

Interview Tips

A few tips to help you “sail” through the Interview Process.

I. **Research the property thoroughly before you interview and certainly prior to accepting the job.**

The best source of information will probably be found on the Internet. Type the name of the company into a search engine (such as Google) and you’ll get all the information you need to prepare yourself for the interview and to determine whether this is going to be the right place for you.

If you want to go a step further, you can call the company ahead of time and ask them to send you an annual report. And, of course, if you know anyone who works at the property already, make the phone call to see what you might be able to learn from an “insider.”

Once you’re armed with all the facts, find a way to show what you’ve learned about the company. Know about any recent changes they’ve made, any new additions to their “hospitality family” (new restaurants, hotels, or resorts being built, acquired, et cetera), where they’ve been in the past 5 years and what they hope the next few years will bring. Demonstrate your interest and knowledge by asking a couple of questions, referring to facts about the company that could only have come from your having done your homework. If you can’t come up with some good questions on your own, going to the Web site may help you think of some. And it’s easier to think of questions before the interview when you’re not under pressure. When the inevitable question is thrown at you: “So, do you have any more questions?” – you’ll be ready! Remember that the quality of your questions will help shape the interviewer’s opinion of you!

II. **Before you go into an interview, you should be able to answer all of these questions:**

- If this is a hotel/resort or restaurant company, how many properties do they own and/or manage?
- Where are they located?
- Are they all in the US or do they have international locations? How has business been? (For hotels and resorts, you might want to learn both the Food & Beverage and the Rooms’ revenue.)
- How many employees are there?
- Has the company been downsizing, or are they adding staff?

- Is there a lot of turnover?
- What are the names of key management staff?
- How is the property doing in terms of guest satisfaction?

These facts are often not available publicly. You may need to either ask your recruiter, or try to find out from friends and business associates.

As for everyone's "favorite" questions – "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" "What are your long-term goals?" -- Bill Swallow of Courion Corporation suggests: "I have fun with it. If the interviewer/company can't appreciate my sense of humor, i.e., who I am, then I know I don't want to work there. I stay professionally focused, but I also try to act natural. After all, you have to determine if the place is right for you, and they have to determine if you'd fit in there. Putting up a false front is detrimental to this process.... honesty is the best policy."

III. Never criticize or put down **your current or previous employer/s**. Try to stay as positive as you can, keeping negative comments about bosses or co-workers to yourself. The most attractive candidate is one looking for career move up rather than one desperate for a lifeboat to pull them out of their misery.

IV: Honesty's the best policy: In an interview (or on a resume) it's never a good idea to stretch the truth about your educational background or your professional accomplishments. Remember "honesty is always the best policy." If you make something up, even the smallest detail, it could come back to haunt you down the road. Note: Never state that you have a college degree on a resume or a formal application form, if it's not true. Employers will want to verify that degree, and if they can't do that, you will not be offered the position! In many cases, a degree is not required for the job, and you will have lost your chance for no reason.

It's *not* wise, though, to divulge certain facts, which are not critical for the employer to know or to divulge facts that could put a cloud over making a good first impression. Things such as having had surgery some time ago are not of concern to the employer unless it impacts your ability to perform your job in the present.

V. Know where your interview will take place and find out how to get there ahead of time. Again, you can go on the Internet to get directions. Leave

early enough so that you're not thrown off by a traffic jam or a lack of easy parking. If you arrive more than 15 minutes early, don't check in right away. Take a few moments to review your notes and walk in the door no more than 5-7 minutes before your scheduled time. Take a cell phone in the car, if you can, so that if you're going to be a few minutes late, you can let the interviewer (and your recruiter) know. But, remember, there is no substitute for being on time, no matter what! This is your opportunity to demonstrate in a concrete manner that this job is very important to you and that you can be depended upon to be there when it counts!

VI. Don't take your cell phone into the interview with you. If you do, be sure to at least turn it off! There's nothing more distracting to you and to the person who's interviewing you than a ringing cell phone. It indicates to the prospective employer that you are forgetful, at the very least. It also shows that this job may not be as important to you as others or as your friends' ability to call you to make a lunch date!

VII. A good part of the impression you will make will be your appearance. Dress conservatively but tastefully. For women, this means a business suit or dress. For men, this will be a suit with dress shirt and tie for most properties. In some cases, a tie will not be necessary. Ask your recruiter if you have any uncertainties about the dress code in this particular firm. No matter how casual a property may say they are, when it comes to first impressions, a business suit (for both men and women) always indicates your level of professionalism and a serious interest on your part. Remember, you can always take a jacket or a tie off if you need to, but if you see that you should have worn one, it will be too late.

Above all, use your own good judgment. There is nothing more uncomfortable for either party than a candidate who shows up in a dark wool suit to interview for a job on a tropical island paradise hotel!

VIII. Salary: We advise that you not bring up the topic of salary and/or benefits, relocation costs during the first interview. The first interview, especially, and all interviews between then and getting an offer are about "what you can do for the company, not what they can do for you!"

If the interviewer asks you how much you'd expect to be paid or ask you to indicate a salary level and then wait for your response, we recommend that you refrain from giving a number and respond along these lines:

"I'm very excited about the possibility of joining your team and if you decide that I'm the best person for the job, I'm sure you'll make me a fair offer."

Or....

“I’m enthusiastic about what I’ve seen so far and am interested in learning more. I’m sure that at that point I will be able to answer the question. Meanwhile, I wonder if you could give me a salary range for the position?”
Or ...

“I am looking for a positive move for my career and feel that a good match for my skills, as well as a place I can grow, is as important to me as the money. Money is important, but a strong, positive match in all areas is what I’m most interested in.”

IX. One of the toughest questions during an interview is: “Now, tell me something about yourself” – or what we call “the two-minute drill.”

This question is the most often asked one and generally is asked for many reasons, one of which is that the interviewer did not come prepared! This question may also be an attempt to find out how you speak, whether you express yourself clearly and are articulate. It’s a way for the interviewer to see how well you’ll fit into the company’s culture. The best thing to do is to stay relaxed and comfortable and, since this question is job-related, talk about yourself in terms of this job. For example, you can throw in the fact that you have a hotel or culinary school degree, have worked “x” number of years in the business, progressing with each position. You can talk about your management style, personality strengths, relevant leisure activities or ongoing educational courses that have increased your work productivity, et cetera. You can prepare for this one at home in front of a mirror! You can practice your delivery and what you’ll say in response to this one! So do it!

If the interviewer doesn’t respond in a way that leads to discussion, you can always ask “Which of these accomplishments would you like me to tell you about first?”

Another approach is to storyboard your career. Start from the end of your resume and tell the story of your successes – not your duties. Be sure to include numbers. Every company likes to hire someone who will improve their numbers. What you don’t want to do, however, is to bring with you a nice, fat portfolio, chock full of pictures and written kudos that say how absolutely wonderful you are!

X. First impressions:

There is never a second chance to make a first impression! In fact, many people have conducted studies and are of the opinion of the fact that this is THE most important part of any interview! The rest is just a confirmation. So some things to bear in mind:

Give a firm handshake, look straight at the person you are speaking with and not at the floor or ceiling. Those simple signs of courtesy and sincerity will go a long way toward paving the way to success.

XI. Mirroring:

It's important to keep in mind people tend to hire those most like themselves, those with whom they feel most comfortable. When interviewing with a person who speaks slowly and deliberately, it is a good idea to slow down your speech pattern rather than keep rattling off at high speed! Or, vice versa. This will help your chances significantly. Also, if you're getting a tour with a person who walks fast, keep up! If the person leans forward, lean forward, yourself, et cetera.

XII. Watch your mouth!

Your interviewer may use inappropriate language -- this is their prerogative but you should NEVER ever use any four-letter or off-color verbiage, no matter what! Do not tell off-color jokes, poke fun at people, et cetera. A good sense of humor and a quick response is great if you can pull it off -- as long as what you're saying is in the best taste.

XIII. What you don't want to do is to go into personal areas such as your marital status, your religion, political preferences, and so forth. Also, don't assume that your interviewer wants to reveal personal information either. If you see personal pictures in their office, refrain from commenting on them. Don't make assumptions about who the people in the pictures might be.

This is also your chance to show that you are a "cut above" other candidates. You can do this by showing that you are passionate about this opportunity (in terms of your career and/or this particular property) and that you believe that you can contribute to the company's future growth and success.

THE "RECRUITER CONNECTION" – MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU!!

Ask your Recruiter! If you have any questions or concerns at all – about anything – give us a call. We know you and we know the client, so we're in a position to give you some good answers to any questions you may have. Your recruiter can be a valuable resource during this process and wants to make this process a successful one as much as you do. It is not "cool" to ask your recruiter how many candidates have been sent to interview, what kind of backgrounds they have, how they compare to you, et cetera. A recruiter's job is to protect the confidentiality of all candidates sent to the client.

Call your Recruiter right after the interview (within one hour if at all possible)! We'll want to hear about your impressions of the property and your interview. We'll want to know how long the interview lasted and what kinds of questions were asked of you. We want to know if you are still interested in the position after the interview. Please be aware of the fact that we are here to help, not to make things more difficult. We can help pave the way and smooth out the bumps in the road! It always helps us if you call us before the client does so we can be prepared for anything that may have come up or occurred during the interview that was of concern to you.