

WESTPORT ONE



AN INDEPENDENT
MRINETWORK[®] MEMBER

INTERVIEWS

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Building rapport from the onset of an interview is critical. Hiring managers typically form 90% of their opinions in the first 30 seconds and spend the rest of the time justifying those opinions. Begin building rapport immediately with a warm handshake, good eye contact, and a display of energetic interest.

DO'S

ARRIVE EARLY

Arriving early gives you an opportunity to observe the company's surroundings and employees; plus, it builds in extra time for any unforeseen events, such as getting lost or parking issues.

BE PROFESSIONAL

Smile, make eye contact, and maintain good posture.

ESTABLISH RAPPORT

During the first few minutes, mention something that shows commonality of interest or similarity in background. Doing so will set a favorable tone and help both parties feel more connected and more comfortable as the conversation begins.

LISTEN

Concentrate not only on the interviewer's words, but also on the tone of voice and body language (if possible). Once you understand how the interviewer thinks, pattern your answers accordingly.

BE SPECIFIC

Relate your skills and background to the position requirements throughout the interview.

GIVE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS

Use real world examples of your quantifiable accomplishments that are most pertinent to the job.

ANTICIPATE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Prepare to turn perceived weaknesses into strengths.

ASK QUESTIONS

An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation.

DON'TS

DON'T ANSWER VAGUE QUESTIONS

Always ask the interviewer to clarify ambiguous questions.

DON'T BE DISRESPECTFUL

Don't chew gum or place anything on the interviewer's desk.

DON'T BE OVERLY FAMILIAR

Maintain a professional demeanor even if the interviewer is more casual.

DON'T RAMBLE

Elongated answers can make you sound apologetic or indecisive.

DON'T LIE OR EMBELLISH

Answer questions truthfully.

DON'T EXPRESS BITTERNESS

Avoid derogatory remarks about past or present employers.

FACE TO FACE INTERVIEWS

In addition to the Do's listed above:

- A padfolio is a great place to keep three copies each of your resume, resume supplement, and reference sheet in addition to any material you may want to have readily available for your interview.
- Turn off your cell phone when you arrive so that you are not tempted to use it while waiting for your interview.
- Be polite and friendly to everyone you meet. Many employers will ask their front office person how they were treated by the candidate waiting to be interviewed.

PHONE INTERVIEWS

Phone interviews have become standard practice as a means to keep costs down and streamline processes. Research shows that 98% of business executives assess a candidate's personality in the first 13 seconds of a phone call, with zero visual information.

Use the following tips to help prepare you for your next phone interview:

THE BASICS

- Secure a quiet and private location to have the phone call.
- Landlines are ideal, but if using a cell phone be sure you are set in an area that has good coverage.
- Keep electronic devices out of the room so they cannot distract you.
- Research the company and have any relevant information accessible to you.
- Carefully craft 5-6 questions that you would like to ask during the interview; these should pertain to the company, the role, and the culture.

PHONE PERSONALITY

While it is unlikely to get a job offer based on a phone interview, you need to make a strong first impression because your primary goal is to be invited to another interview. The need to make a good impression cannot be overemphasized. The phone interview is a make-or-break proposition; your one chance to convince the interviewer that you are worth serious consideration. Since you cannot rely upon visual stimuli like eye contact and body language, your voice, tone, energy level, and speaking mannerisms are the only tools at your disposal. A well-modulated, controlled voice communicates authority and heightens your verbal impact. The quality, pitch and tempo of your speech conveys a certain attitude, energy level, and enthusiasm. Here are a few ways you can maximize your phone personality:

AVOID SITTING IN A HUNCHED POSITION. This adds a note of stress to your voice. Try standing as it opens your diaphragm and allows air to flow more smoothly. You may consider standing at a counter, which will put you at a natural level to take notes if necessary. However, do not become overly consumed with taking notes that it becomes a distraction. It is vital to be engaged and pay attention to the flow of the conversation.

MOVE AROUND. Getting up and moving around introduces an element of action and can make you feel more at ease. Be sure not to move around so much that you become short of breath or distracted.

DO NOT TALK 'AT' THE INTERVIEWER. Speak in a relaxed and conversational way. Listen carefully and allow him/her to finish his/her questions before providing answers.

STAY FOCUSED. It is critical to stay focused during the conversation and to be succinct with your answers. Any distraction on your part or rambling will quickly frustrate the interviewer and you will lose their interest.

And most importantly ...

BE YOURSELF. Do not try to force anything that is not natural for you. The more comfortable and relaxed you are during your phone interview, the more your confidence, enthusiasm, and intelligence will shine through.



VIDEO INTERVIEWS

LOOK AT THE CAMERA, NOT THE SCREEN. It is very tempting to watch yourself or your interviewer during a video interview, but looking directly at the camera is the only way to maintain direct eye contact. If needed, try putting a colored sticker next to the camera as a reminder and something to focus on.

DRESS THE PART. When it comes to what you wear, treat your video interview like an in-person interview and dress professionally from head to toe (or at least from head to waist!).

PREPARE YOUR SURROUNDINGS. Pick a quiet place to interview without an elaborate backdrop so that you can be the focal point on the screen. Remove anything distracting behind you and keep it neutral. Make sure your light source is in front of you so that your face can be seen clearly.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT. Doing a mock interview with a friend beforehand is helpful because your first few video calls are likely to feel awkward, especially if you have to retrain yourself to watch the camera and not the screen. Also, familiarize yourself with the program to avoid any distractions during the interview.

CLOSE OTHER PROGRAMS ON YOUR COMPUTER. Getting notifications during your interview is distracting and unprofessional.

USE NOTES. Don't be afraid to help yourself with post-it notes or a copy of your resume during the interview. A huge benefit of a video interview is that you can have a cheat sheet and you do not have to memorize everything you want to mention. Make sure your notes are easily scannable and use them as quick reminders, not as a script. An interviewer will not be impressed if they only see the top of your head during the interview, so use your notes sparingly.

AVOID INTERRUPTIONS. If you are interviewing in a house with multiple people or pets present, be sure to let everyone know ahead of time that you will be in an interview while securing any animals away from your interview space.

WATCH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE. Not all physical cues translate from in-person interviews to video interviews, which make the ones that do even more important. Be sure to have good posture and relax your shoulders to avoid stiffness.

AVOID A "CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?" SITUATION. Nothing is more frustrating than only catching every other word a person is saying, so be sure to tweak your audio ahead of time to ensure you can hear and be heard without difficulty.

CLOSING

ASK FOR THE JOB

If you don't ask for the job, someone else will. If you demonstrate interest and energy throughout the process, it will be natural at the end of the interview to indicate that you are very interested in an offer, should you be the candidate of choice. Enthusiasm may be a factor in a close decision between you and another candidate.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

Candidates often second-guess themselves after interviews. By asking good questions and closing strongly, you can reduce post-interview doubts. If you feel that the interview went well and you want to take the next step, express your interest to the interviewer. Try an approach like the following:

"After learning more about your company, the position and responsibilities, I believe that I have the qualities you are looking for. Are there any issues or concerns that would lead you to believe otherwise?"

This is an effective closing question because it opens the door for the hiring authority to be honest with you about his or her feelings. If concerns do exist, you may be able to create an opportunity to overcome them, and have one final chance to dispel the concerns, sell your strengths and end the interview on a positive note.

A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER DURING THE CLOSING PROCESS

- Don't be discouraged if an offer is not made or a specific salary is not discussed. The interviewer may want to communicate with colleagues or conduct other scheduled interviews before making a decision.
- Make sure that you have thoroughly answered these questions during the interview:
 - "Why are you interested in our company?"
 - "What can you offer?"
- Express appreciation for the interviewer's time and consideration.
- Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can write a thank you email and/or letter.

FOLLOWUP

After your interview, follow up is critical. As soon as you can do so, write down key issues uncovered in the interview. Call your recruiter to discuss your interview and next steps.

THANK YOU NOTES

It is important to send Thank You notes to everyone you met within 24 hours of the interview. Email is a good option because of speed, but don't rule out the uniqueness of a handwritten note, delivered rather than mailed. Differentiating yourself from everyone else will give you an edge.