

## Ten Commandments for Winning Interviews

1. **Know your past achievements.** An achievement is something that excited you, gave you a feeling of pride, or something that you enjoyed doing. Each achievement is made up of factors that have made you successful: creativity, management, directing, leading, selling, etc. Your core skills can be found by writing stories about your successes. Then, by underlining the qualities you've used to achieve and noting those used most frequently, your core skills will emerge.
2. **Do your research.** Gather and analyze information about the company and the companies' competition. Your research should include: what the company produces, who the company's customers are, what their culture is like, and if they have a company mission and if so what it is. Also find out if they are growing and why, what their plans are for the future, and who their primary competition is. Your knowledge about them will not only contribute to your self-confidence, but also show that you have sincere interest in them.
3. **Answer all questions directly.** Don't get long winded or go off on unrelated tangents. The best insurance for a direct response is to listen, do your company's research and know your skills, achievements, values and personal qualities. Listening and preparation are the keys to a winning presentation at an interview. Decision makers are busy; they don't have time to listen to you ramble. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your effective, practical, and solution oriented work style.
4. **Be prepared to answer personal questions.** Your personality and core values are strongly considered in a competitive market. Every person counts. You will not only contribute to the profitability of the company but also to its culture. You may be asked, "What are your shortcomings?" "What is it about yourself that might offend someone?" "Describe the best or worst boss you ever worked for?" "What do you want to contribute to this organization?" "What are your three top values?"
5. **Balance listening with telling your story.** Do not interrupt when the interviewer is talking. Be brief when it's your turn to tell your story or answer a question. Pause and check in by asking. "Would you like me to continue?" or "Am I answering your question?" or "Is there any aspect of my background that is of most interest?"
6. **Focus on what you can do for them.** Employers are interested in how you can solve their problems and work with their customers. Do not operate out of a job description mentality that emphasizes title, position, and narrowly defines responsibilities. Today, businesses are focusing on the customer. They look for people whose primary concern is the customer and the company and who want to roll up their sleeves and get to work.
7. **Let the employer raise the issue of compensation.** All employers want to hire the best person for the job, especially in a competitive marketplace. They'll make you an offer if you've done your homework and have shown them the relevancy of your experience and ability to their needs. If they ask, "What would you like?" respond, "I'd like you to make me an offer." Then you'll have additional significant information from which to think over their proposal and to counteroffer and negotiate.
8. **Be bold. State your interest and why.** In a competitive business market, employers hire people who know what they want and why. Often interviewers will not be as prepared as you are. So do your personal and company research. If the company and the specific job interest you, say so and why. For example, the organization may have similar values to your

regarding their respect for employee growth and development, or their product/service could contribute to the environment in a way in which you believe.

9. **Relate your past experience to their needs.** Hearsay is that all employers are looking for employees with experience in their specific industry baloney. Be prepared to demonstrate how your experience and skills are allied with their needs. For example, tell a story about how you consistently mat customer service and management is highly transferable if you can clearly demonstrate how.
10. **Expand your options.** Set up as many interviews as possible even when you think you have a hot prospect. You don't have the job until you've signed the acceptance letter. The job market is unpredictable: an employer with whom you think a job offer is imminent could lose a contract or could surface and internal candidate, both of which would adversely affect your candidacy. Also, you will be much stronger negotiator if you know the market and have other active possibilities.

## **10 Serious Mistakes to Avoid**

Inability to make life, work and educational experiences relevant to the position desired.

Little or no career opportunity knowledge

Complaints about prior employers and education

Bringing up negative personal information

Run-on motor mouth responses

Vague responses to specific questions

Bizarre (You Decide) Responses

Emphasizing only salary, not value to the company

Poor grammar usage

Fail to present relevant skills & abilities.

## **Proof by Example**

### **Or how to prove that you CAN do that job**

Anytime you say: "I know how to...", "I'm good at..." or any other type of "I am" or "can do" statement, you'd better be able to back it up.

Most applicants give "I can statements" instead of the more powerful "I can prove statements"

I can statements simply state that you can do certain things. "I am reliable" "I can operate a punch press" "I can type well"

I can prove statements go a little farther and give some type of exemplary proof that you can do the work. "I am reliable. I've only missed one day of work in the past year."

"I can prove statements"... Always give examples and are better than "I can statements"

Link and thank is comparable to story telling

Pick one example of a skill that you have. Tell what you did, who you did it with, and what the benefit was of what you did. Then tie it to the present employer.

## Proof by Example – Example

Interviewer: I see that you're good at organizing things. Can you give me an example of when you've used your organizational skills?

1. Specific Example: "I had to set up and reorganize the entire customer service files for over 35,000 customers.
2. Detail the Example

Who details: I did this while I was working for Mrs. Elvira Shagnasty, the department manager. In this example, I worked with three other secretaries and I supervised one clerical assistant.

Where details: At this time, I was working for Lesco Mail Order company, in the customer services department office in Lansing, MI.

Why details. They had a problem of not being able to find out who was behind in their payments and wanted to track them better.

When details. Five days a week, at least six hours a day, I did nothing but organize customer information. In fact, I just used my organizational skills yesterday on another customer service project.

How details. In order to get the job done, I had to analyze the inventory control records and customer invoices. This required me to call up customers, other vendors, and the people who shipped the goods. In doing this, I had to use our IBM computer system and the account payables and receivables software. When the information was not there, I had to come up with ways and ideas to track this information down.

3. Specify Results: Once we were done, we found that over 25% of our customers were behind. We knew this because our receivables did not match up to orders out.
4. Think & Link: This resulted in better customers service and saved the company time and money. I know I can do the same for your company.

## 5. Avoiding the Silver Bullet Questions

There are thousands of questions that you could be asked during your interview. Regardless of the questions being asked they can always be grouped under the following areas:

What can you do for the employer

How long will it take you to become productive

What do you want from the employer

Can you handle sensitive or stressful situations

Will you get along with co-workers, bosses, etc.

How long will you stay with the company.

Out of these six target areas there are 11 silver bullet questions which give people the most trouble.

If you can handle the silver bullet

## Overcoming Objections

Just like a salesman, you have to sell yourself to the interviewer. Before a sales person has ever talked to a customer they have thought through all the objections that their customers might have to purchasing their product. You have to do the same.

There are common objections that interviewers have with candidates but most of them are never stated in the interview.

Too much education  
Not enough education  
Not enough experience in the field  
Over qualified  
Too old  
Too young  
Higher salaries in the past  
Gender  
Children

What objections do you think someone might have to hiring you? List any that you can think of and then think how you can incorporate the information that will overcome your objections within the interview?