

INTRODUCTION

I've created this handout for the people who have attended one of my interview workshops. Some of the information may seem obvious to you, but had this been obvious to everyone, I wouldn't have to mention it! This paper covers information I've learned as a recruiter, human resources professional, consultant, career coach and job seeker. I also wrote a book, Recruiters on Recruiting, and many professional recruiters echoed this information.

GOAL

To learn successful interview skills by understanding the process, types of interviews, and how to best present yourself.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOU!

Professional attire, haircut, attitude, handshake, smile, resume are all very important.

Visual assessments take less than 5 seconds, and an auditory assessment within the first 15 seconds.

BE ON TIME!

BE PREPARED:

- Research the company:
 - Website
 - LinkedIn
 - Public Records (annual reports, announcements of VC funding)
- Research the interview team
 - LinkedIn
 - Press Releases, blogs, Twitter
- Review your resume and check the spelling on your application form.
- Professional image: e/vmail and phone manners; check social networking sites; clean, pressed conservative interview clothes/shoes; no perfume, extreme makeup, lots of piercings.
- Turn off phone.
- Be on-time, firm handshake, smile, eye contact.
- Don't ever trash former employer, manager or job.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS are used in particular industries such as the government, educational institutions and certain banking positions.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS are more commonly used.

- More informal
- Open-ended questions, focus on past performance (Behavioral Interview)
- Candidate talks 70-80%
- Limited specific information about the position until your qualifications are confirmed
- Eye contact, silence/wait for you

YOU HAVE A LOT OF CONTROL!

PRE-SCREENING INTERVIEWS

- Resume Screening - basic criteria, keywords
- Telephone Screening - are you available, how do you sound, basic discussion of your skills and the job.
 - If you're caught off-guard, set up an appointment for the call. Don't try to interview when you're in line for coffee, driving or picking up your kids.
 - Prepare for the call: research the company, review the job description and your skills/experiences as they relate to the job. Have a quiet place to talk, stand as you talk (more energy is relayed) and smile. You can "hear" a smile by a person's tone of voice.

STAR OR PAR STATEMENTS

Situation—Task/Action—Result

Problem—Action—Result

Be organized and succinct, 1 minute or less.

Describe the situation, actions taken, state your result.

PREPARE FOR THESE QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself.

Why did you leave your last position?

Tell me about a time when you managed a project that didn't go well.

ANTICIPATE "DEFICIENCIES" - *Anticipate concerns and address them.*

Do you think you may be considered "too young" or "too old?"

How will you answer questions about "too much" or "too little" experience?

Never worked in a start-up or large company?

Never managed such a large budget?

MONEY QUESTIONS

- Delay money questions: learn if the position is a match and learn more about the scope of the position.
- Research salaries: www.salary.com, www.cbsalary.com, www.glassdoor.com, ask friends and check your professional association. I'm in a large Yahoo Group for recruiters and we regularly discuss salaries.
- Be prepared with a range.

YOU ASK QUESTIONS, TOO!

How would you describe the companies' culture?

Why is the position vacant?

What do you see as the most important challenge for this position?

How can I be most successful in this role?

What are your 60-/90-/120-day goals for this position? (Or 30/60/90 - customize for the job.)

How does this position interact with other departments?

What is your vision for the department / division?

What are your next steps?

When can I expect to hear from you, and if you get too busy, may I follow up in one week?

How should I contact you - through phone or email?

QUESTIONS **NOT** TO ASK

Do not ask about salary, benefits.

Do not be too familiar, casual, overly-friendly.

Don't be desperate even if you feel that way. It's scary.

WHAT TO DO IF THE INTERVIEWER IS UNPREPARED

Have you ever interviewed only to find that your interviewer just found out about you and hasn't read your resume? I have on several occasions and I enjoy this kind of an interview. I'm in charge and I start with something like this: "Would you like me to walk you through my background?" It gives me the opportunity to present some information about myself and find out what's important to that person about my role, how s/he sees it, where they really need help, and then I can direct my answers. It's very conversational and I get a better sense of who that person is. The key to this interview is the same key to other interviews: **be prepared**.

STRONG CLOSING

- Have your questions been answered?

- Restate your interest and how you fill the position's requirements.
- Know the next steps in the process.
- Ask for the job. Is there anything else you need to know about me in order to make your decision?
- Thank the interviewer/s and send a thank-you note.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

10-30 second verbal commercial, highlighting your qualifications, strengths and personal attributes. Why such a large range of time? You'll introduce yourself in different situations. You don't want to take 30 seconds at a networking meeting, but at an interview, you should be prepared with an overview of your background.

My name is _____. I'm a previous or current title. My background includes _____.

Quick summary of your experience: career highlight, something challenging, something you've learned, how you helped the company or others. _____.

Why are you looking for a new job/why'd you leave your last job?

What did you like *most* about your last job?

Tell me about your previous manager and company. *Don't complain.*

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses? *Quickly note truth, what you've done to correct it, and note something you do well. Be positive.*

How long have you been looking for another position? Why has it taken so long? *Be honest about how long your search has been and your challenge to find the right match.*

Finding the right job takes time and careful evaluation and it's OK to be selective.

Mention what you have done in the meantime.

*Make this "down time" sound like a **positive** experience.*

Tell me about something you planned to do that did not work out.

Bring up a failed situation, how you turned it around, and describe what you learned / gained as a result of the experience.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send customized thank-you notes.
- Follow up in 1 week or as suggested at the end of the interview.
- Prepare your references.
- Double-check your social network sites for professional appearance.

SHRM SURVEY

Society for Human Resource Management's survey of nearly 500 HR managers:

- 30% of hiring managers will decide whether to hire you within 15 minutes
- 40% of hiring managers say a cell phone ringing in the middle of an interview is a "deal breaker"
- 70% prefer job candidates to have unpaid internship experience directly related to their companies' work versus paid employment in an unrelated field
- 39% say "chemistry" with a job applicant accounts for half of their hiring decision

RESOURCES

www.santaclaracountylib.org/brainfuse - Must be a member of the Santa Clara County Library for this site. Check your local library for resources.

1. Users need a library card and PIN number.
2. Click on the purple button "Click here to go to Brainfuse."
3. Click on "Adult Learning Center," then on "Write a Winning Resume."
4. Tutors are available Monday through Sunday from 1:00pm - 10:00pm PST.

www.linkedin.com

www.referenceusa.com - use at home or at library

www.ourhrsite.com/resources.html

Networking Groups, News, General Information

Downloads:

- Job Boards
- Reference Checks
- Insurance
- LinkedIn
- And more!

BEST OF LUCK!

MARCIA STEIN, PHR has worked in the Silicon Valley since 1989 and owns a Human Resources Consulting practice. She is experienced as a Recruiter, Staffing Manager and Human Resources Director and regular job seeker. Marcia presents to organizations, corporations and job search groups. She is the founder of Silicon Valley Women in Human Resources...and Friends, a networking, mentoring and educational group for professional women with over 1,500 members. She is the author of [*Recruiters on Recruiting*](#), a look into the career paths of different types of recruiters, their tips for job seekers and new recruiters. Her second book is [*Strained Relations: Help for Struggling Parents of Troubled Teens*](#). She has also released a booklet, [*Top Tips From Recruiters for Job Seekers*](#). See www.tellmeaboutyourself.info for more information.

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