

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

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In Person Interview Guidelines

Pre-Interview Preparation

- Do your homework:
 - Thoroughly review the company's web site.
 - Look up the profiles of those you are meeting with on LinkedIn.
 - Google the company and names of those you'll be meeting to gain additional information.
 - For extra credit, research competitor's web sites as well.
- Prepare a list of 5 to 10 open-ended questions. Examples include the following:
 - Company: What are its products or services? Where does it fit into the marketplace?
 - Department: Where does IT fit into the company? How is IT organized, and what is the staff size? What is the technical environment?
 - Position: What do you expect the person filling this position to accomplish during the first 6 months? Where does it lead after that? What is the most important skill required for this position? What is the business problem you are trying to solve with this position? What would I be doing on a typical day?
 - Hiring Manager: How long have you been with the company? What do you like about the firm? What kinds of people succeed here or what qualities do successful people have in IT?
- Anticipate and prepare answers for likely objections, such as reasons for leaving current employer, job history where your tenure was 2 years or less, rationale to prove that you are ok with a long commute, why would you take a position under your current title/salary, etc. If you are unhappy with your current employer, do not dwell on negative aspects during the interview. Perhaps answer that you are looking for more growth opportunity, and leave it at that.
- Prepare a response to the ever-popular "Tell me about yourself" question. Aim for about 3 to 5 minutes, and focus on accomplishments rather than responsibilities. This answer should be purely professional, not personal in nature.
- Think of several reasons why you think you would be a good candidate (Skills, Personal Qualities, Accomplishments).
- Prepare for other common questions, including: What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses? What was your greatest failure, and what would you now do differently in the same situation?
- Bring a hard copy of the resume we provided to you, and review it and be prepared to speak to anything on it.
- Social Networking – ensure that anything available publicly has professional content only. Best best is to ensure that Facebook, Myspace, Personal Blogs, etc, are private. Even if you believe that your personal life should not affect how people judge you professionally, the fact is they will, so protect yourself.
- Unless you have been specifically instructed one way or the other, please bring the information you might need to complete a background check authorization/employment application. This includes complete details of job, education and military history, along with references.

Interview Logistics

1. Make sure you are comfortable with directions. Bring phone numbers with you in case you get lost or hit worse than expected traffic. If you are running late, call our main office at 310 479 8830, but be sure to call the client directly as well.
2. Dress in a nice suit unless you have been advised to dress more casually.
3. Aim to arrive about 10 minutes early.
4. Leave the cell phone in the car!
5. Bring a portfolio/paper so you are prepared to write down notes if there is a need.

Interview Time

1. Basics: Good handshake, good eye contact and positive attitude.
2. Be punctual – plan to arrive about 10 minutes early. There is nothing that will throw you off of an interview than showing up late.
3. Manners – be nice and professional with everyone, including the security guard, receptionist and personal assistants. When you are waiting in the reception area, don't put your feet up or get too casual.
4. Let the interviewer lead the interview. Make sure you are answering questions directly and with enough, but not too much information. Do not try to control the interview – let the interviewer be the one that steers the conversation.
5. There is no such thing as an interview which is a “formality”. It is never a formality. Even if you feel you have built a rapport with one/many employees at the company, never forget that you are interviewing and maintain the same level of professional at all times.
6. Yes/No Questions: Try to answer in a positive fashion that shows flexibility. If you're asked if you have a particular technical skill that you are not familiar with, obviously say “No”. But, add a “but”. Example: “No, I have not used Java, but I have solid object oriented development skills, am a quick learner and have used C++ and VB extensively.” You can also ask the interviewer if that skill is required for the position. Many times it's not, but they want to feel out your experience, and or see what your attitude is about learning new things.
7. If you get “Tell Me About” questions, many times they are attitudinal (“What is your attitude towards overtime, maintenance, etc”). Try to answer in an honest, positive and flexible manner (even if it's something you do not want to do, try to round out a No with something softer).
8. Generally you'll have time to ask questions, so use the ones you have prepared prior to the interview.
9. Be sure to be prepared to discuss the kinds of work you have been doing. It is a good idea to review your resume to refresh your memory and to boost your confidence. Be sure to relay the hands-on experience with good examples that demonstrate your technical experience and/or management qualifications for this position.
10. Have a clear idea of what you're looking for and why. Be sure to map your experience to the position you are interviewing for. This is NOT the time to try to upsell yourself.
11. At the end of an interview, try to ferret out concerns that the interviewer may have regarding your qualifications. Here are some examples of questions that may help to identify such concerns: Based on our meeting, I feel both qualified and interested in your firm. What are the next steps towards an offer? Do you have any concerns about my qualifications for this position? Is there any area that I can further clarify for you?
12. Salary: If you are asked for your current salary, go ahead and tell the interviewer. You should not be the one to bring up money. You may want to add that though money is an important factor, it's not the only factor in your decision. If you are asked what your salary requirements are, try to tactfully deflect the question back to the interviewer. You never know what number he/she has in mind, and the figure you throw out may be far greater than they are prepared to offer (so you run the risk of getting no offer), or the number is below the actual number (so you shortchange yourself). Let us do the salary negotiation at the point an offer is being made. An example of a good answer is “ I feel qualified and interested in the position, and if you feel the same about me, please make me the best offer that you are comfortable with so I may consider a career with (company).” Here's another “I don't want to give you a specific number because frankly I would be guessing. I'd prefer to leave you with the fact that I know I'm qualified and I'm very interested in what we have discussed today. If you feel the same about me, I am hopeful you'll make me the best offer you feel comfortable with.” If those options don't feel right, or you are pushed to give a number, give a range so it buys us room to negotiate.

Follow Up

1. Call Technical Connections immediately following your interview to give us feedback. We will then check on feedback and next steps from the client.
2. Be sure to send a thank you email following the interview. Please email your recruiter the proposed thank you note first and we can provide insight and potential tweaks, to ensure they have the most impact. It's a nice touch, and we have had clients on the fence about two candidates pick the one who took the time to send a quick thank you note.

Phone Interview Guidelines

- Telephone interviews are merely screening interviews meant to eliminate poorly qualified candidates so that only a few are left for personal interviews. Your mission is to be invited for a personal face-to-face interview. Some tips for telephone interviews include:
 - Make sure your ringback tones and outgoing voicemail message on your home and/or cell phones is professional. If the client misses you and gets your voicemail, their first impression of you will be the professionalism of your message.
 - Use a landline if possible – a bad connection and/or dropped call is not the first impression you want to make. If you can't, make sure you are in a quiet area with good reception.
 - Without being able to see body language, you may miss out on signals telling you you've said enough. Try to leave some spaces during your answers, so the interviewer can interject a comment or new question.
 - Keep your notes handy: Have any key information, including your resume, notes about the company, and any notes you have prepared, next to the phone. You will sound prepared if you don't have to search for information. Make sure you also have a notepad and pen so you can jot down notes and any questions you would like to ask at the end of the interview.
 - Be prepared to think on your feet: If you are asked to participate in a role-playing situation, give short but concise answers. Accept any criticism with tact and grace.
 - Avoid salary issues: If you are asked how much money you would expect, try to avoid the issue by using a delaying statement or give a broad range, especially if you do not know how much the job is budgeted for.
 - Push for a face-to-face meeting: Sell yourself by closing with something like: "I am very interested in exploring the possibility of working in your company. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you in person. Would you like to set up a meeting at this time?"
 - Try to reschedule surprise interviews: You will not be your best with a surprise interview. If you were called unexpectedly, try to set an appointment to call back by saying something like: "I have a scheduling conflict at this time. Can I call you back tomorrow after work, say 6 PM?"

Lunch Interview Guidelines

- It has been established that you have the skills and education necessary for the position. The interviewer wants to see if you will fit in with the company culturally, and how your skills will complement the rest of the department. Your goal in a Lunch (one-on-one) Interview is to establish a rapport with the interviewer and show him or her that your qualifications will benefit the company. .

- The setting may be more casual, but remember it is a business lunch and you are being watched carefully. Use the lunch interview to develop common ground with your interviewer. Follow his or her lead in both selection of food and in etiquette.
- Don't order spaghetti ☺.

Panel (Committee) Interview Guidelines

- Panel interviews are a common practice. You will face several members of the company who have a say in whether you are hired. When answering questions from several people, speak directly to the person asking the question; it is not necessary to answer to the group.
- In some panel interviews, you may be asked to demonstrate your problem-solving skills. The panel will outline a situation and ask you to formulate a plan that deals with the problem. You don't have to come up with the ultimate solution. The interviewers are looking for how you apply your knowledge and skills to an applicable situation. They may also be looking to see how you think on your feet, and your problem solving approach.

Group Interview Guidelines

- A group interview is usually designed to uncover the leadership potential of prospective managers and employees who will be dealing with the company as a whole and/or the public. You will be gathered together in an informal, discussion-type interview.
- A subject is introduced and the interviewer will start off the discussion. The goal of the group interview is to see how you interact with others and how you use your knowledge and reasoning powers to win others over. If you do well in the group interview, you can expect to be asked back for a more extensive interview.

Sample Q&A

Tell me about yourself

- Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position.
- Keep responses concise and brief and avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs and bosses.
- "Tell-me-about-yourself" means, "Tell me about your qualifications." Prepare a one to two minute discussion of your qualifications. Start with education and discuss your experiences. For example, "I graduated from Stanford 1999 and have been in financial services since that time. Most recently, I have been working as a senior business development officer for X bank. I've also had significant experience in credit and underwriting and portfolio management...."

What are your greatest strengths?

- Interviewers like to hear abstract qualities. Loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, fast-learner, technical skills, politeness, and promptness, expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid the simple generalization "I like people" or "I work too hard."

What are your greatest weaknesses?

- Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all of your imperfections. Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, (i.e., "I have the tendency to take on too much work myself, but I have been learning to delegate more effectively" OR "I tend to get very involved with the matters I work on and then if something doesn't go well, I will sometimes take it personally.") Do identify a weakness. Nothing is more annoying than talking to someone who thinks they have no weakness. Identify an "area you need improvement in" and say what you've done to improve in that area.

B. Personality Questions

What do you do in your spare time?

- Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.

C. Motive Questions

- Answer motive questions enthusiastically. Show the interviewer that you are interested in the position and that you really want the job. Remember to maintain eye contact and be sincere.

What attracted you to banking or financial services, etc?

- Talk about the aspects you enjoy about the practice, the market, the intellectual challenge, etc. In this area, it is usually more important that you exude enthusiasm and passion than what you actually say.

How can you contribute to this company?

- Be positive and sell yourself! Bringing strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to meet and exceed goals, and complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.

Why should I hire you for this position?

- Explain your qualifications and how they "fit" the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why it's work that you enjoy. Emphasize your ability to successfully perform the duties required.

Why do you want to work for our company?

- Make a compliment about what the company does, its location, or its people. Research about the company is important here.

What interests you most about this position?

- Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two-word answer such as, "the challenge" or "the opportunity", will force them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

What are your career goals?

Your answer should depend on a specific time frame:

- Short term - "I want to be the best in my current position, while learning whatever is needed to take on additional responsibilities."
- Long term - "After proving my abilities, I see myself in a company with career growth in management (or whatever is important to you)."

What are you doing to achieve your goals?

- "I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you see from my resume, by taking educational courses, when offered. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations in my field." (Make sure you can expand on your statements).

D. Job Satisfaction Questions**Why did you leave your previous employer? Why do you want to leave _____?**

- NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition, better deal flow, larger loans, more diversity etc.

What did you like most/least about your previous job?

- An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position.

Why are you looking for in another job?

- Again, be positive. "I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at _____. There are a lot of good people there. I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth, and recognition. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career."

E. Past Performance Questions

(To determine behavior, based on past examples)

What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?

- Again, be truthful and admit not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice as you can to make the best decision possible.

What causes you to lose your temper?

- Everybody has a low boiling point on some particular issue. Pick one of yours; something safe and reasonable. People who are late to meetings, blame shifting, broken appointments and office "backstabbing" are suitable responses. Don't say that you never fly off the handle. You won't be believed.

What are your greatest accomplishments?

- Be ready to recant one or two stories that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A particularly complex or difficult transaction, a notable matter that was well publicized or matters you took the lead on are a few examples.

Eleven Reasons for Rejection

There are many reasons that candidates are not extended offers from companies where they interview. When asking Hiring Managers why they did not proceed with a candidate, the following list cites the most common reasons:

1. **Poor attitude.** Many candidates come across as arrogant. While employers can afford to be self-centered, candidates cannot. Be enthusiastic, energetic and personal, while maintaining your professionalism.
2. **Appearance.** Many candidates do not consider their appearance as much as they should. First impressions are quickly made in the first three to five minutes. Be conservative in your dress to avoid unnecessary distractions.
3. **Lack of research.** It's obvious when candidates haven't learned about the job or company prior to the interview. Use the Internet to research the company, and then talk with friends, peers and other professionals about the opportunity before each meeting.
4. **Not having questions to ask.** Asking questions shows your interest in the company and the position. Prepare a list of intelligent questions in advance.
5. **Not readily knowing the answers to interviewers' questions.** Anticipate and answers to tough questions about your background, such as a recent termination or an employment gap. Practicing with your spouse or a friend before the interview will help you to frame intelligent responses.
6. **Relying too much on resumes.** Employers hire people, not paper. Although a resume can list qualifications and skills, it's the interview dialogue that will portray you as a committed, responsive team player.
7. **Too much humility.** Being conditioned not to brag, candidates are sometimes reluctant to describe their accomplishments. Explaining how you reach difficult or impressive goals helps employers understand what you can do for them.
8. **Not relating skills to employers' needs.** A list of sterling accomplishments means little if you can't relate them to a company's requirements. Reiterate your skills and convince the employer that you can "do the same for them".
9. **Handling salary and bonus issues ineptly.** Candidates should not ask about salary, bonus and benefit packages too early. In most cases, I can handle the salary and bonus discussions with the client and will relay the information to you.
10. **Lack of career direction.** Job hunters who aren't clear about their career goals often can't spot or commit to appropriate opportunities. Not knowing what you want wastes everyone's time.
11. **Job shopping.** Some candidates will admit they're just "shopping" for opportunities and have little intention of changing jobs. This wastes time and leaves a bad impression with employers they may need to contact in the future.

Employment Application Guidelines

How It Works

Most companies will complete a Background Check on you, and its successful completion is a requirement before you can start working for that company. When you complete an Employment Application and/or Background Check Approval form, it gives the company the OK to verify all information provided on the form. The types of things normally checked include:

- Criminal – this includes local, county and federal. Felonies, as well as Misdemeanors will typically come up.
- Financial – this will show debt, bankruptcies, etc
- Social Security – will indicate if you have a valid SS #
- DMV – will show driving infractions.
- Education – will verify degree completion
- Employment History – will verify title, dates of employment and salary.

Once you complete, sign and return the Background Check/Employment Application form(s) to TCI or to a client, you are indicating that all the information is accurate. There is no turning back at that point.

Key Rules & Regulations

- **DO NOT PAD YOUR COMPENSATION** – let us negotiate for you to get a fair compensation package. If current (or past) compensation can't be verified, you can have an offer rescinded.
- **DO NOT SAY YOU GRADUATED WITH A DEGREE IF YOU DID NOT** – many companies do not require degrees, and yet if you say you got one, they will pull offer if it does not check out (they don't care about the degree, but they care that you may lie about other things).
- **DO NOT PUT ANYTHING DOWN IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ABOUT IT** – it's better to ask questions, put "approximate" or leave an item blank, then to put information which will not check out. Talk to us or to the company's HR representative about any questions.
- **THE FORM(S) COUNT, NOT WHAT IS ON YOUR RESUME** – even if your resume is not entirely accurate, it's imperative that you put only accurate information on the form(s). It's ok if they are inconsistent, as long as the accurate information is on the form(s).

Pointers

- Above all, if you know something is going to come up on a background check, it's imperative that you disclose it before the company finds out on the background report. In most, if not all cases, the clients will see past the issue if you are up front about it, and assure them you have taken care of the situation satisfactorily. Everyone makes mistakes. The key is to take responsibility for them, own up and not be embarrassed by them. How you disclose them and what you have done to resolve them will be what matters to a company in most situations.
- For misdemeanors, most courts require you to fill out a form to have it taken off your record once you have met the milestone for its deletion. Take care of this ASAP to avoid having things show up unnecessarily.