take the time to reroute them. The only way that you can be sure that the correct person has received your materials is to make a follow-up telephone call before you call every employer that you sent material to, you need to be prepared. The best way to prepare is to write out a script and practice it.

The script should include: who you are, who referred you, why you are calling, how your skills meet the organization's needs, and why a face to face meeting would be mutually beneficial. If you receive an appointment, be sure to confirm the details. Once your goal has been accomplished, say thank you, and hang up. Do not OVER SELL yourself!

**Additional tips for making a follow-up call are:**

Prepare for the unexpected, such as being told your letter has not arrived, or having the call turn into a screening interview.

Establish rapport with the secretary or administrative assistant; he/she can be an asset.

If you are having trouble getting past the secretary, try calling before 9:00 am, after 5:00 pm, or during the lunch hour.

Do not call on Monday morning (most people are busy) or on Friday afternoon (many people are out).

Practice with low priority organizations first.

Maintain control of the follow-up process; offer to return your call rather than leave a message.

Keep written records of all of your follow-up calls.

Making follow-up calls can provide you with opportunities you might have otherwise missed, and ensures that the correct person gets your resume.

**JOB LINES**

Some employers maintain a list of job openings that can be accessed via telephone.

Here is a list of area Job Lines:

ALCOA Davenport Works, Davenport (319) 359-2832.

Rock Island Arsenal (Civilian Job Information) (309) 782-2214

Federal Employment (Local Job Information) 1-800-735-8004.

Montgomery Kone, Moline (309) 757-5693

Ralston-Purina (Human resources-3 or Personnel-3) (319) 323-3353.

Genesis Medical Center (Human Resources, not a recording) (319) 421-1313.

Iowa Workforce Development center (Job Service) (515) 281-5387

President Riverboat Casino, Davenport (319) 328-8075

Proctor and Gamble, Iowa City (319) 339-2299.

John Deere (recruiting line-not a recording) (309) 765-4126

Trinity Medical Center, Rock Island-Moline (309) 757-2243

City of Iowa City (319) 356-5021

USA Jobs by Phone, Government positions (816) 426-7757

Iowa Department of Personnel (515) 281-5820.

University of Iowa Office/Clerical (319) 335-2682 Service (319) 335-2684

Professional/Scientific (319) 335-2686 Technical (319) 335-2685

University of Northern Iowa (319) 273-2421.

Iowa State University (515) 294-0146

We at the Placement Office wish you the best of luck as you begin your job search.

Please include a visit to our office when you start this process!