

# SECRETS TO INTERVIEW SUCCESS

The interview is one of the most important phases of the job search process. Your resume and cover letters are simply tools to get you to the interview stage of the process. The purpose of the interview is for you and an employer to get acquainted, learn about one another, and explore the possibility of working together. It's important that you convince the employer, using your powers of persuasion and communication skills that you are the right person for the job.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

### Research is Critical!!!!!!

The applicant who has worked hard to prepare is much more likely to get a call back for a second interview or offer of employment.

#### Research Yourself

- Clarify the skills and abilities you have to offer an employer, thinking of an example for each one. Think back on your previous experience (work, academic and extracurricular) to determine the skills and abilities used in each.

#### Research the Position

- Research the career field/position you are pursuing to convince yourself this is an occupation you would enjoy. Check with the Office of Career Services for a brochure, pamphlet or written job description.

#### Research the Organization

- Conduct thorough research on the organization, developing a checklist of information based on your research to share with the interviewer during the interview. Incorporating your knowledge of the company into the interview will impress the employer. As you research the company, be sure to note the following:

- ✓ Names and job titles of key contacts
- ✓ Whether the company is privately or publicly owned
- ✓ Products and/or services
- ✓ Year of incorporation
- ✓ Number of employees
- ✓ Principal locations and subsidiaries
- ✓ Type of customers
- ✓ Key competitors
- ✓ Sales and profit trends
- ✓ Possible future ventures

#### \*Hoovers.com - [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)

This site provides the most up to date business information in the industry. You can utilize this site to research different companies before an interview.

## Be Prompt and Prepared

- Map/drive the route for the interview the day before if you are unfamiliar with the location of the company. [Arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled interview.](#)
- Plan your interview attire in advance and make sure your clothing is pressed, your shoes shined, and your hair and nails are well groomed.
- Bring extra copies of your resume, your list of references, a pen and paper, your list of questions for the interviewer, and samples of your work, if applicable.

- Notify employer or Office of Career Services 24 hours in advance to cancel an interview.

### What to Take to the Interview

- A professional- looking portfolio or briefcase
- Extra resumes
- Pen and Paper (for note taking)
- Examples of projects you have handled that are relevant to the position you are applying for
- Your list of questions for the interviewer
- List of your references

## PREPARING FOR QUESTIONS

### Practice Makes Perfect!!!!

You can never be sure what you will be asked during an interview, but certain questions are likely to arise. Anticipate these questions and rehearse your responses to them in advance. **Think about how your experiences in work, classes, and activities can relate to the job you're seeking.** Do practice interviews with your coordinator in Career Services, friends, family member, by yourself or attend a Mock Interview Workshop.

### Sample behavioral-based interview questions:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

**Whenever possible, answer questions using specific examples to support your response. Think of the acronym STAR (situation or task, action, and result).**



### **STAR Method**

**Situation or Task:** Describe a task or project for which you had responsibility.

**Action:** Talk about the approach you took to deal with the situation.

**Results:** Discuss the outcome of your action, making sure to mention accomplishments or improvements made due to your action.

**\*BE SURE TO PRACTICE ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS USING THIS METHOD\***

### **Skills and Personal Qualities**

- What skills or personal qualities do you possess that will help make you successful in today's job market?
- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- Why are you interested in working for this company?
- What is your major strengths/weakness?
- Where do you see yourself in three years?
- Why have you chosen this particular field?
- What are your salary requirements?
- Give me an example of a problem you encountered either in school or at work, and explain how you solved it.
- Do you have any questions for me?
- What unique experience or qualifications separate you from other candidates?

## **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

### **First Impressions Count!**

#### **Employers are looking for:**

- An introduction and greeting
- A firm handshake
- Eye contact
- Appearance and dress appropriate to the organization and an interview
- After you are escorted to the interview room, stand until offered a seat.

#### **Do's and Don'ts**

- Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts. **Think before you speak!**
- Use good diction, e.g.: say, yes instead of yeah.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand.
- Answer the interviewer's questions thoroughly but ask questions throughout the process.
- Don't slouch. Sit straight in the chair and maintain good posture.
- Don't chew gum during the interview or smoke before the interview.
- Avoid interrupting and don't monopolize the whole conversation.
- Be honest. Don't try to cover up a mistake. Instead, focus on how you learned from them.
- Make appropriate eye contact.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Don't badmouth your current or previous employer.

- If for any reason you cannot make the interview notify the employer or Career Services 24 hours prior to your interview.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

### Follow-Up

- Ask the interviewer for a business card
- Promptly send a thank-you note within 24 hours. Keep it brief, but reiterate your interest in the position if you are, in fact, interested in it. (See sample thank-you letter)

### Review the Interview Process and Your Performance

- Jot down key components.
- Record the name and title of the person with whom you interviewed.
- List important details you want to remember about the job/company.
- Assess your own performance and ways to improve it.

### Evaluate

- Determine if the job is right for you.
- Did the job description match your interests and abilities?
- Did this seem like a good place to work?
- Did the organization's culture and values match your own?

### An Offer During the Visit (Interview)

Don't say, "yes" until you have slept on it. Even if you want the position and do plan to accept it, be gracious in your thanks for the offer, but ask for a little time to consider it.

## SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

2900 Joy Lane  
Anytown, NY 23465

June 30, 2013

Mr. Garth Ledbetter  
Blue Sky Communications, Inc.  
5555 W. Highway Terrace  
Peace, OH 88888

Dear Mr. Ledbetter,

Thank you for interviewing me yesterday for the marketing position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your marketing plans and strategy for achieving your objectives.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for Blue Sky were strengthened as a result of the interview. During the interview, you stressed the necessity for developing new strategic plans and tracking their success. Now that I have a better idea of what the position entails, I am certain that I could make a significant contribution to your team and to Blue Sky.

I want to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with you and your staff. You provide the kind of opportunity I seek. Please feel free to contact me at 870 575-6800 or [doe\\_j@yahoo.com](mailto:doe_j@yahoo.com) if I can provide you with any additional information.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

## ACCEPTANCE LETTER

2005 North Spruce Street  
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

June 30, 2013

Mr. Kenneth Stone  
Division Manager  
Alltel Communications  
1111 West Capitol  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

Dear Mr. Stone:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of employment as a computer specialist for Alltel Communications at the monthly salary of \$\_\_\_\_\_. The work is exactly what I have prepared to perform and I feel confident that I can make a significant contribution.

As we discussed, I will report to work at 8:00 a.m. on July 10, 2005 and will have completed the medical examination and drug testing by the start date. Additionally, I shall complete all employment and insurance forms for the new employee orientation.

I look forward to my future association with Alltel Communications and working with you and your fine team. I appreciate your confidence in me and I am very happy to be joining your staff.

Sincerely,

Mary Doe

## REJECTION LETTER

1202 Georgia Street  
Chicago, Ill 71221

June 30, 2013

Mr. John Brown  
Sales and Marketing Division  
Walgreens  
1500 North Shore Drive  
Detroit, MI 69807

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for your employment offer for the position of Sales Manager with Walgreens. I valued our discussion about the position responsibilities, as well as the career possibilities within the company.

You have a fine organization and there are many aspects of the position that are very appealing to me. However, I believe it is in our mutual best interests that I decline your kind offer. This has been a difficult decision for me, but I believe it is the appropriate one for my career at this time.

I want to thank you for the consideration and courtesy given to me. It was a pleasure meeting you and your fine staff.

Sincerely,

Sharon Jones