

## Preparing for Your Interview

### Be Prepared to Do Well

Your future career success may depend on how well you handle your upcoming interview. Many highly qualified candidates fail to obtain positions simply because they interview poorly. Your performance in the interview will be affected most by two factors:

- How enthusiastic you seem, and
- How well prepared you are.

Many positive things can unfold during an interview. Keep in mind that while an employer may have a specific personnel requirement to satisfy, an interview can be a forum for discovering even greater opportunities. This may lead to expanding the position— and the compensation— for the right kind of candidate.

If you are poorly prepared, you will inspire little interest on the part of the employer. As a result, you may never see the full extent of the opportunity, much less be offered the position.

No matter how well qualified you are, the success of the interview depends on your ability to demonstrate sincere interest in the employer's needs. You will need to ask and answer questions intelligently, while exhibiting your ability to make a real contribution to the employer and its objectives.

### Things to Consider

Take advantage of a few surprising facts:

- Well-prepared candidates often receive offers that better qualified competitors do not!
- Few candidates bother to research a company prior to the interview.
- Only one of ten candidates sells his or her abilities and accomplishments effectively.
- Successful candidates always ask questions about the position and the employer.
- One way to move toward the top of the list is to ask for the offer. (Companies want people who ask for the job.)
- Recognize that an interview is a classic buyer and seller situation. You must assume the role of seller in order to gain the employer's interest in you as a candidate.

### Make the Interview Work for You

Establish a relationship with the interviewer that permits a relaxed dialog and open exchange of information. Be friendly and show interest in what the interviewer is saying. Look for opportunities to demonstrate your interest in the opportunity, the interviewer and the employer. Withhold questions about those issues (such as compensation) that can better be resolved once an offer is imminent. Maintain your self-esteem but do not dominate the conversation. Strike a comfortable balance between listening and asking or answering questions.

Consider the impression you are trying to create and discuss with your SRA Consultant any questions you may have concerning appropriate attire for the interview.

Anticipate “tough” questions the employer may ask and review them with your SRA Consultant.

Prepare key questions of your own that demonstrate your understanding of the company and its industry. Review these with your SRA Consultant.

Be ready to discuss how you have performed in the past, particularly in solving problems similar to those likely to be encountered in the job.

Do not try to negotiate a compensation and benefits package until you know the employer is prepared to offer you the job, and then let your SRA Consultant take the lead. If asked directly about your compensation requirements, mention your current actual compensation, including any bonuses, salary deferrals, etc. Indicate to the employer that you would expect a fair and reasonable increase commensurate with the new position and its contribution to the company.

Before leaving any interview, express your sincere interest in pursuing this opportunity.

### **Following up After the Interview**

Immediately after the interview several actions are critical:

- Call your SRA Consultant and “debrief” him or her on your meeting.
- Write a thank-you letter to each key person you met. Indicate your appreciation for the opportunity to discuss their organization and its needs. Be sure to re-emphasize any pertinent experiences and accomplishments you discussed that may uniquely qualify you for the opportunity.
- If you initially decide that the opportunity fails to meet your needs, do not burn your bridges. You may be misreading the situation. This warrants further discussion with your SRA Consultant.

Remember that the SRA Consultant has a very close relationship with the employer and can often resolve seemingly insurmountable issues.