



The 8 Keys To A Successful Interview

You got the interview, now it's your time to shine.

1 Show Enthusiasm

Your demeanor during an interview speaks volumes to the interviewer. Showing enthusiasm for the company and the position will go a long way. If there's one common characteristic employers look for, it's a candidate who is excited about the opportunity and expresses it through their words and actions. There are several ways to show enthusiasm:

- Be punctual: Arrive 5-10 minutes early
- Dress for success:
 - Men: Dark suit, button-down shirt, plain tie, minimal or no cologne
 - Women: Suit, natural make-up, clear nail polish, minimal or no perfume
- Smile, be friendly and relax
- Display confidence in yourself and your skills
- Show genuine interest in what the interviewer is saying
- Take notes on important points shared and names
- Listen carefully and respond with relevant questions
- Come prepared with your own questions
- Exhibit knowledge about the company during conversation
- Stay positive, upbeat and professional
- Speak up; an interview is a two-way conversation

2 Positively Share Your Career Pursuits

Be prepared to discuss your reasons for leaving your last position to pursue this opportunity. Keep the conversation positive, not going down the trail of things you didn't like, but rather focusing on what the new position offers such as:

- Ability to achieve professional career goals
- Opportunity to make a meaningful contribution
- Growth and advancement potential
- Stability and quality of the company

3 Do Your Research and Ask Thoughtful Questions

An interview is a learning process. While a large portion is designed for the employer to learn about you, asking thoughtful questions will help you discover whether the position is a good fit for you. But, before you unleash your questions, be sure to do your research, learning as much as you can about the organization and the position. Interviewers want to know that you were interested enough to learn about their company and if you don't, they'll know it. So, do your homework! There are several ways to learn about a company:

- Look up the company's Web site, annual report and recent press releases
- Call and request sales materials
- Conduct online research: Google the company, check news sites
- Inquire with friends, colleagues and associates

Once you've absorbed all the information you can, plan ways to weave relevant pieces of it into your conversation. This shows the interviewer you've done your homework and you are serious about the opportunity. The following is a guide to questions you should ask the interviewer:

- Tell me about your company culture and the type of employee that would thrive in your organization.
- What are the company's plans for growth over the next few years?
- How did this position become available (new, promotion)?
- What skills and strengths would it take to succeed in this position?
- What does a typical day in this position look like?
- What are the main roles and responsibilities of this position?
- What kind of projects would this position be responsible for now? In six months?
- What are the dynamics of your department?
- What is the reporting structure of this position?
- What types of individuals, departments and customers would this position interact with?

4 Strategically Sell Your Qualifications

In today's competitive job market, it's up to you to sell your skills in a way that sets you apart from other candidates. The interview is your one chance to do that. Be prepared to tell the interviewer why you are the best person for the job—and back it up with strong examples. Here are a few tips:

- Study the job description, paying attention to specific qualifications and responsibilities required. These are focal points you should steer your skills around.
- Prepare specific examples where you exhibited these skills in a work situation, highlighting areas that directly apply to the position at hand.
- Know the content on your résumé, and be prepared to elaborate on specific details of employment, responsibilities and accomplishments.
- Identify your strengths and tie them to specific needs of the job.
- Consider your weaknesses, and think of examples that will paint you in the most positive light to the interviewer if asked about them.

5 Approach Advancement Potential Carefully

An interview is intended to be an open forum for questions, but it's wise to exercise caution when approaching the subject of advancement potential. Employers want to know you are excited about the opportunity they are offering, not focused on the next position up. That doesn't mean you shouldn't inquire, but how you do it is important. Here are a few suggestions:

- Ask how the position became available (if it was through a promotion, you'll gain insight into the potential career path).
- If the interviewer is your prospective new boss, ask him/her how they got to their level in the organization.
- Ask directly, "If someone in this position performed very well, what would their potential career path be?"

6 Let the Interviewer Address Salary and Benefits

Discussing salary and benefits at your first interview is inappropriate—in fact, if you know the range is acceptable, it's best to wait until a verbal offer has been extended. But, if the interviewer brings up the subject, you should be prepared to answer. Here are a few suggestions for responding to salary-related questions:

- "I'm open to negotiation."
- "I'm seeking a fair offer—one that offers growth opportunity, challenges and a great work atmosphere."
- "I would prefer you discuss salary with Spherion."
- "If you make me a fair offer, I would be thrilled to work here."
- Respond honestly to questions regarding current salary, reviews and benefits.
- Do not give a specific dollar amount—this could lower your starting salary or disqualify you for being too high.
- Do not give a salary range, otherwise the most you can expect is the bottom end of the range.

7 Close the Interview With a Call to Action

As the interview comes to a close, look the interviewer in the eye and ask them directly, "Do you feel I possess the qualifications you are seeking?" The answer to this question will enable you to do two things:

- Clear up any miscommunications regarding your skills and abilities.
- Counter any weak points with a response that reveals you are addressing those areas.

8 Follow Up With a Thank-You

Sending a thank-you note to your interviewer shows that you are very interested in the position and sets you apart from other candidates.

