

Capsule 10 – Getting ready for the interview

Goal: Testing your presentation and your answers to frequently asked questions

Introduction

Great! Your resumé has been selected. The only thing left is to go through the last (but not least) stage, the interview.

Nervous? It's normal. It is understandable that the employer will want to meet you before hiring you. It will allow him to obtain precious information about you, information that is not available while reading your resumé. It is also important for you: you will learn a lot about the job's working environment!

The first thing to do when called for an interview: ask questions. Take notes about the time, the location, and the contact-person as well as the number to join that person. Also ask if you will have to pass tests after the interview. Indeed, for certain jobs, it can be possible that the employer will ask you to perform a writing test or even a situation scenario exercise. It is always better to know it in advance rather than finding out about it on the spot!

Why does the employer want to meet you?

Here are a few reasons why bosses want to meet candidates to select future employees.

TO SEE HOW YOU PRESENT YOURSELF SOCIALLY

Before you even start speaking, the employer already starts to have an idea of you. Some studies pretend that the first 30 seconds are crucial, hence the importance to seize all the opportunities to give a good first impression.

- Your non-verbal language can show a lot about yourself: avoid crossing your arms, and stay straight.
- Do not chew gum during the interview.
- Do not sit before asked to do so.
- Be well dressed: do not show up with a wrinkled shirt or stained pants! If your looks are neglected, you will lose your credibility. Avoid uncommon clothes and perfumes that can bother the employer.
- A good hand shake, a smile and an honest look are unavoidable assets.
- Avoid answering yes or no. Try to elaborate your answers.
- You do not fully understand the meaning of a question? Ask clarifications before giving an inappropriate answer.
- Try to avoid using a familiar level of language.

TO EVALUATE YOUR PERSONNALITY TYPE

The employer will try to evaluate the personal qualities that will allow you to fill the position. Many questions allow the employer to judge your personality and your aptitude to join his team. Tip: be yourself, do not try to impress by bragging.

- Comparing yourself to others is always a bad idea. Emphasize on your competencies and your aptitudes.
- Adopt a positive attitude, be courteous and keep smiling.
- Show confidence without being arrogant.
- Avoid talking about your personal life and expressing your opinions.
- Greet the person at the reception when you arrive and when you leave.
- Thank the employer at the end of the interview.

TO VERIFY THAT YOU CAN DO THE JOB

The employer wants to confirm the information stated in your resumé and cover letter. During the interview, remember the elements on your resumé that you want to highlight and that are requested by the employer. For each one of the questions, you should answer by showing your experiences, your professional training and the qualities that make you the ideal candidate.

- Try to emphasize on your realizations.
- Think about bringing with you at least one copy of your resumé and your references, which could be requested during the interview.
- Never lie.

TO BE SURE YOU CAN DO THE JOB AND DO IT RIGHT

This is the occasion for the employer to judge your reliability, motivation and attachment to the job.

- Never say bad things about former employers.
- Show your reliability: arrive 5 to 10 minutes early. If you can, go to the location the day before to see exactly where you have to go.
- Make your experience stand out by showing that you have already performed successfully some tasks similar to the ones you could find in the position.
- Show your true interest by mentioning a few facts about the organization.

TO PROVE YOU INTEREST FOR THE JOB OR THE ORGANIZATION

The employer wants to see that you are really interested.

You should always check up some information about the organization that called you for an interview. What is its philosophy? Has it been running for some time? Be informed about the elements the employer is looking for to fill up the vacancy. A call to the human resources

department, an Internet search, a glance at the newspaper will allow you to have more information.

More interesting information

Is it a company, a cooperative, a community organization, a non profit organization, etc.?
Is the organization known for its family policy, flexible schedule, and technological progress?
Is the organization unionized?
Does it have other branches?
Does it have plans for future growth?

The more you know, the more you will be comfortable to give answers and ask questions at the right time. See the importance of searching for information on organizations:

http://interview.monster.ca/16051_en-CA_p1.asp

The interview: an information gold mine for you as well

The interview will allow you to see the work environment and the atmosphere. Are people smiling? Is it noisy? Are the offices appropriate? Does the distance between the work location and your residence suit you?

In most cases, the supervisor of the future employee will be the person performing the interview. This is a good opportunity to learn more about that person. Does he/she seem trustworthy? Does he/she seem understanding, warm?

Remember that the interview is the occasion to judge whether the organization meets your needs and expectations or not. If, in the end, the position doesn't suit you or if, after the encounter, you lose the desire of working there, you do not have to accept the job if it is offered to you!

Carefully prepare your answers to the most frequently asked questions. Several of them may seem difficult. A good preparation will allow you to never get caught off guard. Ideally, practice with a friend or sibling! Your answers will then be more natural and fluent.

Frequently asked questions during an interview

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR OUR ORGANIZATION?

Purpose: Verify that what the organization has to offer can meet your expectations. Also allows to validate your interest for the organization.

In this case, your answer should demonstrate why you would like to obtain this job; avoid personal explanations. Bring up what you have learned about the organization and link it to your competencies.

WHAT CAN YOU PROVIDE TO OUR ORGANIZATION?

Purpose: Check if your realizations can be useful to the organization

This is the time to give real examples to illustrate your statements.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES?

Purpose: Validate that your qualities will allow you to fulfill the position

Go straight to the point: choose two or three qualities related to the job. Try to choose those that fit with the job description.

WHY DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD CHOOSE YOU INSTEAD OF SOMEONE ELSE?

Purpose: Verify what distinguishes you from other candidates.

Highlight your strengths, but avoid comparing yourself to others.

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION?

Purpose: See if you are well informed about the organization.

Give a simple answer. Take the occasion to talk about the things you found interesting while learning about the organization.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK WITH US?

Purpose: Once again, the employer wants to measure your interest in the organization.

Put the organization's needs before yours in your answer.

CAN YOU WORK UNDER PRESSURE?

Purpose: Verify if you have what it takes to fill the position.

Before answering, ask for clarifications. What type of pressure are we talking about? From the answer, you will be able to illustrate your comments by real examples from your working experience. For example, explain that you are able to perform tasks despite tight schedules. Naturally; avoid being negative!

The tricky questions

Here are some questions that are always annoying to answer out of the blue.

TALK ABOUT YOURSELF

Purpose: See if you can make links between your skills and the job offered.

The answer to this seemingly vague question says a lot about you. From the start, it shows if you can manage priorities, as it is easy to jump from one subject to another and lose clarity in this type of context. Think about what the employer wants to know about you. Still, it is also the occasion to present yourself as you desire. Do not hesitate to link your capacities to the position's requirements.

WHAT SALARY DO YOU EXPECT?

Purpose: validate that your expectations correspond to what the company has to offer.

Do not put yourself in a tight spot by answering an exact number! Your answer should rather be a salary range. If your searches on the organization allowed you to know the current wage scale, this is the occasion to mention it. For example, «I know that you offer an X salary, and that is convenient for me ». Otherwise an answer of this kind: «I am open to any fair offer» will allow you to get by.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN FLAWS?

Purpose: know if your flaws could keep you from doing a good job.

When answering this kind of question, you could be tempted to lie but the employers do not expect to hire somebody who is perfect! They simply want to verify that your flaws will not be a nuisance to your job. Be honest while being positive. Choose a flaw which does not have much impact on your future work and show that you made efforts to improve yourself.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

Purpose: This is another way to verify your interest for the organization or the position.

Never answer NO to this question. Take this occasion to clear up certain points. Also have in mind a list of more general questions.

Here are a few examples:

- When do you plan to make a decision?
- When may I expect to have news?
- Were there many candidates for the interview?
- Who will be my immediate supervisor?
- If I obtain the position, shall I have to travel?
- What are the work shifts?
- Shall I have to do a training course before I start working?
- Has this position been vacant for a long time?

- Why is this position vacant?

For more information

<http://interview.monster.ca/>

This section is very complete and it even allows you to practice based on a targeted job sector.

A few examples of frequently asked questions:

<http://www.toilejeunesse.centre-du-quebec.qc.ca/client/page1.asp?page=48&clef=85&clef2=41&saut=5>

And even more...

<http://travaillez.vous.net/questions.html>