

SIX STEPS TO Successful Interviewing



The Goal of Interviews

When most people think about interviews, they picture a one-sided question-and-answer interrogation—a stressful, out-of-control, unpredictable situation. As with all aspects of the job search, you should take a proactive approach to your meeting with the employer. A proactive appointment or meeting is never one-sided. You both interact as equals. Remember that you asked for this meeting, therefore you should be prepared to be an active participant in it.

The initial goal of your meeting with the employer is NOT to get you a job. Instead, at first you want to get to know each other and see if there is potential for an employment relationship. However, if you find that this is a good opportunity for you, then pursue it aggressively. The tools presented in this guide will maximize your chances of getting the job offer.

Key Interviewing Activities

There are several steps that are critical to successful interviewing. The more you can incorporate each of these into your interviews, the more confident and successful you will be with them. The following six interviewing steps are the key to your success:

Build rapport to get them on your side.

Proactive selling by asking questions.

Evaluate the opportunity.

Responsive selling by answering questions.

Deal with their concerns.

Get a commitment.

1. Build Rapport

Rapport is essential to your interviewing success. People generally do not hire simply the most qualified person. If they did, they would make hiring decisions based primarily on resumes. Instead, they hire the person that they believe they would most like to work with long-term.

More than assessing skills, interviews are an opportunity for employers to get to know job candidates' personalities and interaction styles. Ideally, you want to create a relaxed, friendly, cooperative environment.

There are four basic ways to build rapport with the interviewer:

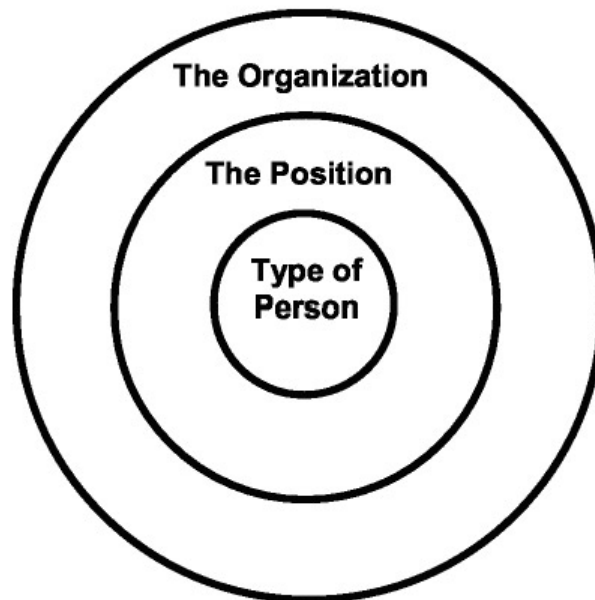
- 1. Researching the organization before the meeting**
- 2. Projecting an attractive appearance and a positive attitude**
- 3. Asking questions that focus on the employer**
- 4. Being a good listener**

2. Proactive Selling

Proactively asking questions gives you the opportunity to analyze the employer's situation and goals so that you can focus your comments on what matters to him/her.

Don't wait until the end of the meeting to ask the interviewer questions. Ask them up front and throughout your time together.

Ask questions to gather information about the following three areas:



On the next page are questions grouped in these three categories. You can use these to help formulate questions you would like to get answered during an interview.

The second page following has core values that you will also want to consider in creating your questions. You need to be sure that you really will "fit" in the organization's values and be comfortable. Otherwise, what might look like a great job could turn into a bad dream that you will soon choose to leave.

Questions to Ask in an Interview

Check those questions below you would prefer to use in your interviews.

The Organization

- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- Describe your company's management style and type of employee who would fit it?
- What is the company's policy on providing seminars, workshops, and training so employees can keep up their skills or acquire new ones?
- What is your organization's policy on transfers to other cities?
- Could you explain your organizational structure?
- What are the problems and opportunities of the organization? (Help employers to recognize problems, if they haven't already.)
- What is important to the employer? You need to know this so that you can focus your comments on the employer's priorities. Don't talk about things they don't care about.

The Position

- How important does upper management consider the function of this department/position?
- Why is this position available?
- How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured? By whom?
- What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- What kind of work can I expect to be doing the first year?
- What particular computer equipment and software do you use?
- What percentage of routine, detailed work will I encounter?
- How much opportunity is there to see the end result of my efforts?
- Who will review my performance? How often?
- How much guidance / assistance is available to individuals in developing career goals?
- How much opportunity will I have for decision-making in my first assignment?
- What are the most important duties of the position?
- What goals will the employer set for this position over the next 12 months?

The Type of Person

- Can you describe the ideal employee?
- What are some of the skills necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- What are the characteristics of the ideal candidate?
- What is your image of a good employee?

3. Evaluate the Opportunity

As you gather information, you should evaluate the attractiveness of the opportunity. Specifically, you should analyze yourself to determine the following:

1. Your ability to do the job. Are you able to solve the problems and capitalize on the opportunities of the employer?
2. Your enthusiasm for this opportunity. Are these the kinds of challenges you are looking to solve? Is this position in line with your career goals?

Ability + Enthusiasm = Good Fit

If you are lacking in either confidence to do the job or enthusiasm, go back and ask more questions. If you are still lacking, seriously consider bowing out and not proceeding with the meeting. This will earn you respect and prevent you from embarrassing yourself by trying to sell yourself for a job for which you are not qualified.

Your Ideal Environment

Think about what your ideal work environment looks like . . . be sure this position and company fits what you are really looking for. If you feel that this is a good opportunity for you, however, be **sure** to clearly convey your confidence and enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm does not mean desperation!

4. Responsive Selling by Answering Questions

Don't expect employers to automatically recognize that you are a good fit for their organization. You need to actively sell your abilities and attitude during the meeting. You should be as prepared as possible for any situation you may encounter.

Let's focus on strategies for dealing with common tough interview questions and creating powerful answers to these questions that allow you to sell yourself.

There are five sections (Ask your Notus Career Management Coach about getting access to these.)

- Salary questions.
- Questions about motives or aspirations.
- Questions that should be answered with a STAR.
- Negative questions.
- Risk-reducer questions - alleviate the employer's concerns about hiring you.

In each section, you will have the opportunity to consider the question, understand better what the employer is really looking for, consider some suggestions for addressing the question, and read a sample answer.

You will then pick one of the questions and create your own answer for what you consider the toughest question in the section.

One question that you often encounter but does not fit in one of the categories is not a question at all, but the statement, "Tell me about yourself." We will use this to show how the sections are structured on the following pages.

5. Dealing with Concerns

As potential employers get to know you and your possible contributions, it is common for them to have some concerns about you. They may be worried about how well you'll fit with their organization. They may be worried about your work values, enthusiasm, skills and abilities, or your background.

Whether any of these concerns are valid or not, it is your responsibility to address them. Not dealt with, they may raise enough doubts for the employer to not make a job offer. Address these concerns by asking for feedback.

Get Feedback

Often during interviews, you will be asked questions that have a right and a wrong answer. For instance, suppose you are interviewing for a management position. A normal question would be, "Have you ever supervised someone before?" The right answer, of course, is, "Yes!"

However, what if you haven't been a manager before? In that circumstance, you should ask for feedback. For instance, "No, I haven't. Does that concern you?"

You need to ask for feedback, so you can deal with any concerns that might arise from these types of right/wrong questions. You will learn more information on how to deal with these concerns using the ARTS technique.

After you've discussed a number of issues together, ask the employer a question such as the following:

- *Have I answered all your questions? Is there anything else you need to know about me?*
- *Did I answer all the questions you have about my education?*
- *Do you know everything you need to know in order to make a decision?*
- *What questions do you have about my ability to do this job?*

ARTS - Dealing with Liabilities

Once you have listed all of your potential liabilities, you need to prepare a response for each of them. To do this, you can use a method called the “**ARTS**” technique. **ARTS** is an acronym that stands for **A**cknowledge-**R**edirect-**T**est-**S**upport.

ARTS will help you to avoid becoming defensive, build a more positive personal chemistry with the employer, and deal effectively with the most difficult liabilities.

This technique has four simple steps. Step 1 is based on the recognition that whenever anyone raises a concern, the personal interaction tends to get somewhat emotional. The first thing you want to do, therefore, is to relieve the tension in order to maintain good feeling and rapport.

Step 1: Acknowledge the Employer’s Concern

Start by acknowledging the employer’s concern. This keeps you from sounding defensive. Be sure not to agree or disagree, but to acknowledge. An example of how this might be done:

“I can understand your concern. If I were in your position, I might be concerned about that as well.”

Step 2: Redirect from Qualifications to Underlying Attributes

Step 2 is based on the recognition that if you have a liability there is little change it. You can’t change your past experience or education.

However, beneath each concern about your qualifications is an underlying one of two attributes:

1. Your Abilities.
2. Your Attitude.

For example, if the employer raised the concern that “your experience is in a different industry,” the underlying concern is that you might take a long time to learn the business.

Therefore, you should redirect the conversation toward the underlying attribute—the “real concern”—and away from the surface qualification. Redirecting should go something like this:

“When you say you’re worried about [my qualification], what is the underlying concern?”

Please note that redirecting ends with a question, asking if your interpretation is correct. That gives the employer the opportunity to reaffirm that you are correct, which helps build a dialogue in the conversation and prevents you from doing all the talking. Also, in case you have misinterpreted, it gives the employer the opportunity to tell you so.

Step 3: Test with an “If-Then” Question

Step 3 is a simple question. You ask the employer IF you could show that you possess the underlying attributes, THEN would he/she be interested in an example. Your test question should go something like this:

“If I could show you that I have this [ability/attitude], would that alleviate your concern about [my qualifications]?”

Step 4: Support with a STAR

When you get a positive response, you can then proceed to Step 4. Here you should use a STAR that helps to support and illustrate your answer. Then you should end with a feedback question that asks whether the employer feels better about the concern.

6. Get a Commitment

If you want to get a job offer from employers, then you must ask for a commitment from them. The commitment you want is to get to the next step in the employer’s hiring process.

Different employers have different hiring procedures, so you must first get as much information as possible about their process. Specifically, you need to know what, when, and with whom is the next step. To gather this information, ask questions such as the following:

- *Will you be interviewing other candidates?*
- *Will you be having second interviews?*
- *Will you be conducting them or will someone else?*
- *When will that happen?*
- *What is your time frame for making a decision?*
- *Will you be making that decision or is there anyone else I need to meet with?*
- *If I haven’t heard back by [date] then I’ll give you a call just to see where we’re at, okay?*

Once you understand the next step, you must ask to get to that step. It is absolutely critical to ask for a commitment. Keep in mind the following principle:

IF YOU DON’T ASK FOR IT, YOU WON’T GET IT!

Be clear and straightforward when asking for the commitment:

- *Will you have me back for a second interview?*
- *Will you recommend me for an interview with that person?*
- *Is there anything keeping you from offering me this position?*
- *I think you should make me an offer. How do you feel about that?*