

The McGraw-Hill Companies

How to Succeed at Interviews

Second Edition

About the Author

Sudhir Andrews graduated with honours in English Literature from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University. Thereafter, he completed his post-graduation in management from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He was one of the first MBAs to join the hotel industry in 1971. He earned two Hotel Management Diplomas with distinction—one from the International Hotel Association, Paris, France and the other from the American Hotel and Lodging Association, US. He did a fellowship with CERT, an apex body of Irish hospitality education.

His experience of over 30 years includes his work with the following organisations and institutes of international repute:

- The Oberoi—where he created the Oberoi Hotel School and was the General Manager of two Oberoi properties.
- ITC Welcomgroup—where he rose to be Member Personnel on the Divisional Board. He created the Welcomgroup hotel training centre in New Delhi and commissioned the Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration at Manipal, Karnataka.
- Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology—where he was the Principal of the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pusa, New Delhi under the Ministry of Tourism. At this time, he was also on the Board of many IHMs and the National Council of Hotel Management and Catering Technology. During this period, he was involved in several ILO and UNDP programs in India and abroad as faculty. He was also the member of the National Classification Committee and gave star ratings to many properties.

In 1994, he moved to Dubai as Director—Human Resources for the Metropolitan Chain. Here he set up the Metropolitan Institute of Hotel Management in collaboration with HIM, Montreaux, Switzerland. He also became Group Vice President—HR with a sister concern of the Metropolitan Group which have businesses in automobiles, airlines, hotels, travel agencies, etc.

He immigrated to Canada in 2000 where he worked with a Property Management Company. He returned to Dubai again in 2002. In his second sojourn in Dubai, he joined the “Executive Office”—a consulting wing to the ruling Sheikh of Dubai. He also acted as an advisor to the Merit Hotel School which opened two hotel school campuses in Dubai and Sharjah. He was also engaged as a consultant with “The Peoples Partnership”—a British HR consultancy firm where he did some noteworthy consultancy projects for several banks, oil companies, and Dot.com companies.

At this juncture of his life, he also worked as a career counsellor and had his own program on FM Radio 89.1 in Dubai. He brought out his own column on Career Counselling with *Khaleej Times*, a Dubai newspaper, for a year as well as taught at Eikon Academy which brought in the Herriot-Watt University.

Sudhir Andrews is now Dean of École Hôtelière Lavasa in collaboration with École Hôtelière Lausanne, Switzerland. He is also the author of 10 hospitality books published by McGraw-Hill India.

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Dean—École Hôtelière Lavasa



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*Dedicated to my father
Air Cde. (Retd.) J. Andrews
Who guided me through my career*

Letter from the Author

Dear Job Hunter,

Oh dear! There you are with sweaty palms and a sinking feeling in your belly. You have just been grilled by the interviewer. He threw questions at you left and right and you spluttered an answer knowing that you could have done better. The reactions on the interviewer's face showed he was unimpressed. How unfortunate! Specially when you know you are right for the job.



He offered you a limp hand in disinterest when he said goodbye at the office door. You drive back home pounding the car steering wheel, wondering, "Why did I say that?" However, the damage has been done. You would never hear back.

You find later that the job did go to someone else, even though you had a better résumé. But unknown to you, that person had polished his job interview skills. If only you knew the right words to say to the interviewer's questions, the job would have been yours.



But don't despair dear reader. What if I told you that you can ace your next interview by mastering job interview skills given in this book, and this will make you look forward to interviews rather than being tense and insecure about them.

I promise to potentially double or triple your odds of getting the job.

This book provides you with answers to questions typically asked by the candidates:

- How do I overcome interview jitters?
- How can I make a positive impression?
- How do I prepare for an interview?
- How do I prepare a hotshot résumé?
- What should I wear for the interview?
- How do I deal with different types of interviews?
- What kind of questions can I expect?
- Why does the interviewer ask certain question?
- What kind of answers can I give?
- How can I counter the interviewer's style of questioning?
- What kind of questions can I ask the interviewer?
- How can I make telephone interviews a success?
- What if I am an average candidate?
- How can I negotiate a better salary?
- What happens after the interview?





This book has it all! I am empowering you with 101 most popularly asked questions and how to answer them. This book will help you to dramatically increase your odds of winning at a job interview. The book unlocks the secrets of success.

But first let me explain why did I write this book for you. For two reasons:

1. In my 30 years of interviewing I was appalled at the lack of preparation by candidates and even though I favoured them for selection, they ruined their chances. I want to give you an insight from the other side of the table.
2. I wrote the first edition of this book in 1988 as a guide to candidates when they prepared for interviews. I have been deeply encouraged by the readers over the years. I have upgraded the book to introduce the changes in modern times and also brought in international perspectives. You are now a global citizen and the world is your job market.



As a starter let us refresh ourselves with some basics:

WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

An interview is an opportunity to present yourself for selection. Interviews have become an essential and critical part of your life. This is especially true in our competitive world where selectors have numerous candidates to choose from and the interview becomes the means of differentiating you from another. But *here is a secret!* The market may be full of candidates but few succeed at interviews because they just do not prepare for them. I am sure that you, the reader, would like to be one of the successful ones.



WHY ARE WE NERVOUS ABOUT INTERVIEWS?

Our first interview was at the impressionable age of four or five when we went for admission to a nursery school. Most of us remember it as a frightening experience because of the new environment, new faces, and above all, the separation from the warmth and comfort of our parent's presence. Our parents may have thought us naïve, but in fact we sensed their anxiety along with the cries of other children and the hustle and bustle which was so new to us. The confused situation may have laid the seeds of fear of interviews. Consequently, interviews have become a much dreaded thing.



Letter from the Author

We continued interviews throughout our school life especially the dreaded parent-teacher meeting where our progress report was discussed. We faced interviews when changing schools. But here is some news. The succession of interviews will never end. It continues with the effort of getting admission into a college; with the banker to get a loan; with the government for permissions and licenses; with the tax authorities regarding tax deductions; with organisations to get jobs; etc. **The most important interview is the one for a job—which is what this book is all about.**



What makes interviews awesome is the fear of failure. Obviously interviews are held for something that will significantly influence our lives. Failure in an interview is humiliating, shameful, and a blow to our self-esteem. Success in an interview brings pride to us and our family, community, neighbourhood, and alma mater.

We would naturally like to succeed. While there are coaching schools for written tests such as GMAT, TOFEL, JEEs, etc., there are few institutes that prepare you for an interview. Wouldn't you like to know the secrets to succeed at interviews? This book aspires to unravel such secrets to you.

I wish readers happy reading and success in their future interviews.

SUDHIR ANDREWS



Contents

<i>Letter from the Author</i>	<i>vii</i>
1. Concept of Mutuality	1
Definition and Objectives	1
Purpose of an Interview	1
2. Job Search	5
Introduction	5
The Internet	5
Specialty Job Sites	6
Company Web Sites	6
The Newspaper	8
Trade Magazines	9
Recruitment Agencies	9
Employment Exchanges	10
College Notice Boards	10
Crisis! Careers after 40	10
Ways to Tell that You Need to Look for Another Job	11
Action Plan	13
3. The Hotshot Résumé	17
Introduction	17
What is a Résumé?	17
Types of Résumés	18
Preparing a Résumé	19
What Does a Personalised Résumé Do For You?	20
Destination Dustbin—Bad Résumés	20
Basic Guidelines for a Good Résumé	21
Résumé Format—General Guidelines	23
Final Check	35
Cover Letters	36
4. Preparing for an Interview	45
Introduction—Preparation Tips	45
Learn about the Organisation	45
Refresh on Your Chosen Subject	47
Refresh on Your Experience	47

Identify What You have to Offer	48	
Consider Your Potential as an Employee	48	
Practise the Frequently Asked Questions	48	
KNOW Name of the Interviewer/s	48	
Keep your Documents Ready	48	
Practice Makes Perfect	49	
Make a Trip to the Site of the Interview in Advance	49	
Review your Résumé	50	
Pre-Interview Checklist	50	
The Night before the Interview	51	
5. The Interview		52
Interview Ethics	52	
The Interview Day	52	
Before the Interview	53	
Your Dress	53	
Being on Time	60	
It's All About You	60	
Self Motivation	60	
Waiting for Your Turn	62	
The Interview	63	
Why do Candidates Get Rejected?	71	
6. Techniques that Interviewers Employ		74
Introduction	74	
While Waiting	74	
Entry	75	
Seating	76	
Putting at Ease	76	
Question Techniques	77	
Listening	78	
Interview Fatigue	79	
Evaluating Personal Qualities	80	
Presentations	82	
Closing an Interview	83	
7. Types of Interviews and Selection Methods		84
Interviews	84	
Some FAQs about Group Discussions	91	
Case Studies	98	
Behavioural Interviews	101	

Telephone Interview	102	
Luncheon Interviews	104	
Aptitude Tests	106	
Personality Tests	106	
8. Profiles of Interviewers		107
Introduction	107	
Different Types of Interviewers	108	
9. 101 Frequently Asked Interview Questions and Answers		111
Introduction	111	
Interview	111	
HR Interview Questions	113	
Functional Interview Questions	134	
Final Interview Questions	157	
The Compensation Interview Questions	163	
10. Post Interview Processes		168
Introduction	168	
Thank You Letter	168	
Review of Interview	170	
What to Ask After the Offer	170	
Questions to Ask the HR	171	
Background Checks	172	
Employee Screening	173	
The Offer Letter	173	
Some Post Interview FAQs Asked by the Candidates	174	
The Day of Joining	175	
Tips While in Employment	177	

Chapter

1

Concept of Mutuality

DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES

The Oxford Dictionary defines an interview as a face-to-face meeting, especially for the purpose of obtaining a statement or for assessing the qualities of a candidate. The term 'interview' is derived from the French word *entrevoir*, which means 'glimpse'. An interview, therefore, indicates a physical meeting of people with **two possible** objectives:

1. To obtain a statement or opinion—This is usually the case when film stars are interviewed and are being asked about their views on a role, or when a prime minister is interviewed and is asked to give his statement on a political issue.
2. To assess a person for selection—This is usually the case when interviews are conducted for recruitment, admission to an educational institution, or acquisition of a bank loan.

This book focusses on the **second objective** with special reference to interviews for jobs. The main principle governing an interview, that is to get an understanding of the person being interviewed, however, remains the same for both the above-mentioned objectives.

PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

It seems clear from the definition and objectives given above that the purpose of an interview is to create an opportunity for people to meet and converse with each other on a matter of mutual benefit. The participants consist of an interviewer (or interviewers) who poses questions concerning the objective of the interview, to an interviewee who answers them. However, there is an important

aspect of this interaction which people often tend to forget. *The interviewee can also ask questions.* Herein lies the concept of mutuality where both partners benefit.

Most candidates believe that in an interview they are the victims of a barrage of questions when in fact they have the equal right to ask questions too. A successful interview

is never a one-sided conversation. The belief that an interview is a one-way street causes fear of interview in the candidate's mind because he/she feels judged. In fact, an interview is an opportunity where he/she too can evaluate the suitability of a job or organisation for himself/herself.

The interview is an occasion for discussion where both the sides decide the future course of action. In job interviews, the organisation, the interviewer, and the interviewee are stakeholders (those who benefit from this process). Let us examine in detail how they gain from an interview.



HOW THE ORGANISATION BENEFITS

The success of any organisation depends upon its people. An organisation may have expensive assets, extensive facilities, and efficient systems and processes. However, their successful use can only be brought about if they are in the hands of the right people—people who possess the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for a particular job to meet the organisation's objectives. Therefore, one of the main concerns of an organisation is to find and recruit the *right person for the right job*. An interview helps the organisation to select the *right person* for a given vacancy. Interviewers who are assigned the task of recruitment find making the right selection a challenging task.

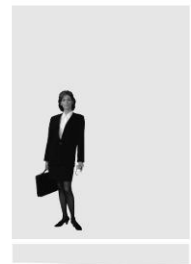
An organisation incurs huge monetary expense in various recruitment and selection processes. First, there are the prohibitive *costs* of job advertisements or the fees of the recruitment agencies; second, there is the cost of the valuable and productive time of the interviewers; third, there is the cost of travel of interviewers to conduct outstation interviews; fourth, there is the cost of hiring a place for the interview; and finally, there is the cost of reimbursing the travel costs of candidates. Organisations are under pressure to make these investments productive by selecting the right people who can ultimately bring returns to the organisation with their own contributions towards achieving the organisation's goals.

Sometimes, a job vacancy takes several months to fill. This *lead-time* is a loss to the organisation as the position becomes unproductive without the person. At the interview, the organisation must make sure that the wait was well worth it.

HOW THE INTERVIEWER BENEFITS

The interviewer is very often the Human Resources Manager or Functional Head and in the case of senior positions, the Board. An interview pulls these high-ranking professionals away from their core job chores. As a result, they are very critical about the *time* they spend on the interview. They want this time to be productive as it's the time they could have spent on fulfilling pressing tasks. I have often found it difficult to pull together an interview panel in my career. The members show reluctance to be on the interview panel considering the loss of their valuable man-hours that an interview would take.

The interviewer's skill in interviewing is put to *test* at an interview. Interviewing skills are fundamental to most job positions that hold responsibility and accountability. Interviewers, therefore, hold important positions in an organisation. To fail in making the right selections would mean failing to measure up to their job responsibility. This puts a pressure on them as they have to be mentally alert, be good listeners, and be able to ask the right questions. They should also possess the right motivational skills to be able to convince a good candidate to join as candidates have other options as well. So here lies the surprise for the candidates. *Interviewers are just as nervous as the interviewee at the time of an interview.*



HOW THE CANDIDATE BENEFITS

An interviewee's greatest stake in a job interview is to be *selected* in the hope of augmenting life's experiences, achieving status, and improving the quality of life. People give job interviews in order to achieve something better than what they presently have.

Candidate's ego is also at stake in an interview. Success in an interview adds to the self-esteem of the candidate and brings the consequent sense of well being to him. There are often several candidates for the same post which leads to competition. Success in such a scenario brings self confidence in the candidate and strengthens his belief of being better than others. Success also brings pride to the family, neighbourhood, and alma mater. I have heard students of schools and colleges proudly boasting about the success of their seniors in achieving important positions.

So, we see how all the members involved in an interview have important stakes. Hence, it flows logically that best benefits can be reaped from the interviews by all the members if they take the stance of mutuality. Everyone has his/her own needs at an interview and the best approach can only be one of partnership where the rights of each member are honoured and there is a free exchange of information. Just as the interviewer has the right to seek information from you, you have the right to get information from them about the organisation to help you determine whether to join the organisation or not. For example, a BPO may have a vacancy for night shifts only, which many people may not find suitable.

Many people forfeit their rights at an interview on the belief that jobs are few and hard to come by. *The spirit of the interview is really the state of your mind.* If your attitude is to exercise your rights then the tone of the interview is one of mutuality—less awesome and more amicable. I have seen several candidates withdrawing their candidature because the terms and conditions of employment did not suit them. I have also seen candidates not accepting the job because the job content was not according to their skills and competencies. Some candidates also decline job offers because they do not get satisfied by the pay offered to them by the company.



Many candidates regret their decision of joining an organisation within the first month because they did not exercise their right to get more information about the organisation, working conditions, and the job at the interview. One person joined the back-processing unit of a bank in haste only to find that she has to work twelve hours a day (and sometimes on weekends too) without any overtime remunerations or considerations for meals and transport to home after late hours. She left the job in one month!

I am sure you would like to know the questions that you should ask at an interview. You can find these questions in Chapter 9, “101 Frequently Asked Questions.” There is no limit to the questions that can be asked about the organisation. You should have done a lot of fact finding about the job and the organisation before your interview. This can limit the questions at the time of interview but again they can be reconfirmed at the interview. You have a right to know these things. Any organisation that does not give time and opportunity to answer your questions is not worth joining in the first place. The manner of asking questions is also important. Don’t speak with arrogance or with challenge. Enquiries may be made politely and with dignity.

Remember: *Good interviewers like candidates to ask questions. They believe that candidates show real interest in the organisation and the job in doing so.*

Chapter

2

Job Search

INTRODUCTION

I am sure you would like to know where to look when seeking a job. There are several sources from where you can find job vacancies:

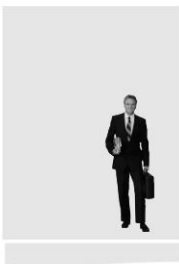
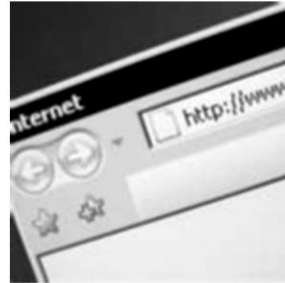
- The Internet
- Specialty job sites
- Company websites
- The newspaper
- Trade magazines
- Recruitment agencies
- Employment exchange
- Your college job notice board/placement cell

THE INTERNET

Today the Internet is loaded with lots of job sites. There are more than 4,000 job sites available online. You can log on to any job site like www.monster.com, www.jobs.com, www.careerbuilder.com, etc. and check out the 'Help Wanted' bulletin boards for jobs around the world. If you are looking for a job in India then Naukri.com and TimesJobs.com are useful sites. Most likely, these sites will offer you lots of vacancies in your job category. You can submit your résumé on these sites to apply for suitable jobs. So will four million other candidates! Can you imagine the number of résumés a good posting will generate? If you are lucky you will receive a call immediately, otherwise you will have to wait. The competition for really good jobs is fierce. If you're a generalist within your profession, these gigantic sites shouldn't be your first stop in your online search. Conversely, if you're a nanotechnology

engineer with PhD in calculus, which is a specialised field, then you are a specialist and the competition won't be so fierce, since most of us don't even know what a nanotechnology engineer does.

In either case, it certainly doesn't hurt to sign up with these sites and post your résumé. You may get a call simply because the timing is right or your stars are in your favour.



SPECIALTY JOB SITES

These sites focus on a particular industry, skill set, or other limited criteria. For example, there are several web sites that connect chartered accountants, engineers, hoteliers, etc. Some of these sites are sponsored by professional associations like the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Federation of the Hotel and Restaurant Associations, Indian Society for Training and Development, etc. Such sites are specific to your qualifications and are likely to be more successful than general job sites.

Most states post their vacancies on these sites. Some post them as part of the main site for the state, while others have separate web sites for employment listings. These sites are useful for finding local and regional openings, especially for those job seekers who don't want to uproot their families and move across country. Many vacancies on state job sites are for positions in state government. If you have experience in this area, check out postings on your state's site, or the sites of states to which you'd be willing to move.

Also, posting your résumé on these government-sponsored sites is always a good idea. The employer may be looking for someone just like you.

COMPANY WEB SITES

If you are very clear about the specific company you wish to join then applying through the company website is the most effective option.

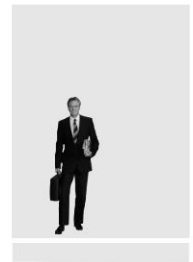
Many companies post job listings on their own sites. They have a link labelled as 'Job Opportunities' or 'Employment' or 'Careers' on their home page. These are definitely worth adding to your favourites menu of your internet explorer while doing a job search on the internet. New postings come up daily and you can target the job you specifically want.

Many companies even e-mail you, when they have openings in your area of expertise. This can be a real time-saver. Most of these sites also take a digital (online) résumé and store it in their database. You never know, you might receive a call from your desired company, months after posting your résumé on the company site.

FEW WORDS OF CAUTION

Looking for a job can be stressful. Unfortunately, a lot of unscrupulous people know this and online job scams have been reported. So, here are a few tips to protect yourself, your wallet, and your personal information:

1. Never pay listing fee online. You become a 'commodity' for these sites. Employers should pay all the fees and be glad that they found you.
2. Never disclose your personal information on an unsecured site. There are all kinds of hackers, crackers, script kiddies, and other cyber-creeps who would love to know all about you. Post your résumé on secure sites but never disclose critical information like your Driving License number, Credit Card number, or mailing address. Provide your e-mail address only when you post your résumé on an open job site.
3. Remove your posted, online résumés from job sites, once you've found a job. Again, you already have enough personal information floating through the Ethernet without adding to it.
4. Ensure information is encrypted, when purchasing from a résumé-writing or résumé-submission service. Encryption, in short, ensures that the private information you submit online is kept safe. At your browser, you can recognise an encrypted form, when the root URL starts with "https:" instead of "http:" or seeing the padlock present at the bottom right corner of your screen. Purchase services from companies having added security measures to ensure that your private information is secure from the hands of ill-willed people.
5. Read and understand the privacy policy of sites you patronise. Professional organisations possess a strict policy for members who do business online. A privacy statement must be displayed on the company's website with no exceptions. Professional organisations value the trust of online buyers. A privacy statement outlines what type of customer information is collected and how it is used. Alliances and partnerships, for example, arrange for Company A to sell or pass on client information to Company B. The information transferred or sold could be basic—like name and email address—or far more in-depth like name, address, social security number, and phone number. No matter how basic or detailed the information is, the company must have the logistics spelled out in their privacy policy.
6. Be wary of submission invitations. Scammers and spammers follow the same patterns. Mass emails are sent to an enormous list of recipients. Not everyone on the "hit list" is searching for a new job. However, only a small number of people need to be convinced, or tricked into believing, that the email is authentic for the scam to be deemed successful. When you receive an email from a recruiter who states, "We saw your résumé



on the Internet, and we find your skill set to be perfect for one of our clients. Please complete our online application through the below link”, ask yourself a series of questions—

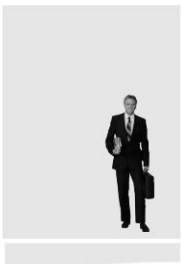
- Did you send your résumé to this recruiter? Visit the company’s website (type the web address into your browser, avoid clicking the link in the email);
- Examine a little more to find out if they are reputable.
- How did they hear about you? Call the company if necessary.
- Always proceed with caution when you receive a cold-contact email from someone. They could be shams to avoid.

7. Phishing is an attempt to extract personal information through what appears to be authentic emails. If you are searching for a job, an email from a seemingly interested recruiter may seem normal and you might consider it legitimate. However, looks can be deceiving. Know the counter checks you may need to protect yourself from fraud.

8. Avoid responding to requests for personal information, such as a social security or credit card number. Let’s say you receive an email from what appears to be a well-known recruitment firm. The email states that the company needs your account number to update your records. You click on the link and you’re taken to a page that looks, feels, and smells right. You proceed by submitting the requested information. The link appeared safe, but you were taken to a site designed to defraud you. Reputable companies will rarely ask for personal information via email, so examine every incoming email for validity. Avoid giving your information freely. Whether you are at the end of a Phishing attack or the job application requires more information than you are willing to provide, proceed with caution. Just as you analyse job opportunities, intensely examine each person who receives your personal information. With safe online practices, you’ll get the best return from your job-search efforts.

Using online job sites offers the opportunity for you to discover the perfect job that you would never have found using conventional means. These sites are so convenient that the employers love them for all sorts of reasons and they work for you when you use them to your best advantage.

They are worth your time and effort. Just think of them as one more dimension of your larger job search—another open door to your next position.



THE NEWSPAPER

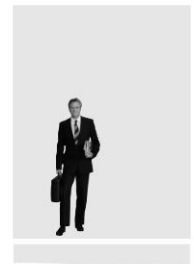
Open a national daily and you find columns flooded with job postings. Skilled jobs are posted daily in the newspaper while specialist jobs and senior positions

come in a supplement once a week. For example, *Times Ascent* of *The Times of India*. Many companies advertise for 'walk-in interviews' where they provide time and location of interviews. Such job listings are safe and reliable and address the needs of a specific organisation only. You can also send your résumé by post or by e-mail as directed. Make sure that you have the right information about the address and the person to whom you should send your résumé. Also look for the last date for sending in your résumé.



TRADE MAGAZINES

Trade magazines target a specific industry. Some of them are sponsored by the industry association. For example, *The Caterer* and *The Hotelier* are specific to the hotel industry. Trade magazines advertise job vacancies specific to the industry. If you are qualified, experienced, and trained for a specific industry, such magazines will save your time as they focus on a particular industry.



RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

Recruitment agencies are the most popular source of finding about job vacancies these days. Many organisations approach recruitment agencies as a measure of protecting their identity till the end. Organisations want to protect their identity for several reasons—they do not want their competitor to know that they are recruiting; they want to protect themselves from recommendations of stakeholders whom they cannot refuse; they do not want their employees to know that certain positions are being filled; and they want to keep certain projects and positions secret. The recruitment agent then becomes the wonderful intermediary who can do the preliminary screening. He/She can provide several candidates to the organisation to choose from.

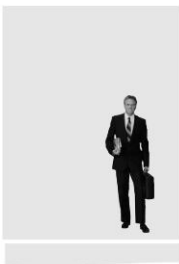
Most recruitment agents charge their fees from the organisation and not the candidate. They may charge you a nominal registration fee only. But some recruitment agents may charge the candidate as well. An advantage of going to a recruitment agent is that he/she knows of jobs vacancies that are not advertised. He/She will ask for your résumé. Treat such agents as though they are the end organisation. They must be impressed with your credentials first before they pass your résumé to the organisation. The reputation of these recruitment agents is based on the quality of candidates they provide to the organisation.



Another benefit of a recruitment agent is that he/she prepares you for the interview. They give you tips on how to succeed with a particular organisation. They also have vast information about the organisation and can give you the required information for preparation of the interview.

EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGES

Employment exchanges are usually sponsored by the state or federal government. They do have large job vacancies in the state or federal government level. Most of them, however, list positions at skilled levels for the public sector. Those with craft level qualifications can benefit most from these employment exchanges.



COLLEGE NOTICE BOARDS

Most universities and colleges list jobs on their 'Job Notice Boards.' These are ideal for undergrads and graduating students who are looking for part-time or full-time jobs at the entry level into an organisation. Many universities and specialised colleges have their own placement cells. It is best to register with them as they have contacts with industry and they promote their university/college students for entry level positions. The placement cell will also give you interview tips. Some placement cells like the IIMs, IITs and Hotel Management Schools etc., invite the industry to their campus to conduct the interviews.

CRISIS! CAREERS AFTER 40

In today's environment, organisations prefer young people and they are quick to replace employees once they touch 35–40 years. They adopt this preference for several reasons:

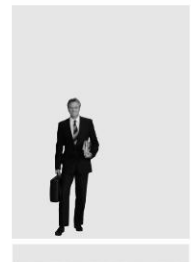
1. Organisations (especially service-oriented ones in the new service age) maintain long hours of work. Young employees have energy to cope with these long hours.
2. Knowledge and skills get obsolete very quickly these days (e.g. the camera and cell phone industries bring new developments in every six months), and young employees bring in new ideas.
3. Young people are more ambitious and are willing to take risks to outperform others. Mature people are less flexible, as they have family responsibilities.
4. Young people are more creative and less burdened with past practices.

So when you hit 35, start thinking seriously of updating yourself, before the crisis of age hits you.

Think like professional sportspersons. They are considered 'old' once they reach 35 years. Many re-engineer themselves to become sports commentators, coaches, sports critics, etc. You must follow their principle. Before the lay-off strikes you, prepare yourself in advance.

Industry is also readjusting itself rapidly to survive. Loathsome words for job-seekers include downsizing, acquisitions, mergers, closures, cutbacks, and layoffs. We hear of layoffs by even the most reputed companies because the dynamics of business have changed. Companies want to get leaner and meaner to survive in a fiercely competitive market. No one wants to lose their job, especially with rising cost-of-living prices. Just the mention of proposed company changes has made employees feel insecure. People rely on their incomes; therefore, identifying any hint of a layoff is critical to job-seeker's survival. Facing unemployment can be daunting, but the true test is how you prepare for it with the time you're given.

Unlike days passed, companies rarely announce an upcoming layoff, unless the story is leaked and somehow makes the six o'clock news. There are several reasons for this. Market dynamics are sudden and companies have to re-align to those sudden changes which can even include layoffs; employees 'switch off' when they hear of an impending change and may even sabotage such efforts; companies do not want their stocks to plummet in the share market with rumours of impending disaster, etc.



WAYS TO TELL THAT YOU NEED TO LOOK FOR ANOTHER JOB

It hurts getting axed, sacked, canned, or fired. It does nothing for your self-esteem and it doesn't look great on your résumé. It is always better to leave your position on your own terms. But how can you tell, when your job may be threatened. Here are some clues:

COMPANY RESTRUCTURING

A management or executive-level restructuring, elimination of a second or third shift, and changes in inventory or production levels, are the signs that something is changing in the company structure. Ask co-workers, particularly those involved with inventory and clients, how things are going in the company. Account managers, for example, will be the first to know when a large client won't be renewing a major contract or if sales have dropped significantly. An inventory and procurement professional will be the one to ask whether supplies have stopped being delivered due to late or non-payment issues.

NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

Check the pulse of the local media. Newspapers and business publications can offer a window into the financial health of your employer. Stories and articles covering missed contracts or severed business relationships should capture your interest.

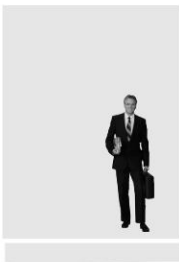
Keep in mind, negative indications doesn't mean you should react hastily. Companies always undergo changes—it is important in today's market. Cutting the fat and shifting to lean operations is a necessity to staying profitable and continuing to grow in competitive markets. As companies are being transformed, retraining or cutting back on staff is sometimes unavoidable.

YOUR BOSS IS FINDING TOO MANY FAULTS

If you're being pulled up frequently by your boss, it means that he/she is making a case for your dismissal. He has made up his mind and instead of honestly telling you about a layoff, he starts finding faults in your work. It is a clue that its time to start looking for another job.

WHEN THE BOSS IS IGNORING YOU

This is a dangerous signal. It means that the boss has already made up his or her mind. If no new assignments, instructions, or projects are coming your way, this is an indication that projects are going to someone else or kept pending for a new incumbent. You may even find that you are excluded from meetings and important communication is not coming your way.



YOUR CO-WORKERS START AVOIDING YOU

Office gossip spreads like wildfire and, all-too-often, everybody knows before you do. Sure, it's unprofessional, but it happens all the time. You will notice surreptitious glimpses or conversations will suddenly stop when you approach people in your office. So, if your workplace friends start to shun you, ask people whether they've heard anything about you. A good friend will surely tell you. A lousy friend will run screaming from the room. Either way, it's time to move on.

THE HR DIRECTOR HAS YOUR FILE ON HIS TABLE

You may wonder why, all of a sudden, the people in HR have pulled out your file. Be suspicious.

YOU READ A JOB AD FOR YOUR POSITION

This happens very often. Employers like continuity in a job position and seek replacements before they break the news to you. If you happen to come across your job description in the classifieds, in an ad placed by your company, start considering change of job. You're probably in the market for a new job—which was why you were reading the "help wanted" section in the first place.

YOU'VE BEEN FALLING ABSENT OFTEN DUE TO DOMESTIC OBLIGATIONS

Your employer does not like this. In the fast-paced workplace, supervisors want warm bodies to complete the daily tasks. Your absence can be very annoying to them. Employers expect you to be at work and when you aren't, productivity falls and someone has to cover for you. Good employees go to work and do their jobs. Those who take excessive leaves are guaranteed to be on the block.

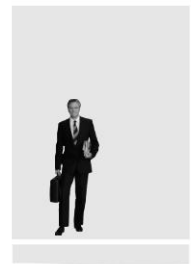
A BUNCH OF NEW TRAINEES ARE TAKEN FROM THE LOCAL COLLEGES

This could mean that the company has plans to enthrone new blood into the organisation. They are cheaper than you and are poised to replace you and all others like you.

ACTION PLAN

Getting sacked rarely comes as a complete surprise. There are usually signs that things aren't right at work—signs that you may choose to ignore, but shouldn't. Keep your eyes and ears open for signs of trouble—a change in company ownership, a new supervisor, a new set of company procedures, drop in sales, etc. Dramatic changes can often lead to layoffs, belt-tightening and lots of 'Good Luck' parties.

Let's say the above signs are present in your situation. Immediately shift into survival mode, especially if the layoff is rumoured to happen within hours or days. Here are a few tips to re-engineer yourself.



BUILD ON WHAT YOU KNOW

You have experience and that's valuable. To walk away from 15 years in marketing to become a goat herder is *not* a good career move. Build on what you know.

Examples

1. An auto engineer picks up a temporary teaching certificate after a three-month crash course in principles of education and becomes a high school CAD instructor. It doesn't pay him much, but the intangible rewards more than offset the smaller paycheck.
2. A real estate agent, tired of the late-night phone calls and 60-hour work weeks, starts flipping properties on the side. She knows the market, the inspectors, the contractors, the lenders—she's plugged into the local real estate grid from the top to the bottom. So, she takes what she knows (which is of immense value) and starts her own property management company—buying, selling and renting properties.
3. A CPA becomes Director of Development for a local non-profit organisation. A pediatric nurse takes the helm at a drop-off kid care franchise.
4. A Food and Beverage Manager opens his own restaurant. Another one acts as consultant to smaller restaurant entrepreneurs.

Do you get the idea from the above-mentioned examples? Build on what you've got.

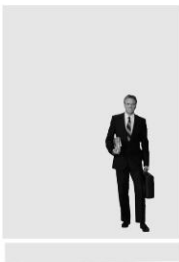
MAKE A CRITICAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Sit down with a nice cup of coffee and make a list of your *professional knowledge*,

skills, and competencies that could be leveraged in a new career. You'll be surprised at the extent of your skill set.

Your list should include proficiency using computer software programs (these are transportable skills required on almost every job), special training, and knowledge acquired on-the-job.

Make a second list of your *professional weaknesses*. Make a third list of your *personal qualities*. Maybe, it may open new doors for you. Sometimes, we have talents and attitudes that were kept locked throughout your career so far. You need to open those locked doors and do something you like. I took authorship after 30 years in corporate life. To start with I went to a writing course, it was marvelous. Maybe it is time to go back to school and do a short-term course yourself.



UPDATE YOUR RÉSUMÉ

When did you last update your résumé? Do so now and start scanning for potential employers. Remember, as mentioned above, reading newspapers and business publications can be a huge asset for you while you're searching for jobs because they also tell you about the companies that are expanding, landing the big contracts, and expecting to see growth. Look at industries (possibly outside your current one) that aren't facing job losses because you don't want to jump from one sinking ship to another.

GO BACK TO SCHOOL

Continuous education is the byword for today's professional. Unless you keep yourself updated you are not going to survive in today's job market that is changing each day. One of the reasons for getting laid off is your obsolete knowledge and skills. Younger generations come out of college with the latest knowledge and are, therefore, preferred. Adult education, the local community college, technical schools, workshops, seminars, etc. are all great places to develop new skills and update old ones. Get the certificate, license, degree or the credentials you need to start your new career path. I have known defence personnel who studied hotel management to find jobs as security officers and administration managers in hotels. Air Force Pilots got commercial licenses to fly commercial jets.

STUDY THE JOB MARKET

Check out what's hot and what's not. Well, the IT sector seems to be hot again while manufacturing is in free fall. There's unprecedented demand for back processing offices and trainers at all levels.

Go through the classifieds to see what's hot in your region. Or, maybe you're willing to relocate. That'll expand your options! There are many start-up

companies who value experience. They can get you on board as advisor, consultant, retainer, etc.

BACKDOOR ENTRY

You have another option if you are asked to leave. You could negotiate being re-hired as a retainer to the same company. A retainer works on a contract basis at perhaps a lesser pay. Organisations look at such methods to cut payroll costs. A retainer does not attract the benefits and superannuation costs so the company gets interested. A company values your knowledge of systems and processes and prefers an old, experienced hand than having to train someone new.

Another good method of associating with your company is to become a supplier or contractor to it. Many organisations believe in outsourcing services as a viable strategy. The horticulturist of a hotel was laid off and was hired as a contractor to maintain the gardens of the property. The continuity of the horticulture programme was maintained. An engineer in a motor company became the supplier of spark plugs to the factory. He knew exactly the needs and standards of the manufacturer and was able to source cheaper spark plugs of quality. A Director of Engineering became the technical trainer of the company. A Human Resources Manager started her own recruitment firm supplying human resources to her old company.

Leverage your connections with the organisation to serve it in other ways than straight employment. Your experience counts.

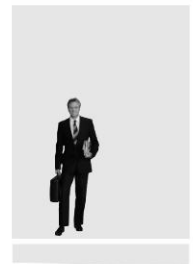
CAREER COUNSELLING

If it's offered, take it. You've been laid off, but the company still cares enough to help you find a new job. Take advantage. It's free and it may help you land your next job two months faster. Alternatively, seek the help of a professional career counsellor, if you are stuck. Remember, these are new times and a professional career counsellor can help you align yourself with the new trends using your present talents. He/She will also advise you about other courses you can take to make you more eligible in the market.

REFERENCES

References are a must. They will stand in good stead in your next career. Don't stop with your immediate supervisor. Get letters of reference from the higher-ups too. The Human Resources Department is authorised to give official references but no harm in getting ones from your other well-wishers in the organisation.

Letters from clients and customers also look good in an employment package, so don't be shy about calling a few of your best customers and asking for a letter of recommendation. They are very impressive to a future employer.



LEAVE ON A GOOD NOTE

You never know when you will need the support of your organisation in your future career. They may even call you back when circumstances change. Your associates could be good network points to get you through many doors. Leave on the best possible terms. Leave with a lot of handshakes, smiles, and best wishes all around.

The absolute worst thing you can do is to quit without a plan of action. That's walking the tightrope without a net. If at all possible, give your notice, clean out your desk and move on to the rest of your life starting first thing Monday morning.

The key is to find a job—any job to keep the creditors at bay. Build on your skill set by designing a résumé, cover letter, and thank you letter that demonstrate *how* your skills translate to this new position, business, or industry.



Chapter

3

The Hotshot Résumé

INTRODUCTION

I feel compelled to write about a properly presented résumé. In my experience several résumés found their way to the dustbin because of the improper and shabby way they were presented. Such résumés were just not appealing enough to motivate the employers. I do not want this to happen to you. Some résumés I received left a positive impression on me and spurred me to anxiously want to meet the people who prepared them. This chapter will deal with how to make *winning résumés* that are informative and appealing. But first let us understand what a résumé is.

WHAT IS A RÉSUMÉ?

A résumé is a documented profile of the candidate and reflects his/her personality. In other words a résumé is you. It can either *destroy* or *augment* your chances of being called for an interview. A résumé (French term) is also called a *curriculum vitae* (Latin term) or *bio-data* (English term). The term which is most widely understood in your location must be used. The résumé is your first introduction to the recruiters and explains your education, experience, achievements, and character. It is your calling card which is viewed well before a physical meeting with the interviewers. It, therefore, must evoke enough interest in the selector to shortlist you for an interview. Your objective in the first instance is to present the best document about yourself to get a call for the interview.

Résumés are formal legal documents. Information which is presented in the résumé must be authentic. Information provided in the résumé can be verified and good organisations do verify them through formal and informal references.

Organisations also ask for documentary proof of qualification, experience, and date of birth. Candidates may lose their jobs because of unsupported documents. Candidates are summarily dropped or dismissed when they are found to have provided incorrect information about themselves.

PURPOSE OF A RÉSUMÉ

The primary purpose of a résumé is to secure an interview for you. The résumé is your “**sales tool**” and provides you with an opportunity to market your strengths and accomplishments to prospective employers. You can communicate your skills, qualification, experience, and interests to a potential employer. This information will help the employer in assessing your ability to do the work. There is no right résumé, however, a concise, well-written, easy-to-read résumé will attract attention and increase your chances of being invited to an interview.



TYPES OF RÉSUMÉS

The following general guidelines can help you to decide which résumé format will work best for you. The types of résumés are:

- The Chronological Résumé
- The Functional Résumé
- The Combination Résumé

THE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

A Chronological Résumé is organised by job titles (with your most recent position listed first) and highlights your work experience and academic history. This is the most popular résumé format, and the one which is most familiar to the employers.

ADVANTAGES

- It provides employers with a clear and concise assessment of your experience.
- It highlights your major asset—your educational background.
- It brings the employer’s attention to the fact that you have relevant work experience in a particular area or industry.

DISADVANTAGES

- A lack of steady or relevant employment history will be prominently reflected in such a résumé.
- The chronological résumé exposes gaps in your work history.
- It downplays the transferability of skills from one job to another.

THE FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ

A Functional Résumé is organised in a list format. It emphasises your skills, experiences, and accomplishments rather than your employment history.

ADVANTAGES

- You can draw equally from all aspects of your relevant skills and experiences including paid positions, volunteer work, education, involvement in campus clubs, etc.
- Lack of steady work experience will not be as obvious as it is in the chronological résumé.
- This format will highlight your transferable skills such as “researching”, “writing”, “giving presentations”, etc.

DISADVANTAGES

- This style may make it more difficult for employers to follow and to make comparisons between the candidates.
- Some employers (who prefer chronological résumés) may assume that you are attempting to conceal certain aspects of your employment background.



THE COMBINATION RÉSUMÉ

The combination résumé emphasises your skills and accomplishments for a specific job, but still lists your work history.

ADVANTAGES

- This style of résumé has most of the advantages of both the Chronological and Functional résumé formats.

DISADVANTAGES

- This format is not as familiar to the employers as the Chronological format. However, the combination résumé should not be considered a major disadvantage as it is gaining popularity among the employers.

PREPARING A RÉSUMÉ

Preparing a good résumé requires some time and effort and cannot be a 10-minute activity. You can make a meal in 10 minutes; you can have the oil in your car changed in 10 minutes; you can do a lot of things in 10 minutes, but writing a résumé isn't one of them. Not if you are serious about finding a good job. It is human tendency to doubt the quality of products and services that one gets too easily and I am quite sure that you do the same. This is because anything good takes time to polish. Remember you went to college and took three years to graduate. By the same token, in order to make your résumé

distinct and more presentable from others, you will have to devote some time in preparing it. Many candidates use stereotyped methods to prepare their résumés, which then look as though they have been cut from a template. However, you should prepare your résumé in such a way that it should sizzle and sell.

Creating the right résumé is an art. It's a skill you can learn, but creativity is an important aspect of a perfect résumé, and that's where art plays an important role.

You can also go to a professional résumé writer (a recruitment agent can help). Professional résumé writer would take time to get to know you and your job search objectives. He/She will ask for extensive details about your work activities, looking for that little 'hook' that will set you apart from your competitors. He/She would highlight your strongest attributes as a job candidate. Professional résumé writers keep themselves updated on current employment trends; they use current buzz words in your résumé to make it really professional.



WHAT DOES A PERSONALISED RÉSUMÉ DO FOR YOU?

- Your résumé is not a string of dates, places, and job duties. It is a sales tool that excites the interest of a recruiter.
- A résumé is usually your first introduction to a potential employer, so when the head of HR opens your employment package, containing a résumé, cover letter, and other documentation requested from the employer, it should look professional and grab the attention of the reader.
- The résumé highlights your credentials such as your knowledge, skills, and achievements, and hide your weaknesses such as understating or ignoring the eight-month period you lived at home with your parents.
- A professionally prepared résumé is perfect. No typos, no misspellings, no slang, and no white-outs. A résumé with a gross spelling error is doomed to the dustbin.
- A well-packaged résumé and cover letter says a lot about your professionalism. It shows the employer that you know the rules of the business or commercial world. A résumé must be typed (or computer generated). A hand-written résumé is not acceptable to the employers.

Isn't your professional future worth the effort of crafting a good résumé?

DESTINATION DUSTBIN—BAD RÉSUMÉS

Those who do not give enough importance to this vital document show the following pitfalls that forces the employer to reject them:

1. It is hand-written.
2. It is crumpled.

3. It is stained.
4. It has spelling errors.
5. White-out is used for words and sentences.
6. It is presented on ruled paper.
7. The ruled paper is torn from a notebook.
8. It is a photocopy (shows that the résumé is being sent to several places).
9. There is no covering letter.
10. There is an undated covering letter.
11. The covering letter is not addressed to a specific person.
12. The information is incomplete.
13. It does not contain the formal name.
14. It does not have an address.
15. It does not contain a contact number.
16. It does not have a photograph (résumés by e-mail may be excused but those with a scanned photograph have an advantage).
17. The candidate has not formally dressed for the photograph.
18. Candidates in the photograph do not smile. The snap is rather a grim mug shot.
19. Information is not presented in the correct sequence.
20. Information is scratched out with ball pen.
21. Information is added with a ball pen.
22. The qualifications and experience do not match the profile of the job (shows that the candidate has applied blindly).
23. It does not have the candidate's signature (with the exception of those sent by e-mail).
24. Photographs and documents are not stapled.



BASIC GUIDELINES FOR A GOOD RÉSUMÉ

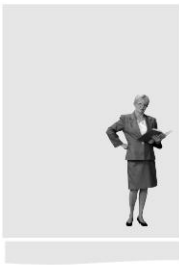
- You must tell the truth.
- It is your job to sell yourself.
- A résumé is about your future not your past.
- Put information in order of interest to your potential employer.

TELL THE TRUTH

You must tell the **truth** in your résumé. That's not negotiable. It is simply unethical to invent any part of your background. Ensure that you can support your information with proof. Employers will verify the basic facts on your résumé, especially your title, dates of employment, prior salary history, and your qualifications. If you get a job based on lies, there is no job security. Most employers dismiss such an employee, even years later, if they discover that the employee had provided false information in his application. Your résumé is a legal document which becomes a part of your permanent personnel file. Being creative and persuasive does not mean creating a piece of fiction.

SELL YOURSELF

A résumé is no place for modesty. Employers expect you to showcase your skills, competencies, talents, traits, and experiences according to their needs. You do them a favour if you put your best foot forward, because they look at your résumé specifically to discover your talents and abilities. While selling yourself, always focus on those attributes that the employer needs. Perhaps your reference letters from school, college, and work will provide you with the right words. Ask your best friend or family member to tell you what they perceive to be your strengths. We are often unaware of our own strengths.



A good résumé is focused toward your **future**. It will tell about your career objectives, aspirations, and ambitions. The information should be of interest to your employer. It should be customised according to each job vacancy whether it is an internship or a job opportunity. The job you are applying for must be related to your career goals. So a résumé should be designed to create your future want, not just report your past. This is why it is important to start working on your résumé not by compiling information from your past, but by imagining your future.

INTEREST THE EMPLOYER

Many résumés are long-winded and boring. It is an effort to go through them because they are not concise and to the point. They become a history sheet. You can use some key phrases which can attract the attention of the employer. Consider your employer and customise your résumé accordingly. Research the industry that you want to work for, assess their needs, and create a résumé that highlights how you can contribute to them. Emphasise the skills which relate most to the position you are applying for, highlighting any growth in your responsibilities.

1. Use action words such as “supervised”, “directed”, “developed”, “organised”, and “planned” to describe what you are capable of doing.
2. Highlight qualities or skills you excel at or which are unique to you.
3. Place the most relevant information at the top of your résumé and highlight those skills which are related to the applied job vacancy.
4. Focus on what you can do for the company/organisation with reference to your past achievements.
5. Use short but specific, descriptive statements to illustrate your skills, experience, and education which match the employer’s requirements.
6. Be honest about your accomplishments—do not undersell yourself, but do not exaggerate either—this could come back to you in the interview.
7. Include your name, telephone number, and complete home and e-mail addresses.
8. Include your other interests.

RÉSUMÉ FORMAT—GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are followed in typical résumé format. These are general résumé format rules:

- Use Font size of 10 or 12.
- Résumé should be perfectly typed with about a one-inch margin.
- Use only one type of font (preferably Times new Roman, Arial, or Verdana). You may vary size for emphasis, if necessary.
- Use **bold print** for emphasis. However, do not use too many different styles.
- Avoid typing the résumé in capital letters and italics as they are difficult to read.
- Describe training, skills, and accomplishments in phrases rather than sentences.
- Use action verbs to attract employer's interest and response.

Good résumés follow a proper sequence of information that is generally accepted. You must keep in mind that the selector is a busy person and is inundated with several applications and will need to get the right information immediately from the résumé to raise interest to carry on further. Here is a suggested sequence of information:

- ❖ Title
- ❖ Name, address, and contact number
- ❖ Career objective, aspiration, and ambition
- ❖ Special skills and competencies for the job
- ❖ Past achievements related to the new job
- ❖ Educational qualifications
- ❖ Special courses attended
- ❖ Experience
- ❖ Hobbies and interests
- ❖ Personal information
- ❖ References
- ❖ Signature

Let us look at each in detail:

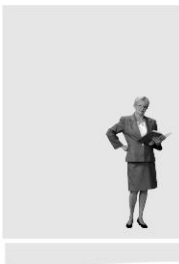
TITLE

This refers to the heading of the document. It must be titled as 'Résumé', 'Bio-Data', or 'Curriculum Vitae'. Use the term used by the organisation when they advertised for the position. Apparently, it is the term that they are using at their work place.



NAME, ADDRESS, AND CONTACT NUMBERS

The name must be in the sequence of first name, middle name, and surname. There are certain cultures where the village or father's name is given like in the state of Kerala. Since the names are adaptations to the local dialects some candidates may use initials like C.V. George. Whatever the style used, it must correspond exactly to the way it is presented in the passport, driving license, or school leaving certificate. These documents are accepted universally to authenticate names. Remember that certain statutory funds like the provident fund, pension, government gratuity fund, or social insurance are redeemable by showing documentary evidence of name. Therefore, your name as reflected in the résumé will be logged as the official name in the company records for contributions to such funds.



ADDRESS

The address must be reliable over a long period of time for immediate and long-term contact. The company will use the address mentioned in the résumé for correspondence like letters calling for interview; rejection letters; correspondence during service; legal notices; cheques of statutory funds which arrive long after a candidate has left the service; etc. Some candidates have two addresses—contact address and permanent address. The contact address is for immediate communication while the permanent address is for long-term communication (over a year). The address must have the proper pin or zip code and must mention the city and state clearly. The address is particularly important in case of emergencies when the next of kin need to be contacted. Provide a reliable permanent address if you are frequently moving, to ensure that correspondence will reach a reliable place. Ensure that you update your address with the Human Resources department once you are employed.

CONTACT NUMBERS

This is vital for all immediate contact concerning the interview and subsequent official conversation. The most valuable contact number these days is the mobile number. But at times the mobile can be switched off or unreachable. It is, therefore, important to give alternate numbers like the residence land-line number. It is important to keep the mobile 'ON', so that you can be contacted at any time. It must be kept ON but in silent mode if you are in cinema halls or areas that prohibit mobile phones. With the advent of cyberspace, it is prudent to provide your e-mail address if you possess one.

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Selectors these days are keen to know the reason for your applying for a job. This gives them the indication about your motivation. Think about this carefully,

as it could enhance or destroy your chances for selection. Selectors want serious applicants and are keen to match your objective to their objectives of employment. Remember that the interviewer may probe the reason for your applying at the time of interview, so the reason stated must be credible. Some objectives are mentioned below:

- Start career after your education.
- Change of job for a better position that matches your skill-set more appropriately.
- Change of job for advancement.
- Move to an organisation that offers better career prospects.
- Move to a better organisation.
- Move to an organisation that offers higher individual growth.
- Move to an organisation that recognises good talent.
- Moving into a state or city for personal reasons.

While the reasons above are legitimate reasons, some of them can be double-edged swords too. For example, a change of job for advancement gives the fear to the interviewer that you may leave them if you get a better offer somewhere else. The interviewer will check your employment record and see the frequency with which you change jobs. Too many changes will give a negative picture to the employer, and while you may be having a valid reason for change—after all everyone wants to improve their lot—organisations are wary of job-hoppers.

Some typical examples of objectives are mentioned below:

- “To seek employment at the entry level that matches my qualifications and aspirations.”
- “To join an organisation that will utilise my qualification and experience to mutual benefit.”
- “To join an organisation where we can grow together using my skill sets and experience.”
- “I am seeking employment as I believe that my profile best suits the job advertised.”
- “To grow in the energy sector as it is my chosen field.”
- “To join a growing organisation that will help me grow with it.”

SPECIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

First, let us understand the meaning of ‘skills’ and ‘competencies’. **Skills** are abilities to execute certain specific tasks for a definite purpose such as a machinist has the skill to operate a lathe machine, an accountant has bookkeeping skills to fulfil his job.

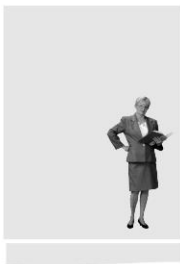
Competencies are of behaviours essential to a job. Both the machinist and accountant must be perfectionists in their own respective fields. Any deviation in their jobs can have serious impact on their work ability. An Air Hostess loves to serve people, a Salesman loves to communicate with people, a



Project Technician likes to work in a team. Let us look at some more examples of both skills and competencies:

SKILLS

- Technical (handling machines, acting, modelling, accounting, business, etc.)
- Computer
- Communication
- Analytical
- Customer Service
- Management
- People
- Negotiation
- Selling



COMPETENCIES

- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Coordination
- Customer orientation
- Grooming and hygiene
- Courtesy and manners
- Result-oriented
- Disciplined

To understand the difference between the two in a better way let's take an example. Say, a counter salesperson must have the skill to sell a product. This is acquired through training and experience. This same salesperson cannot sell successfully if he/she does not have the competency of courtesy and manners. In other words, one is an ability to perform and the other is behaviour while performing.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A résumé showcases the achievements of the past that holds promises for the future. This gives the selector a snapshot of what recognitions you have acquired in your past jobs. Employers like to hire those who are result oriented. The achievements must be mentioned along with the quantity, time, and place of the performance. Here are some good examples of achievement statements that can be mentioned in a résumé:

- Increased sales by 20% in the year 2006 at Goodwin Park Ltd.
- Achieved a labour cost saving of 40% in 2005 at Hyundai Factory.
- Got the "Employee of the Year" recognition for three consecutive years since 2001 at Pullman Hops LLC.

- Successfully trained 20 customer service executives who achieved 20% growth in sales at Hero Honda in the year 1999.

Examples of bad achievement statements are:

- Increased sales
- Saved labour cost
- Got recognition for performance
- Trained 20 customer service executives

What if you do not have any achievements? This is a serious matter and you must look at yourself and your performance. Someone with achievements is likely to score above you at the time of selection. Do not be surprised if you are not shortlisted. But this is the gloomy side of things. On the positive side, everyone has achieved something, if not at work then may be at school which he/she might have taken for granted. It is just that he/she has not thought about it. You can highlight even your achievements at school. You may have been a sports captain in school or a prefect or won a declamation contest. This shows you to be a leader and good communicator. Search for your achievements and list them down. At work you may have at least achieved the targets set for you in a year. List such achievements as:

- “Achieved targets throughout my working career leading to above average performance rating.”
- “I achieved a zero percent absentee rate during my career.”

Wow! In the above examples I as a recruiter can expect you to achieve the targets set for you with a zero absentee record. I like such workers who show commitment and achieve results.



ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

These must be presented with the recent first in your résumé. Those with good qualifications would like to showcase it prominently to get the edge over other candidates. Educational qualifications can be presented in two ways—the running style or through a table:

Running Style:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1985–1987 | Masters in Business Administration from the Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi University |
| 1982–1985 | Bachelor of Commerce from Sri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University |
| 1981–1982 | High School (Class XII) from Modern School, New Delhi |
| 1978–1981 | Junior High (Class X) from Modern School, New Delhi |

Table Style:

From	To	Educational Institution	Qualification	Rating
1985	1987	Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi University	Master in Business Administration	B
1982	1985	Sri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University	Bachelor of Commerce	92%
1981	1982	Modern School, New Delhi	High School (Class XII)	95%
1978	1981	Modern School, New Delhi	Junior High School (Class X)	95%



You may ask, “*What if I did not study in well-known institutions?*” Be proud of where you studied. Employers appreciate those candidates who are proud of their school and college irrespective of whether it was well-known or not. They feel that such candidates would show the same fierce loyalty and pride to the organisation. Never undermine your institution and prepare all the good qualities you learnt from it. Flaunt it at the interview.

Another question you may ask is, “*What if I did not get good marks in school or college?*” Do not mention your rating in the résumé. Let the interviewer seek it at the interview. You can respond “I am more a hands-on person than an academic.” Those who are not academically inclined are not necessarily poor performers. As a matter of fact such candidates went that extra mile to prove to themselves that they are just as good as others. And they are quite good at work, if not better. Your scholastic marks will affect you in getting into good institutions that have their internal cut-off marks for higher studies. You may have not got admitted to a noted college because of your average marks. What matters here is ‘you’ and how you have shaped up. Your intrinsic qualities backed by your achievements at work must override your average marks and must be highlighted. That matters at the moment. You can mention your educational qualification after your experience in your résumé if that is more impressive.

SPECIAL COURSES ATTENDED

Important technical courses help you to specialise in specific skills. These courses reflect your interest in continuous learning and will to stay upgraded. Special courses are short term, ranging from 3 days to less than a year. Most of them end with a certificate of proficiency, participation, or achievement. These courses can be also presented in a running style or in the form of a table.

Running Style:

Nov 1983	2-week programme on Microsoft Office Applications by Aptech Ltd, New Delhi
Sep 1989	3-day ‘Train the Trainer’ programme by the Indian Society for Training & Development, Mumbai

Table Style:

Date	Duration	Institution	Name of Certification	Programme
Nov 1983	2 weeks	Aptech Ltd. New Delhi	Microsoft Office Applications	Certificate of Proficiency
Sep 1989	3 days	Indian Society of Training and Development, Mumbai	Train-the-Trainer	Certificate of Achievement

EXPERIENCE

Your experience is perhaps the most important part of your résumé. Obviously, selectors try to match the experience to the job profile of the position. Experience concerns involve two things:

1. Quality of experience, and
2. Duration of experience (number of years).

Your experience should meet up to the expectations of the organisation. Most organisations mention these two concerns in their job advertisement. There are candidates who disregard these expectations and apply anyway. It is a waste of time for both, you and the employer. Make sure that your experience should match the expectation of the organisation.

In a résumé your experience can be reflected in running style or as a table. It should commence with the most recent experience.

Running Style:

1. XYZ Co. Ltd. Marketing Supervisor July 2000–till date

The company is a leading manufacturer of piping for the oil industry.

Responsibilities:

- Led a team of six sales persons who exceeded sales targets.
- Coached 6 team members in negotiating skills resulting in more orders.
- Coordinated with the warehouse for supply of goods. Have never fallen short of supply deadlines.
- Coordinated with transporters, achieving timely supply to customers and keeping transportation costs within budget.
- Followed-up on production schedules for timely delivery.
- Provided customer service and received several commendation letters from clients.
- Prepared accurate invoices for goods and ensured a zero per cent recovery factor.
- Accounted for goods sold and met my sales targets.



Achievements:

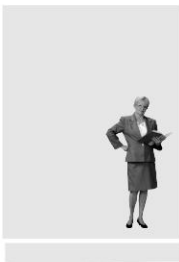
- Expanded market segment by 20%
- Increased sales by 10% over last year
- Delivered orders on time

2. ABC company Sr. Salesman January 1992–July 2000

The company is a mid-range trader of piping for the oil industry.

Responsibilities:

- Develop sales leads throughout South Asia.
- Ascertain sales requirements and negotiate prices.
- Source pipe manufacturers.
- Evaluate pipe manufacturers for our needs.
- Recommend to Sales Manager such manufacturers for short-term and long-term orders.
- Follow-up on manufacturers production schedules.
- Coordinate with shipping and transportation for ex-factory delivery.
- Complete all sales documentation.



Achievements:

- Increased sources of supply by 12%
- Increased sales leads by 30%

Table Style:

Sr. No.	Period From	Period to	Name of Organisation	Designation	Brief Responsibilities
1.	July 2000	Till date	XYZ Co. Ltd	Marketing Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading a team of six sales persons to achieve sales targets. • Coaching team members. • Coordination with warehouse for supply of goods. • Coordination with shipping and transportation of goods. • Customer Service and handling complaints. • Raising invoices for goods. • Accounting for goods sold.
2.	January 1992	July 2000	ABC Co. Ltd.	Senior Salesman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop sales leads throughout South Asia. • Ascertain sales requirements and negotiate prices.

(Contd)

Sr. No.	Period From	Period to	Name of Organisation	Designation	Brief Responsibilities
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source pipe manufacturers. • Evaluate pipe manufacturers for our needs. • Recommend to Sales Manager such manufacturers for short-term and long-term orders. • Follow-up on manufacturers production schedules. • Coordinate with shipping and transportation for ex-factory delivery. • Complete all sales documentation.



INTERVIEWER'S POINT OF VIEW

When reading the example given above, the interviewer is going to understand the following about you and your experience.

- You belong to the oil piping industry. (Obviously you would have applied to the oil industry only).
- You have experience in the sales and marketing function.
- You have leadership skills.
- You have coaching skills.
- You have sales, accounting, and documentation skills.
- You have co-ordination ability.
- You possess follow-up skills.
- You are achievement oriented.
- You make businesses grow.
- You are time-conscious.
- You are not a job-hopper.

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

First, let us understand the difference between hobbies, interests, and pastimes. **Hobbies** are those activities, other than your work, in which you have extensive knowledge. You have learnt about it, developed skills in it, and achieved some degree of proficiency. People have different kinds of hobbies like aero modelling,

philately (stamp collection), numismatics (coin collection), sculpture, painting, music, gardening, etc.

Interests are those activities in which you have knowledge but you do not actively participate in those activities or have proficiency in them like you may have interest in cricket, aeroplanes, cars, politics, etc. but do not participate in them actively.

Pastimes are those activities which are passive in nature for leisure purposes. Some examples of pastimes are watching television, eating, window shopping, reading, listening to music, etc. *Pastimes are rarely mentioned in résumés.*

There are candidates who list an impressive array of extra curricular activities in their résumé, but have very little knowledge of what they have listed. This annoys the employer. It is better to list one hobby that you know in depth than a number of them that you know very little about. It is important to mention interests separately as the level of knowledge expected is less on the subject.

This segment of the résumé is especially important to those who are starting their career in entry level jobs. Since there is no experience to write about, the interviewer would like to know about your character through your hobbies and interests. When presenting them on the résumé, it is better to list achievements rather than activities. For example:

Activity: I play cricket

Achievement: Represented school and college in cricket

Interviewer's points of view:

Hobbies and interests show the following:

- Whether you are creative or logical
- Whether you are active or passive
- Whether you are curious or cursory
- Whether you are achievement-oriented or an 'also participated' type
- Whether you are a leader or a follower
- Whether you are committed or fickle

Therefore, any form of art is creative. Interest in crosswords, chess, aeromodelling shows you are logical. Participation in any form of outdoor sport shows you are active, whereas origami, board game, or reading show you are passive. Certificates of achievement show that you attained some level performance whereas certificates of participation show that you are one of the crowd. Being a captain, prefect, supervisor, chairman, team leader, etc. shows leadership whereas being a member of a team activity shows you to be a good follower.

Personal: Personal information may include the following:

- Date of birth
- Whether in possession of a passport (necessary for international assignments)



- Whether in possession of a driving license (necessary for outdoor jobs)
- Whether in possession of own car (some outdoor jobs may insist on this and they may give a petrol allowance)
- Permanent address (in case the applicant moves houses frequently)

There are some states that believe in equal opportunities and cannot ask for the following information:

- Marital status
- Religion
- Caste or tribe (in India this may be necessary to mention to get consideration of quotas given to scheduled castes and tribes, referred to as SC/ST)
- Race or colour
- Gender orientation

REFERENCES

There are two types of references—(a) character reference and (b) work reference.

CHARACTER REFERENCE

An organisation would like to ensure that when they select you, they are selecting a law-abiding, honest, and reliable person. Your antecedents are, therefore, important to the organisation. The only tool to the organisation is the reference of responsible persons who can vouch for you.

Your résumé should have at least three referees who are not your relatives. The higher the status of the referee, the higher would be your credibility. To get these references you must seek their permission first. The references quoted must mention the full name, address, and telephone numbers of the referee. Professional organisations will contact these referees by phone or in writing to get independent references about you. Make sure that you identify the right people who will give good accounts about you.

WORK REFERENCE

Work reference is given by your previous employer. Good professionals will always seek reference letters from their previous employers. Such letters not only confirm the period of your employment with them, but also testify your conduct and performance with your previous employers. Some organisations may be peeved about your leaving and will give only a letter confirming the duration of your employment with them. This is better than nothing. File these reference letters carefully as they may be asked at the time of interview.

SIGNATURE

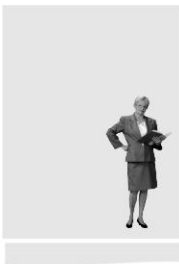
Always sign your résumé. This is a confirmation that all information given in the résumé is true and authentic. You can be held responsible for any false



information mentioned in the résumé. These days résumés are sent by e-mail. In such cases the applicant can send an unsigned résumé but will have to provide a signed résumé at the time of interview.

PHOTOGRAPH

A résumé is complete with a photograph. While taking the photograph you must look cheerful with a smile. Also dress formally with a jacket and tie (for men) and jacket and formal shirt (for women). It is important to smile. Passport photographs with smiling faces are more appealing. Men should make sure they have shaved and women should have their hair coiffured.



CASE STUDY

It is surprising how many applications are rejected on the basis of the photograph. This applies specially to the service industry or customer-oriented jobs. I remember a neighbour's son who had applied for a hotel job. I knew this boy to be smart, amiable, and ideal for the hotel industry. Unfortunately, the boy took his passport photograph from an unreputed photo studio. In the photo, he looked dishevelled and sullen. He submitted that photo for expediency. He was not called for the interview. Since I knew the Human Resources Manager of the hotel, I asked him informally about the progress of this particular application. He told me it was rejected. This was his reply, "You see we give a lot of importance to grooming and physical presentation in the hospitality business. Judging by his photograph he does not seem to be the person we are looking for". This really brought home to me the point of the importance of the passport photograph.

APPLICATION FORM

Many organisations prescribe their own application form. The forms are printed formats with relevant questions and spaces for you to fill your answers. Organisations insist on this information to ensure the information that they desire.

COLLECTING THE APPLICATION FORM

It is recommended to collect the application form personally from the organisation. By doing so you will get a chance to get the 'feel' of the organisation and its environment, so that you are familiar with the organisation at the time of the interview.

While collecting the form from the organisation, keep it in a file cover and do not fold it. The form must be pristine, foldless, and crisp at the time of submission. While collecting the form ensure the following:

- Talk formally with the person giving the form. Be cheerful and perhaps witty. That person could be a secretary, who could form a good impression about you and give his feedback to the interviewer about you.

- Clarify the last date of submission of the application form.
- Ascertain the documents that need to accompany the form and whether they should be in original or in photocopy. Documents may include the school and college leaving certificates, proof of your date of birth, and reference letters. (Most organisations insist on photocopies as such documents are precious and are seen at the time of interview).

FILLING THE APPLICATION FORM

- The form must be filled by ball pen in your own handwriting. The handwriting must be legible. Use block letters if you have poor handwriting.
- All columns and spaces must be filled. Give a notation of N.A. (not applicable) for those questions which are not applicable to you. Scratch out the questions that require ‘Yes/ No’ answers.
- Read all the columns carefully before writing down anything. It does not reflect well if words or sentences are scratched out. If questions or columns are unclear, seek clarification from the organisation by phone.
- Carefully mention the position you are applying for.
- Provide a good passport-size photograph as explained earlier.
- All supporting documents must be properly stapled with the application form. Many candidates clip the documents which get unhinged in transit.
- Applications must be signed.
- Take a photocopy of the application form to support the information at the time of interview. The photocopy also acts as a proof of submission in case the form is lost by the organisation.



FINAL CHECK

Once you’ve written your résumé, take time to review it carefully for any mistakes and to fine-tune your writing style.

Ensure the following, while checking your résumé:

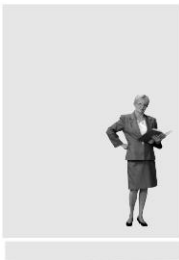
1. Check for errors. Ask someone to proofread your résumé to check spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
2. Avoid using “I” or “me” in your descriptions.
3. Use a consistent format and the same grammatical tense throughout your résumé.
4. Avoid using jargon or abbreviations.
5. Use a variety of words to describe yourself (i.e. avoid using “excellent” or “very” in every second statement).
6. Verify the structure of your statements.

COVER LETTERS

Remember a golden rule. *A résumé must be accompanied by a covering letter.* Writing a cover letter may often seem a difficult task. However, if you learn a few tips, you'll soon become an expert at writing letters to send along with your résumé.

Your cover letter may make the difference between obtaining a job interview and having your résumé ignored; so, it makes good sense to devote time and effort in writing effective cover letters.

A cover letter should complement, not duplicate, your résumé. The purpose of the cover letter is to interpret the data-oriented, factual résumé and add a personal touch to it. A cover letter is often your first written contact with a potential employer, creating a critical first impression.



PURPOSE OF A COVER LETTER

The purpose of a cover letter is to provide a brief introduction about you and your résumé, in response to an advertised position or in anticipation of a possible opening. A good cover letter effectively highlights your strengths and links your abilities directly to the needs of the employer, and therefore helps you to get an interview call. The following are the few hints that you should keep in mind while writing a cover letter.

TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

There are three types of cover letters:

- The **application letter**, which responds to a known job opening.
- The **prospecting letter**, which inquires about possible positions.
- The **networking letter**, which requests information and assistance in your job search.

Your cover letter should be designed specifically for each purpose outlined above as well as for each position you seek.

APPLICATION LETTER

Some Tips

- A cover letter must be specific to the job position
- You must be qualified for the position for which you are applying
- Analyse the advertisement
- List the job criteria, then match your skills to it (See examples below)
- Research the organisation

There are two styles of writing a cover letter (matching your *skills* to the job criteria) —the *paragraph style* and the *list style*. Let's see the following example to understand the styles of writing cover letter:

Job Advertisement

BOX OFFICE MANAGER

Conduct, oversee subscription and ticket sales for events. Generate and maintain reports, perform accounting activities related to box office revenue, oversee operations. The position requires customer service skills and accounting experience.

Cover Letter Example 1: Paragraph Style

As Box Office Assistant for the Light Opera Company, I was responsible for customer service, ticketing patrons, and generating and maintaining box office reports. In addition, I maintained records and accounting reports for all box office transactions.

Cover Letter Example 2: List Style

Box Office Manager Requirements

- Conduct, oversee subscription and ticket sales for events
- Generate and maintain reports, perform accounting activities
- Customer service skills and accounting experience

My Skills and Experience

- Box office management including ticketing, maintenance of records, and ticket database management
- Maintain and generate reports
- Box office accounting, transaction, and reporting
- Customer service, seating, and ticketing patrons

EXPLANATION

As you can see, in both the cases, the candidate has matched his skills to the job criteria. It should pass the first screening because it specifically addresses the job advertisement and states why you are qualified for the position. *Do not apply if your skills, qualifications, and experience do not match.*

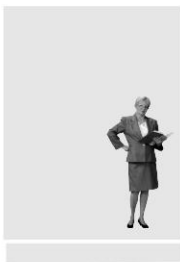
Instead, focus on applying for jobs for which you qualify. Spend some time gaining the additional skills or qualification (volunteer, take a class, etc.) you need to prepare for positions that are a rung or two up the ladder.

Cover Letter Template

Cover letter template lists the information you need to include in the cover letter of your résumé. Use the cover letter template as a guideline, to create customised cover letters.



Following is the cover letter template:



Your Name	
Your Address	
Your City, State, Zip Code	contact information
Your Phone Number	
Your Email Address	
Date	
Name	
Title	
Company	employer contact information
Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Dear Mr./Ms last name	salutation
Subject.....	job position advertised
Body of the letter	
xxxxxxxxxxxxx	first paragraph
xxxxxxxxxxxxx	middle paragraphs
xxxxxxxxxxxxx	concluding paragraph
Yours sincerely,	complimentary close
Signature	hand-signed signature

Contact Information

The first section of your cover letter should include information about you, using which the employer can contact you. Make sure that the information is reliable and correct. Your career depends upon it.

Employer Contact Information

The employer contact information must be accurate. Normally you can get the company address from the job advertisement. Make sure that you have got the right zip code. In website job postings, you can get the company contact information by clicking on ‘contact us’ link on the home page.

Salutation

The standard salutation is “Dear Mr./Ms.” . If you want to be different from others, find out the name of the advertiser. You can get this information by simply calling the office and asking for it from the receptionist or the HR Department. Make sure you get the spelling right. Nothing is more insulting to a person than his name being spelt wrongly. A person’s name is the most precious thing he/she has got. Using the name becomes personal and the reader will be impressed that you took the trouble to find out his or her name. Use the surname only as this is a formal correspondence. I suggest the use of surname in the cover letter even if you know the person personally. The letter may pass through several hands in the organisation and your familiarity with any employee of the organisation should not be reflected through a cover letter.

Subject

The subject is the job position. An organisation gets several letters in a day. Your letter with the subject immediately identifies the purpose of the letter. This is appreciated to segregate the letter from the rest of the correspondence received. Few ways of writing the subject are: 'Box Office Manager', 'Job announcement for Box Office Manager', 'Vacancy for Box Office Manager'.

Body of the Cover Letter

The body of your cover letter includes the details about the position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow-up.

First Paragraph The first paragraph of your letter should include information on why you are writing. Mention the position for which you are applying. Mention that you are qualified for the position. Be clear and concise regarding your request.

- Name the job for which you are applying and tell how you learned about it.
- State that you are qualified to do the job based on your background (give the employer a sense of your confidence in your own abilities).
- State that you are very interested in the job or the organisation and indicate a specific or unique reason why this job or organisation appeals to you, which in turn shows that you have done some research (keep this brief).

First paragraph of the cover letter should read something like this:

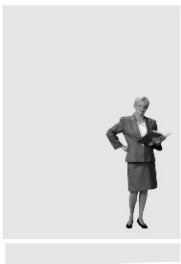
"I am applying for the position of Box Office Manager advertised in *The Times of India* on 27th July 2..... I have the requisite qualifications and experience for the position. I am looking to enhance my professional growth and find that your organisation is ideally suited to my career aspirations as well as provides the chance to use my skills to contribute to your organisation's prosperity".

Middle Paragraphs The next section of the cover letter should describe what you have to offer to the employer. Convince the reader that they should grant the interview or appointment you requested in the first paragraph. Make strong connections between your abilities and their needs. Mention specifically how your skills and experience match the job requirements. Remember, you are interpreting your résumé, not repeating it. Try to support each statement you make with a piece of evidence. Use several short paragraphs or bullets rather than one large block of text. Use the matching text exercise you did earlier.

- Determine what you are going to discuss in terms of your education, work experience, skills, interests, personality and beliefs (focus on the ones which address the job's most important requirements).



- Subdivide the body into sections—one possibility is: first paragraph describes what you have to offer, the second describes your interest and knowledge about the organisation.
- State the skills/strengths that you will bring to the job (address all those asked for in the job advertisement) and include examples or descriptions of how you have acquired and demonstrated each skill/strength.
- Explain how the skills/strengths you mention would be useful in the new position.
- When including an example of your abilities, be specific to allow the employer to visualise what you have done and can do (*quantify*: how long did you do it, how much responsibility you had, what techniques did you use and why were they useful?).



Middle paragraphs of the cover letter should read something like this:

"I am a graduate in arts with five years experience in the theatre business. In my present position as Box Office Assistant for the Light Opera Company, I am responsible for customer service, ticketing patrons, and generating and maintaining box office reports. In addition, I maintained records and accounting reports for all box office transactions.

I have learnt that your progressive organisation is looking for someone with my skills and aspirations. I have been a team leader for one year with responsibilities to motivate and train counter salespersons.

I am a team person who is detailed and with exceptional customer skills. I have good oral and written communication skills".

Final Paragraph Conclude your cover letter by thanking the employer for considering you for the position. You can reduce the time between sending out your résumé and follow-up, if you fax or email your résumé. If your body section is more than one paragraph, restate that you are qualified to do the job, but make this sentence different from the one in your opening paragraph.

- Thank the employer for taking the time to consider your application.
- State that you would like to meet in person to further discuss the job and your qualifications or that you hope to hear from them soon.
- If your application was unsolicited, tell the employer that you will be contacting them in a few days to discuss your application and to possibly set up an interview.
- You may also want to tell the employer where and when you can be contacted if they require further information (optional).

Final paragraph of the cover letter should read something like this:

"I thank you for your consideration and look forward to an interview".

Complimentary Close

Respectfully yours,

Signature

Handwritten Signature (for a mailed letter)

You will notice that the letter is concise, to the point, and targeted to the job. Remember that the interviewer has little time and welcomes letters that give the message in a brief yet effective manner.

PROSPECTING LETTER

Signature

While writing a prospecting letter for a career change, the cover letter should focus on the reasons for change and the specific skills and attributes you possess. Here is a sample prospecting letter:



Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Company Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms.....

Subject: Seeking Employment

This letter is to express my interest in discussing the Senior Customer Service Manager position in your organisation. I have learnt about your organisation through your website and believe it best suits my career aspirations and where I can contribute best. Your organisation profile is appealing and I believe that my experience and education will make me a competitive candidate for this position.

The key strengths that I possess for success in this position include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide exceptional contributions to customer service for all customers.

(Contd)



- Strive for continued excellence.
- Strong communication skills.
- I am a self-starter.
- Eager to learn new things.

You will find me to be well-spoken, energetic, confident, the type of person on whom your customers will rely. I also have a wide breadth of experience of the type that gives you the versatility to place me in a number of contexts with confidence that the level of excellence you expect will be met. Please see my resume for additional information on my experience.

I hope that you'll find my experience and interests intriguing enough to warrant a face-to-face meeting, as I am confident that I could provide value to you and your customers as a member of your team.

I can be reached anytime via my cell phone, 666-6666666. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about a possible employment opportunity.

Sincerely,
Signature

NETWORKING LETTER

Here is a sample networking letter:

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organisation
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I am writing to solicit your services in finding a suitable vacancy for the position of Box Office Manager in the theatre business.

I am a graduate in arts with five years experience in the theatre business. In my present position as Box Office Assistant for the Light

(Contd)

Opera Company I am responsible for customer service, ticketing patrons, and generating and maintaining box office reports. In addition, I am also responsible for maintaining records and accounting reports for all box office transactions.

I am a team person who is detailed and with exceptional customer skills. I have good oral and written communication skills.

I am sure that any theatre will find my experience and skills to their advantage and will find me a committed contributor.

I thank you for your assistance in finding a suitable job and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Signature



Another example of networking letter is:

Contact Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last name,

I was referred to you by Diane Khan from XYZ Company in Mumbai. She recommended you as an excellent source of information on the theatre industry.

My goal is to secure a position as Box Office Manager. I would appreciate hearing your advice on career opportunities in the theatre industry, on conducting an effective job search, and on how best to uncover job leads.

Thanks so much, in advance, for any insight and advice you would be willing to share.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

FINAL CHECKLIST OF COVER LETTER

Before you send your cover letter, review the following checklist to make sure that you have covered all the basics and are sending a perfect cover letter to your prospective employer.

- The contact name and company name are correct.
- The letter is addressed to an individual, if possible.

- Letter mentions the position for which you are applying and where it was listed.
- Your personal information (as mentioned above) is included and correct.
- Cover letter is *targeted* to the position you are applying for.
- Letter is focussed, concise (one page only), clear, and well organised.
- If you have gap in your employment history, explain it in your cover letter.
- Font should be 10 or 12 points and easy to read (Times New Roman, Verdana, or Arial, for example).
- There are no spelling, grammatical, or typographical errors.
- You have read the cover letter out loud to make sure there are no missing words.
- The Cover Letter should be printed on good quality bond paper that matches your résumé.
- You have kept a copy for your records.
- Letter is signed if you are mailing it.



Résumé and cover letter are mailed flat in a business envelope (first choice) or neatly folded into thirds with the résumé on top of the letter.

Chapter

4

Preparing for an Interview

INTRODUCTION—PREPARATION TIPS

The hour that you spend in your job interview could be one of the most important hours in your life. This is because the job is expected to contribute to your career progression, enhance your earning power, enhance your status in society, and add to the general quality of your life. If it has such an impact in your life, it is obvious that you prepare for it thoroughly. You need to have some winning strategies, so that when you're sitting in the interview room you can put every minute to good use. You need to be as prepared as you can for any number of questions that come your way and you need to have the right answers at your fingertips so that you exude self-confidence and credibility. Before an interview, ask yourself the question, "Am I prepared?"

Your main goal should be to stand out from the rest of the candidates, who are applying for the same position. One way to do this is by finding out as much as you can about the company that you want to work for and the position that you're applying for. The more knowledgeable you sound about the job that you want, the better the impression you'll leave with your interviewer.

The most fundamental factors that contribute to the success of an interview is the time and quality of preparation made by you for an interview. It reduces the uncertainty and anxiety that accompany an interview. The amount of preparation is directly related to the importance of the interview. Let us see few points of preparation that are necessary for you while preparing for an interview.

1. LEARN ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Research should always be your first step. Collect information about the company background as it this is a crucial element in successful interview

preparation. You will need to be prepared to answer questions like, “What do you know about our company?” “Why do you want to work here”?, etc. Knowledge about the company’s past performance and future plans can make your interview more interactive and could just be the cutting edge you need in a competitive job market.



An interviewer cannot comprehend how a candidate can appear for an interview without knowing anything about the organisation. It gives the impression that the candidate is not interested or has applied blindly. Interest can only be exhibited by the amount of knowledge you have about the organisation and the job. According to the interviewer’s point of view, a good applicant is the one who has done some homework prior to coming for the interview. The desirable information that one must possess before appearing for the interview is:

1. A brief history of the organisation
2. The organisation’s main businesses
3. Nature of the products and services offered by the company
4. Location of its factories and offices
5. Any newsworthy issues concerning the organisation
6. Names of the chairperson and some senior executives
7. The current state of the organisation/industry
8. The key problems and issues currently being faced by the organisation
9. The key barriers or roadblocks that stand in the way of solving these problems
10. The knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to remove these barriers
11. The organisation’s strategic goals
12. The new knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to realise these goals
13. The company’s expansion plans
14. The organisation’s culture
15. The nature of the job you are applying for and its responsibilities
16. Ways to qualify for that position
17. The unique qualities and skills you can bring to the organisation

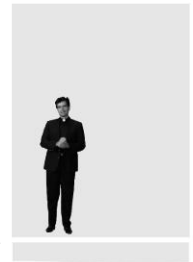
You may ask, “Where do I get this information from?” Well, there are many sources from which information can be obtained.

- (a) The Internet—Most companies have their own website on which they provide information about company’s background, products and services, locations of their offices, factories, special articles concerning them, etc. Just log on to these websites and learn about companies.
- (b) Company Balance Sheets—You may get it from the company head office (sometimes at a price). Public Limited Companies publish their balance

sheets for their shareholders. It may be difficult to get financial information from private limited companies.

- (c) Read the speech of the chairperson at the company's last General Body Meeting in the case of Public Limited Companies.
- (d) Brochures and pamphlets available from any sales office.
- (e) You may get information about the company from the employees of the company through the network of friends.
- (f) Talking to ex-employees who will give the 'other side' of employment with the company.
- (g) Visit the showrooms and offices and speak to the receptionist who may guide you to the right person.
- (h) If the company is listed on the stock exchange through the newspaper or financial papers then learn how much their shares are being quoted at.
- (i) See articles about any recent developments on the company.

You do not need to know everything about the company. The information which is most helpful for the interviewing process includes knowledge about the product manufactured or service offered. You should find out the size of the company and whether it has multiple locations. Who are its competitors? Did they recently merge with another company? What is its sales volume and is that down or up from previous years? What growth possibilities are there?



2. REFRESH ON YOUR CHOSEN SUBJECT

It is natural that the interviewers will ask you questions on your chosen field of specialisation. Therefore, if you have studied a particular discipline like economics, electrical engineering, human resources, sales and marketing, etc., you must go back to the principal textbooks and refresh yourself on the definitions, formulas, concepts, etc. The interviewer assesses your intelligence on your subject and your ability to retain knowledge.

3. REFRESH ON YOUR EXPERIENCE

As the position that you apply for gets higher, it is the experience that counts. Be clear of your job description, the duties and responsibilities that you would hold. An important part of preparing for the interview is to get an understanding of what the new job expects. You can get information about the new job position from:

- (a) Profile of the job as advertised
- (b) Talking to job holders in the company through your network of friends
- (c) Talking to ex-job holders (who may give the negative aspects of the job as well)

You can adapt your answers to the kind of experience they are looking for to get an edge over other candidates. Concentrate on your achievements rather

than activities. For example, if you were able to achieve a 20 per cent increase in sales in the last year, it sounds better than a description of how you do a sales job.

4. IDENTIFY WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER

List down all the skills, abilities, and talents you possess that will make you an excellent employee; your qualification, training, and experience—what you have done, know how to do and can do, etc.



5. CONSIDER YOUR POTENTIAL AS AN EMPLOYEE

- Why do you feel you can do the job?
- What makes you qualified for the job?
- What you have to offer to the company or organisation?
- Why do you want to work for the employer?

6. PRACTISE THE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) with suggestions of possible answers are given in Chapter 9. Go through them conscientiously and it will give you the confidence to face any interview.

7. KNOW NAME OF THE INTERVIEWER/S

Nothing is more precious to a person than his or her own name. As part of the preparation process, it would be an added advantage to know the names of those people, who are there on the selection panel and address them by their names during the interview. This works like a charm. A rapport is built easily. The interviewer feels recognised and important. The names can be obtained before the interview by asking the person/secretary coordinating the interview. Also, get their designations to give the necessary attention and respect during the interview. It would be an added advantage to recognise them. Therefore, know that Mr. Mann is the one with the blue suit while Mr. Paul is the one with the large moustache. The task becomes simpler if there is only one interviewer. Care must be taken to get the pronunciations correct. Otherwise, the effort could become counter-productive.

8. KEEP YOUR DOCUMENTS READY

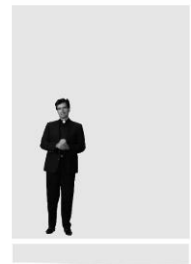
Documents like the school leaving certificate, college degree or reference letters are precious to you and they are like the passport to your future career. Interviewers are appalled by the way some candidates keep them—they are kept loosely in plastic bags and sometimes they are torn or stained. At times, candidates do not even bring these important documents.

An interviewer evaluates your sense of organisation and meticulousness by the way you maintain and present your documents. Since important documents cannot be punched or stapled, it is best to keep them in files with plastic sheets. The documents can be tucked into these sheets. This way they are not only displayed well but are also saved from disfiguration, water, and stains. The documents must be filed in the sequential order of your qualification and experience. It helps in easy identification. Make sure that you have another original copy of your résumé. This is especially important if you have e-mailed your first résumé. The interviewer will want an original copy. Also make sure that all the claims you have made in your résumé are well supported by documents. So if you have claimed to have got the “Best Employee of the Year” award in your achievements then that recognition certificate must be at hand to authenticate your claim. Here is a checklist of documents:

- School leaving certificate
- College degree
- Transcripts
- Certificates of participation in extra-curricular activities
- Citations for special accomplishments
- Work reference letters
- Character reference letters
- Certificates of special courses attended
- Certificates of recognition
- A fresh copy of your résumé
- Copies of all documents

Other unusual documents/artefacts that may be useful are:

- Photographs of recognition ceremonies
- Driving license
- Project reports
- Medals



9. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Practice makes a person perfect (or at least leads to his improvement). So practice with a friend or family member. Record or videotape your responses so you can replay the interview and see how well you did. Prepare answers for the commonly asked interview questions (mentioned in Chapter 9 of this book). This will help you analyse your background and qualifications for the position. Look into a mirror while rehearsing and assume that the interviewer is seeing you. Check whether you are cheerful and confident; well groomed and smart.

10. MAKE A TRIP TO THE SITE OF THE INTERVIEW IN ADVANCE

It is prudent to find the location of interview in advance. It saves time on the day of the interview. The interviewer is not impressed with a plea like, “Sorry

I am late, I had difficulty finding the place!” An interviewer hates to see a candidate coming late. It gives the impression that the candidate is unprofessional, insulting, and does not value the time of the interviewer. By coming late, you may wish your candidature goodbye. In my experience at interviews, I had rejected candidates who came late. If I had a number of candidates to interview, I would call a late candidate at the end of the interviews. I kept him waiting.

11. REVIEW YOUR RÉSUMÉ



Employers will use your résumé as a source of questions during the interview. Review your résumé thoroughly prior to the interview. Develop answers to questions that relate to your employment, qualification, and experience listed on your résumé. Be prepared to discuss gaps in employment. If called upon, you must be able to demonstrate the skills you stated in your résumé. Focus on those skills and experience that are relevant for the future job.

12. PRE-INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Check the following before you leave home for your interview:

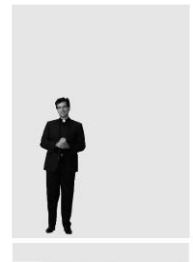
- Have you researched the organisation which would be interviewing you?
- Do you know the interviewer’s name? If not, get it from the receptionist before the interview.
- Have you formulated answers for the interview questions?
- Do you have all the necessary information for the interview? This includes your résumé, names and addresses of references, pen, and notepad.
- Did you practice the interview with someone? You will benefit from that person’s suggestions for improvement.
- Do not forget to research the location of the address BEFORE the interview. What is the company address? How long should you plan for travel time? Drive by the company to be sure that you know how to get there and how long it will take. Also, remember to give yourself an extra 10–15 minutes in case they ask you to complete their job application form.
- Did you consider how the position relates to your talents and goals, such as specialty area and opportunities for advancement?
- Did you schedule the interview at a time that will not conflict with your working hours? Most interviewers will understand you not wanting to take time off work at your current position to interview for other jobs.



- Did you find out the telephone number of the interviewer in case an emergency arises?
- Are you prepared with answers to the questions like why you want to work at that particular organisation, and how you would be the best candidate for this position. Understanding the company, their mission, and their environment will help you answer these questions.
- Did you dress properly for the interview? (*See the tips in the next chapter*).

13. THE NIGHT BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Check the weather forecast! Will you need an umbrella? Should you wear a coat?
- Decide what you will be taking in your handbag/briefcase and set it aside. Be sure to include a pen and paper as well as an extra pair of hosiery (for ladies).
- Plan how you will wear your hair and make-up. (You shouldn't try anything new in the morning.) Make-up should be appropriate for daytime, not Saturday night. No glimmer or shimmer and keep eye makeup to a minimum or wear none at all.
- Check your nails! They should be conservative in length and colour—no chipped polish.
- Do as much of your morning preparation for both yourself and your family as you can.
- Do something to relax—take a warm bath, exercise, etc.
- Have a light dinner (no alcohol) and get to bed early.



Chapter

5

The Interview

INTERVIEW ETHICS

Before we proceed to the day of the interview, there are a few ethical considerations that should be kept in mind:

- Interview only when you are sincerely interested in a position.
- Provide accurate information about your qualifications and interests. Never falsify data such as your grades, academic major, coursework completed, experience claims, or extracurricular activities on a résumé or in an interview.
- Acknowledge invitations for on-site interviews promptly, whether you accept or reject the job.
- Notify employers well in advance (24 hours preferably) if you postpone or cancel an onsite interview.

THE INTERVIEW DAY

Having prepared for an interview, you perhaps have a sense of exhilaration with butterflies in your stomach when the day arrives. The time has come for you to perform. The extent of your preparation will allay your fears correspondingly. But there is always the uncertainty of the unexpected at the interview. Believe me, the interviewer is also anxious to perform. His/Her job is on the line. He/She is under pressure to make the right choice and get the person on board as soon as possible. He/She is also challenged to make the job and the organisation attractive, especially if you are the right candidate with several other job offers. We have already seen that the interview is one of mutuality. Treat the interview as a meeting and not a moment of judgement. Both you and the organisation must measure upto each-other's expectations.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Avoid too much coffee or sugar in the breakfast.
- Brush your teeth and put on deodorant.
- Ensure you know the location of the interview, the name of the person you are meeting, your résumé, and other relevant items with you.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get there, get comfortable, and find the restroom.
- If you feel nervous, try breathing in to the count of 10 and then exhale to the count of 10. Try to increase the count.
- Observe your surroundings to get a feel of the workplace.
- Turn off your mobile phone.

YOUR DRESS



What you wear is your signature. Interviewers make first impressions with the way you are groomed. Remember, in any career your image is a powerful communicator. The nonverbal messages that your image sends can work either on your behalf or against you. Your clothing is a primary component of your

image and it is a potent communicator with its own coded language. Your apparel can signal that you are a leader with winning potential, or it can scream that you're a loser. If your clothing is waving the loser flag, you have to work extra hard to command respect and inspire trust.

The trick is to project a highly professional image with businesslike attire. Immaculate grooming, from head to feet, is also a necessity. It goes with the package of any position.

People do notice the details of your image and make assumptions about you. This is especially true for customer contact positions. I once interviewed a female Public Relations Executive, who was drop-dead gorgeous; she could have been a model. I asked her why she demanded such a high salary. She replied that the cost of maintaining her image for the position was exorbitant. She gave me the details of her expenses on her hair care, beauty parlour, special diets, cost of clothes, and fees for the gym. It did cost her a pretty packet. She said that the organisation should give a premium to her for the way she presented herself in public as it costs her money. I understood her point of view and gave her the job. Your external appearance can be converted into currency.

Anyone can be perceived as attractive. Yes, anyone. If you pay attention to the finer details of your image, you can be perceived as attractive and professional.



Can you afford to make a stressed and rumpled impression? No, not at all, if you consider that your success or getting the job you want is often tied to others' perceptions of you. A prominent CEO recently said, *"If people only knew that it can take two years to undo one negative impression, surely they would try harder."*

Communication statistics reveal that in only five to thirty seconds, three things are determined about you, whether accurate or false, based on your dress:

1. Your Socioeconomic Status
2. Your Educational Level
3. Your Desirability



In the end, we all tend to associate well-dressed individuals with intelligence and achievement. And most people like to be associated with winners. Thus, well-dressed and well-groomed folks are always granted more opportunities to prove themselves and for their success.

Just like the best sports equipment can give an athlete the competitive edge, a crisp businesslike image can work to help you get the job you want as well as gain you promotions and raises.

Though there are many things in life that are uncontrollable, your image is something which is within your control. You actually have a monopoly on it. Avoid the pitfalls of a slipshod image with the following tips:

Dressing to impress employers should be the crucial part of your interview strategy. Though we may believe that no one should be judged by what they wear, the reality is that employers are influenced by a person's grooming. They are not only concerned about your résumé and interview, they are also concerned about the image you project and often make a judgement on appearance within the first five minutes of meeting the candidate.

They are looking to see if the candidate respects them enough to conform to their perceived expectations. Whether we like it or not, how you dress is taken into consideration while hiring decisions are made. If you want to have a competitive edge, especially when it comes to making initial impressions, dress immaculately and professionally.

Whatever be the job position, it is necessary for men to wear a tailored suit with a tie. Those who borrow their friend's coats or wear an oversized one can be detected. It may seem inappropriate in hot weathers but the jacket can be carried and worn before the interview. Most offices are air-conditioned, so a jacket and tie is not out of place. Those starting a career may not possess a suit. A combination jacket like a blazer is the next best thing to wear. Though a combination jacket is more informal than a suit, it may be considered



business casual. While business casual is still in, dressing up in a suit for a job interview has really never gone out of style. Appropriate attire supports your image and you should understand the nature of the dress code in the industry in which you are trying to become employed. Ties must match the suit. If you do not have either suit or combination suit then wear a tie at least to bring in a modicum of formality. The shirt must be crisp and clean—preferably white. It is desirable for women to wear western suits. However, not all can carry them off, so it is alright to wear the national dress. Dress for the position. The interviewer must visualise you in that position. While formal wear is imperative for front line or management jobs, back-house jobs like storekeepers, factory supervisors or procurement can be less formal. Avoid revealing sexy wear. Both men and women candidates should avoid jeans and sneakers. The interviewer considers it an insult if you do not respect him or her by not dressing well for the occasion. The service industry values proper grooming as people are part of the product offer. It is essential to groom. Here are some common tips for grooming.



TIPS FOR A MALE CANDIDATE

1. Suit for a business professional in a conservative environment—dark conservative suit in solid, pinstripe, or subtle plaid.
2. Blazer for an informal business casual environment—coordinated sport coat or blazer with khakis, chinos, or gabardine trousers. Shirts—long-sleeved dress shirt in pastel colours such as white, cream, or light blue are preferred. Avoid shirts with designs as far as possible. Pin-striped shirts are acceptable provided the tie is plain.
3. Necktie—medium width silk ties in solids, stripes, and small patterns. Tip of the tie should touch the top of the belt. The upper and lower parts of the tie must be aligned perfectly. It should co-ordinate with the pant.
4. Shoes may be dressy slip-ons and lace-up shoes in black, burgundy, or dark brown. Socks must be dark colour or neutral over-the-calf socks coordinated to the trousers. White sport socks and athletic shoes are out of place even in a casual business environment. Shoes should be polished and conservative in style. Shoes reveal your personality!
5. Wear leather belts in black, burgundy, or dark brown to match trousers or shoes.
6. Avoid flashy cufflinks, rings, or neck chains. If you wear an earring (or several), remove it before the interview.
7. Trim-styled watch with leather or good-quality metal band is appropriate for an interview. Studies show that a metal watch shows strength and power to a business image. Wedding bands and conservative rings are appropriate, but limit one per hand.
8. Cover tattoos.
9. Hair should be cut close.
10. Clothes should be well fitting, spotless, and well ironed.

11. Nails should be well manicured and hands absolutely clean.
12. Guard against body odours or cheap perfumes. The market has some wonderful anti-perspirants.
13. A close shave is necessary. Stubbles of a beard or untrimmed moustache looks uncomely.
14. Bad breath could be nauseating. Use some mint lozenges before the interview.
15. Avoid gum, candy, or cigarette.



TIPS FOR A FEMALE CANDIDATE

1. Wear, preferably, business suits. Wear the national dress if you do not look well in suits. (National dress may not work for international assignments). Dresses must be conservative, avoiding bold colours, dramatic prints, low-cut necklines, spaghetti straps, and exposed midriffs.
2. Skirts should not be above knee length. Dark pants are permissible.
3. Blouses should either be in plain colours or with small, subtle geometric patterns and florals. Avoid sheer fabrics, oversized prints, frills, ruffles, straps, or plunging necklines. They should be well tailored. Avoid sleeveless blouses.
4. Avoid seductive clothing at all costs.
5. Shoes should be medium to low heeled pumps, no open toes or slings, opt for shoes in black, navy blue, taupe, or dark brown leather. Shoe colour should match or be darker than the hemline.
6. Belts should be in neutral colours no more than an inch wide. Limit jewellery to small pieces in gold or silver, pearls are also appropriate. No dangling earrings and only one pair per ear. Wear your wedding band or good quality rings limited to one ring per hand. Do not try to impress with your jewellery.
7. Your watch should be a plain round-face or tank-styled watch with leather or clasp-style metal band.
8. Hair should be kept in their natural colour, or at least look that way. Wear longer hair pulled up or back and away from your face. Hair should be washed, dried, and styled. If in doubt, tie-up the hair in a bun. It looks formal.
9. Go light on makeup light make-up projects a professional work image. Avoid strong perfume. Use a deodorant.
10. Cover tattoos.
11. Wear good quality garments.



12. Clothes should be clean and well pressed.
13. Fingers and toes must be manicured and painted. Avoid polish.
14. Flat shoes are preferred to high heels. They should be closed.
15. Naked feet are not professional. Wear pants or stockings.
16. Stockings should be clean. Beige, tan, or natural colour stockings. Stockings must be free from runs.
17. Hand bags should be conservative in colour. No reds please co-ordinate with the outfit. They should be small or medium.
18. Avoid gum candy or cigarettes.
19. Remove bodily piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.) unless in a culture.



INDUSTRY

Dressing pays. So take control. Go that extra image mile. Power-up your nonverbal communication. The landscape for job seekers today is more treacherous than at any past time in recent memory. If you want a job today, you actually have to work hard for it.

But how you should look varies depending on your industry and the job you're being interviewed for. Here are the expectations of eight different industries:

TECHNOLOGY

"If you're applying for a technical position, you won't need a suit," says Carole Martin, a former Monster contributor and author of *Boost Your Interview IQ*. "A collared shirt and khakis or slacks would work. Same goes for women—sweater or blouse and slacks or a skirt."

But, upgrade your attire if you're interviewing for a higher-level job. "You dress in the best clothes you have," says David Perry, Managing Director for Ottawa, Canada-based high-tech recruiting firm, Perry-Martel International, and author of *Career Guide for the High-Tech Professional*. "No exceptions."

FINANCE

"Nothing is more precise and exact than managing money," says Pamela Holland, Chief Operating Officer for Brody Communications in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, and co-author of *Help! Was That a Career Limiting Move?* "You cannot afford to have a hair out of place. Full business professional attire is required and expected."

GOVERNMENT

At an interview for a government job, **don't be flashy**. Holland says, "This is a time to show you're responsible, trustworthy, and honest."

But a bit of colour is OK, whether you're a man or a woman. Says Kathryn Troutman, Monster Federal Career Coach and author of *Ten Steps to a Federal Job*.

"Be conservative with jewellery, makeup, and hairstyles," says Troutman. "Be conservative overall." But "the days of all white shirts for men in government need to end," she adds.

HUMAN RESOURCES

For an HR interview, "you must look professional and authoritative." Martin says, "You'll need the look that you could handle any crisis and be dependable."



SALES

Typically, a suit is the uniform for a sales interview. According to Martin, "who would want to buy from a guy in a T-shirt and jeans?"

But you might be able to go with bolder designs and colours, says Holland. "The product or service you're representing will determine how classic versus trendy/fashionable you should be," she explains.

AUTOMOTIVE

"Here's an exception where a potential employer will understand if you have a little dirt or grease under your nails," says Holland. "You still want to look as neat as possible, but a suit is probably not necessary."

"That is, unless you're interviewing at a high-end dealership" says Heidi Nelson, a personnel counsellor for Car People Oregon, a Portland, Oregon automotive staffing service for new-car dealerships. In that case, Nelson says, "I would dress up a bit more."

HOSPITALITY

Image is particularly critical in the hospitality industry. A formal suit is a must for most guest contact positions. Remember that they will provide you a uniform and want to see how well you present yourself. However, you always need to make a great initial impression. In hospitality industry, you are the product as people provide the service. Your grooming is part of the total sales package.

TRADES

John Coffey worked as a factory Production Manager for years before becoming a career coach. His take on appropriate attire for an interview in the trades: Business Casual.

"For men, this might be a nice pair of dockers and a buttoned shirt, along with well-kept and polished shoes," says Coffey, career success officer for Winning Careers in Woodbury, Minnesota. "The same goes for women—nice slacks and a professional business top. I think a suit or sports jacket for this type of work is overkill."

SMART STUFF TO REMEMBER

- If in doubt dress extra formally
- Appearances do matter.
- Don't underestimate the power of a first impression. People make assumptions about you based upon your appearance at your first meeting.
- You are more likely to receive better service, command more respect and get what you want, if you are dressed and speak appropriately for your surroundings.
- Your appearance should be consistent with your message.

Whatever you wear should underline the fact that you're a professional who's ready to get to work at a new job. Let your common sense guide you and it should be easy to avoid fashion blunders that could damage your chances of getting to the next level in the process. In today's job market, it is essential that you look good and your appearance is right for the job. Hopefully, the tips given will make you more confident to appear for the interview.



In my experience I have observed grooming that worked *against* the candidate, such as:

- Dishevelled hair
- Long hair growing from the nose
- Hair not styled for women
- Spectacles not clean
- Dirt at the corner of eyes
- Ill-fitting clothes
- Tie worn with a collar button missing
- Dirty and dog-eared collars
- Dirt lining the collar of the shirt
- Unpressed clothes
- Buttons missing in the shirt
- Shirt cuffs without buttons
- Dirty hands
- Dirty nails
- Chipped nail polish of women
- Casual shoes
- Body odour



These flaws create negative impressions about you and distract the interviewer. It shows that the person is imperfect, low in personal standards, has poor hygiene, and has a casual attitude towards such important meetings.

BEING ON TIME

Interviewers set aside time from their busy schedules to interview you. Interviews are time-consuming events. The interviewer has especially managed his time to meet you and if you are not there, he would be displeased. Nothing is more infuriating to an interviewer than to be kept waiting. It is insulting and shows your disinterest. You might as well say goodbye to the job than being late for the interview.

The first step in the right direction is to reach the venue of the interview ten minutes before. Remember you have already visited the location of your interview as part of your preparations. You will value the effort made on the day of the interview. You do not have to waste time finding the place of the interview. Visit the rest room to tidy yourself and look fresh for the interview. Just by doing this you can consider yourself to have won the first round!



IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Review your résumé thoroughly while waiting, but don't memorise it word by word. Focus on your skills and accomplishments and how they correlate to the position you have applied. Think about how your experience has prepared you for this job and what you can bring to the table.

SELF MOTIVATION

While waiting, pump yourself up. Tell yourself you are a great individual and believe in yourself for if you don't believe in yourself, no one else will do. Create your own life and then go out and live it.

The more self-confidence you have, the less will you be affected by temporary setbacks and short-term disappointments. If you have self-confidence, you will live a life full of achievement, riches, satisfaction, and bliss.

The odds are greater than 50 million to 1 against there ever being anyone with the unique combination of talents, skills, and abilities that you possess. The unbelievable achievements that you are capable of, no one knows, not even you yourself.

MY FRIEND, YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY!!

Exploit your strengths and starve your weaknesses. *We are what we think we are!* You must make up your mind to look at yourself honestly and make future decisions based on your unique qualities.



Abraham Maslow, the psychologist, says that the story of the human race is the story of men and women selling themselves short. The great majority of people tend to compare themselves unfavourably with others. They dwell on their own weaknesses and limitations and they usually end up with far less than they are really capable of. Instead of taking control of their life and enjoying high levels of self-esteem, self-respect, and personal pride, the average person just drifts from day to day. God put you here on this glorious earth with a purpose which is more than just to drift; if self-confidence and the self-esteem that go with this purpose are so desirable, why is it that so few people have enough self-confidence to live the lives that are possible for them?

History shows us that ordinary people have achieved extraordinary things because they had self-confidence, which they learned from their parents, quite fortunately, in early childhood. But, most of us have feelings of inferiority and inadequacy deep down because of the criticism, lack of love, and other mistakes of parents that we encounter in early childhood. Due to this we grow up with little self-esteem and feel less capable and talented than others.

The starting point in developing a high level of self-confidence is to cultivate the belief that you are unique with special talents and that you do not have to compare yourself with others. Identify your unique qualities by asking friends, relatives, and teachers and use them to your advantage.

Make your own list and remember, unshakeable self-confidence comes from unshakeable commitment to your values. When deep down inside yourself you know you will never violate your highest principles you experience a deep sense of "personal power" and confidence that empowers you to deal with life openly and honestly and with complete self-confidence in almost every human situation.



"The secret of success in life is for you to be ready for your opportunity when it comes."

"Success comes in cans, not cannot."

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure."

"Self-trust is the first secret of success."

"Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."

"We can succeed at almost anything for which we have unlimited enthusiasm."

Read as many books and magazines as you possibly can that are positive, inspirational, and motivational. Study the lives of the people who have a positive message to share with all of us, especially in the field you have chosen for yourself.

Nothing in life that is worthy is ever too hard to achieve if you have the courage to try and the faith to believe that you can get it. Faith is a force that is greater than knowledge or power or skill.

Dear reader, you should garner strength to battle with difficulties of life and overcome them. You should have enough patience to toil until some good is accomplished. You should have enough hope to remove all anxious fears concerning the future.

Emotional decisions come from the heart, thinking ones from the brain. You should not take any emotional decisions. We usually take only emotional decisions. Ask your mind always before taking a decision, it will tell you what is correct and what is wrong.

To have a positive day keep the following tips in mind:

1. Every problem has a solution.
2. Failures always lead to learning something you can use later.
3. Many times you must take a step back before you take two steps forward.
4. After a crisis there is always an opportunity.
5. You control your thoughts and feelings.
6. You make the choices that determine your fate.



Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.

WAITING FOR YOUR TURN

Very often you may be required by the interviewing organisation to wait with other candidates in an adjoining room before your turn. This often happens at entry level or junior positions. Senior positions are handled more discretely under secrecy. This period of waiting could be used productively as mentioned below:

1. Introduce yourself to other candidates and set the lead in conversation. This gives you the chance to size up your competitors, their attitudes, and their confidence levels. You may stumble upon some issues for which you should have prepared. Remember, some organisations 'plant' psychologists in the room to study your behaviour. They should see you as a leader, extrovert, and confident.
2. Often the secretary or person coordinating the interview is present in the room. See if you can engage in a conversation and ascertain the names of the interviewers and how to identify them. Try to get information about the organisation, the job, and perhaps the date or time when the results of the interview will be declared. It is quite possible that the organisation's representative will give a feedback of the interviewers about your confidence and enthusiasm.



3. Ask for literature of the organisation, which you can quickly scan for additional information. Remember, that you have already done some spade work before. This reflects your keenness and enterprise to be a representative of the organisation in the room.
4. Make sure you know the correct name of the interviewer and its correct pronunciation. Listen carefully when the interviewer states his or her name and repeat it back when you say hello to them. Before you leave, ask for a business card from each person you meet. This gives you the necessary information to write thank you letters.

THE INTERVIEW

You are called into the interview room. The moment of truth has arrived. This is what you have been preparing for. *Interviews can be divided into four major sections—the introduction, the candidate sell, the employer sell, and the closing.*

During the **introduction**, the employer will use the first few minutes of the interview to create a comfortable, friendly environment, so that a meaningful conversation can follow. A mutual topic of discussion such as weather, sports, or a major news story, etc., will normally be pursued.

The **candidate sell** is the time spent answering questions about your goals, qualifications, etc. and also demonstrating your communication skills.

The **employer sell** will cover organisational structure, products, services, geographical location(s) of the offices, specifics on the position under consideration, salary (usually not discussed during an initial interview), benefits, etc.

During the **closing**, both parties indicate their level of interest in each other and understand the next steps to be taken.

Here is a step-by-step sequence to follow:

INTRODUCTION

1. *Thank the representative who called you in.*
2. *Adjust your dress before entering.* Keep your documents in your left hand, which enables you to open the interview room door and to shake hands.
3. *Knock the door lightly before opening the door.* Often the representative will open the door for you.
4. *Wear a smile.* Nothing is more captivating and refreshing to an interviewer than someone who smiles. It sets a cordial tone to the interview.
5. *Seek permission to enter.* Do so by saying, “May I enter, Sir/Madam (preferably use their name)?”



6. *Shut the door behind you while facing the interviewer.* (This will need practice).
7. *Enter the room walking upright.* Some organisations keep a distance between the door and the interview table. Don't be intimidated. They want to see your dress and gait while walking.



8. At the table, the interviewer may offer a handshake. *Give a firm handshake.* A limp handshake shows a lack of confidence, uncertainty, and hesitation. A very strong handshake gives the impression that you are very aggressive or insecure about creating a good impression. A sweaty hand shows you are nervous. A firm handshake shows your confidence. Practise your handshake before coming for the interview with your relatives or friends. Let them tell you how your handshake is. In some communities women interviewers do not offer a handshake. Respect that. You can bow gently while wishing them.
9. *Sit only after being given the permission to do so.* Choosing to sit without permission shows insolence. If the interviewer forgets this formality, ask politely, "May I sit please?"
10. *Sit upright in the chair.* Place your document file before you on the table and keep your hands clasped on your lap. Remember that unlocked hands can go astray when talking. The gestures can be distracting and can even reveal your feelings at the moment. Interviewers especially notice trembling hands or other such gestures like people playing with their ties, hair, or clothes. Keep your knees together.
11. *The first task of an interviewer is to break the ice.* Good interviewers will start with light talk to put you at ease. *Use that cue to relax.* Some will choose your hobby as a starting point for discussion. They do so because they believe that you would be most comfortable in discussing your hobbies. Remember that you have listed the hobbies you are most accomplished in. *Impress the interviewer with your knowledge on the subject.*

Speak with enthusiasm. It is infectious and carries to the interviewer. The enthusiasm comes with the energetic (not excitable) way you present your thoughts. You should maintain a cheerful disposition throughout the interview. This does not mean that you should be casual or frivolous. It simply means that a pleasant countenance holds the interviewer's attention. It is a good way to make an impression.

There are interviewers who may not know how to start the interview. You will notice a long pause as they scan your résumé searching for a starting point. You could help the interviewer by saying, "May I give you a synopsis of my résumé?" or "Shall I tell you about my academic



achievements?" I have found some candidates very good at breaking the ice. They pick up a clue from the office like my business degree hung on the wall or a gold artefact on the desk. Each personal office of an interviewer has many clues and a good candidate will pick this up and talk about it, such as "I see you are a golfer. Which golf club do you play at?" or "That's an impressive certificate you have on the wall!" The conversation is initiated on that topic that sets the wheels of the interview process.

CANDIDATE SELL

12. *Answer questions posed to you concisely and precisely.* In Chapter 9, 101 frequently asked questions are given. Go through them while preparing for the interview.
13. *Don't bluff.* If you do not know the answer to a question, it is better to acknowledge that you don't know the answer than bluffing your way through it. In my experience the interviewer will immediately grill a candidate if he/she suspects that the candidate is lying. The interviewer will respect your integrity and honesty. You would not have to bluff if you have prepared well for the interview.
14. *Lead the interview.* It may come as a surprise to you that many interviewers are not trained to conduct interviews. They are quite shy and are sometimes lost for questions. You should be quick to sense this when you notice indications such as long pause between questions or interviewers shuffling through your résumé; The pause is a chance for you to suggest, "May I tell you about my experience?" or something to that effect. The interviewer will, more often than not, welcome your suggestion.

Trained interviewers study your résumé in advance and write down specific questions to ask you. Normally, they look for answers not listed in the résumé. Untrained interviewers will, more often than not, ask you questions repeating what is already listed in the résumé. Perhaps, you can suggest some issues about yourself that do not find a place in the résumé. Such issues could be details of your hobbies or interests, your long-term goals and aspirations, or details of your achievements. You can suggest these to lead the interview than being a dumb onlooker. Many candidates believe they are there to answer the questions only. However, a more proactive approach is required by which you can tell the interviewer what you want them to know. You can suggest for example, "May I tell you about the special project that I did in XYZ company



where I got a recognition?” or “May I tell you how I reduced costs of operations in my last job?” Showcase your strengths and achievements. The interview discussion then could enter into areas you are comfortable and confident about.

15. *Sell yourself.* There is an element of salesmanship in each interview. Consider yourself as the ‘product’ with the aim of convincing the interviewer to ‘buy’ your services.
16. *Be brief.* Long-winding explanations can only consume time and bore the interviewer. A verbose dialogue gives the impression of the saying, “empty vessels make more sound”.
17. *Listen carefully.* It is a skill that can work in your favour. First, it helps you to understand the question being asked. Second, it opens the opportunity for a two-way conversation. Third, it shows your composure and it gives you the time to mentally prepare your answers using your mental capacity which works four times faster than what is spoken.
18. *Keep the interviewer’s attention and interest in you.* There are some interviewers who may have interviewed the whole day long and reached a high level of fatigue. They have got tired of asking the same questions again and again from all the candidates. A tired interviewer can be dangerous because of his state of exhaustion and may not give you the opportunity to showcase yourself. In such a case, you should follow some ways to rouse the interviewer’s interest in you:
 - (a) You can vary the tone of your voice. A monotonous drone can lull the interviewer into sleep!
 - (b) Vary the speed of your diction. Speak faster to show excitement interspersed with slow diction to emphasise a point.
 - (c) Bring the interviewers attention to your documents.
 - (d) Talk about the interviewer’s own interests as mentioned earlier, etc. In other words, you should bring in your behaviour any decent and professional-looking change that may enthuse the interviewer.
19. *Enthusiasm:* The interviewer normally pays more attention if you display enthusiasm in whatever you say. This enthusiasm reflects through the energetic way by which you put forward your ideas. You should maintain a cheerful disposition and a pleasant countenance—which hold the interviewer’s interest—throughout the interview.
20. *Use humour.* A person good at it must use it at the interview. It does not mean telling jokes but using wit. This is especially helpful in awkward situations. There are two examples that stand out in my experience. A candidate tripped while entering the interview hall; he said, “I’ve sure stumbled into good company!” A lady candidate dropped her testimonials when approaching me. She said, “There you are, I have spilled the beans about myself already.” If you are bad at humour do not even attempt it. Poorly told jokes are worse than not telling them at all.



21. *Show loyalty to your previous organisations* even though you may have left them in unsavoury circumstances. A common question asked by interviewers is, “Why did you leave your previous organisation?” Never let down your previous organisation. You can give reasons such as your own career aspirations, long distances to work, wanting something more challenging, etc. Any organisation would like to feel secure when hiring you because when they hire you, they give you access to confidential information and processes of the organisation. They do not like to feel that you will blabber negatively about their organisation. The fierce way you protect the reputation of your previous organisations only strengthens your chances for selection.
22. *Avoid slang and jargon.* Slangs are popular words not found in the English dictionary. They are coined to express thoughts in an easy way. Modern youths use slangs as part of their daily conversation. However, in an interview slangs may not be understood and are definitely not appreciated. Your communication must be as formal as possible.

The other aspect of jargon is that it includes technical terms used in some jobs. Use of jargonistic language is not understood or appreciated unless the interview is for a technical job, where the interviewer has clue of the terms being talked about. IT professionals often fall into this trap of using jargonistic language. Remember not every interviewer is computer savvy and will need help in understanding some terms. Sometimes, in order to not appear stupid, interviewers do not clarify some terms. They miss the whole message of the answer and this could work against the candidate.
23. *Avoid smoking, chewing gum or candy.* Most offices these days are ‘no smoking’ areas and the interviewer will definitely feel uncomfortable if you smoke. Some interviewers are allergic to smoke while some despise it on religious grounds. Some organisations prefer non-smokers as they believe smokers take time off from work to smoke. There may be interviewers who are smokers themselves and may offer you a cigarette; decline it politely. Many interviewers offer a cigarette as a courtesy but most dislike it when the candidate accepts the offer. The interviewers like to keep a modicum of formality in the interview process.
24. *Manners are very important.* They reflect your upbringing and culture. Words that show manners are—“Yes please!”, “I beg your pardon”, “Thank you”, “I wish to state”, etc. While words show manners, so do actions such as knocking the door before entering, seeking permission to enter, sitting only when invited to, shaking hands, greeting the interviewer, etc.
25. *Be poised during the interview.* Poise is the way you carry your body while walking or sitting. You should sit or stand upright. Your body conveys non-verbal messages, this is popularly called *body language*. For example, if you cross your arms and clutch yourself it shows you are insecure and closed; if you sit with your body facing away from the interviewer, it shows non-cooperation and suspicion; if you fling your arms over the



back of your chair, it shows over confidence or possessing a 'couldn't care less' attitude; if you cross your legs it shows that you are on guard and defensive; trembling hands and fingers will reveal your nervousness. How you should sit in an interview has already been explained. Interviewers keep the interview chair fairly away from the table to observe your body language. Some do away with a table in between and speak across an open seating arrangement like a sofa arrangement.

26. *Eye contact* is another form of body language. It is an important part of your personality. Eye contact with the interviewer shows self-confidence, honesty, and veracity. Lack of eye contact shows untruthfulness, fear, and lack of confidence. Maintaining eye contact is a difficult process, especially for women in such cultures, where women are trained not to look into the eyes of men to show their humility, respect, and coyness. However, an interviewer will accept this only if he/she has done adequate study of the candidate. Eye contact is vital to make a positive impression.
27. *Seek clarifications to questions you do not understand.* You can do so by asking, "Excuse me sir, could you please repeat the question?" The interviewer may reword the question for your comprehension. Nothing is more annoying to an interviewer than receiving another answer to a question just because you have not understood the question in the first place.
28. *Be natural.* Candidates sometimes adopt an accent which they cannot sustain throughout the interview. Interviewers appreciate a natural person rather than an actor who they can detect immediately. Be yourself while maintaining the formal postures and manners befitting the occasion.
29. *Show you are reliable.* The interview is the first test of reliability, so make sure you arrive on time (better yet, a few minutes early). By doing this, you are trying to tell the employer that you will show up for work on time, will get things done on time, get along with fellow workers, and can be trusted.



EMPLOYER'S SELL

30. *Ask questions.* We have already learnt that an interview is a dialogue of mutuality. Do not consider yourself as powerless and the interviewer as mighty. This kind of belief will only stunt the full potential of the interview. You must not forget that the organisation treats the interview with equal importance as you do. They want to fill the job with the right person just as you want the job. It is, therefore, important that both the interviewer and you jointly create such an atmosphere in an interview that it brings about the mutuality of purpose. Your contribution towards the process is to ask questions to see if the organisation and the job suits you. Some questions that can be asked are:
- The organisation's mission and objectives
 - The organisation's values (that define the culture)
 - Career prospects

- Nature of the job
- Who you will be reporting to
- Working conditions
- Terms of employment
- Next step in the recruitment process
- When you expect to hear from the organisation
- How much notice period you will need to join
- Facilities and benefits that the organisation offers, e.g. transportation, housing, medical, superannuation, meals during office hours, staff canteen, etc.
- What will be your biggest challenge if you get the job?
- What is it in your résumé that attracted the employer to you?
- Expectations of the organisation from you?
- What level of responsibility can you expect in this position?
- Why the job you have applied for is available?
- What training programs do they have for new employees?
- Is there a typical career path for a person in this position?
- How are employees evaluated in the organisation?
- Know about a typical day in the department for which you have been interviewed.

Don't forget to ask questions that involve the management of other employees if you're looking for a supervisory or management position. Some of these questions include

- (1) How much authority will I have to run my own department?
- (2) How many employees will I be supervising?
- (3) May I please see the company organisational chart? and
- (4) Will any employees be let go or transferred from my department?

The better prepared you are to ask questions at the end of your interview the bigger impact you'll leave on your interviewer. Questions show that you are interested in the job and have taken the time to be ready for your interview.

31. *Salary negotiation.* This is perhaps the most embarrassing moment for you and the interviewer. However, this need not be so. Every interviewer knows that the purpose of your wanting the job is dependant on your salary expectations. Many organisations advertise their salary in the job advertisement, in this case you would have already approved it while applying. Many organisations, on the other hand, keep the salary confidential to be discussed at the interview. It is not rude to ask for your remuneration terms. As a matter of fact, interviewers expect you to ask about the salary. When you ask for the salary terms, you can expect the following responses:

- "We will discuss it at the next stage of the recruitment process", which means that they want to keep the salary details close till they are sure to recruit you.



- “What do you expect?” is a cue that the salary is negotiable and they want to ascertain whether your expectations are less than what they offer. In such a situation, it is best to tell them what you are presently receiving and also let them know that you expect an increase to make it worthwhile to move. Normally, a 25–30 per cent increase is acceptable. If their offer is above your present salary, they are likely to tell you right away. If not, they will need time to evaluate whether they can match your expectations or not.
- “Your CTC (Cost to Company) will be”. Nowadays companies give a lump sum amount leaving you to do your tax planning as to how you wish to distribute your salary. The organisation may stipulate the basic salary to conform to the salary structure of the organisation as it also reflects on leave pay, medical, and superannuation benefits.



While salary is very personal to the individual, it should be viewed in total terms such as the benefits and perquisites offered in addition, the chances of career growth wherein you may take a cut in remuneration to make a giant leap in future; the company’s commitment to training and how they will increase your value in future; the quality of work life in terms of working hours, week-end breaks, holidays in the year, facilities for the family, work culture, amount of empowerment given to perform, the reward and recognition systems; the convenience of working with the organisation while keeping your personal life in balance; etc.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

32. The way you conclude the interview is as vital as the main body of the interview. It is the parting impression that you leave prior to the interview. The following statement typifies a good ending—“I thank you sir/madam for providing me this opportunity of an interview. I look forward to hearing from you again”. You should then rise and wish according to the time of the day with a handshake maintaining eye-contact. Remember to address the interviewer by name. Open the door while facing the interviewer and shut the door quietly behind you. Often the interviewer will lead you to the door as a courtesy. Wish him or her again when exiting.
33. It is prudent to stay awhile in the outer office in case the interviewer has an afterthought and wishes to speak to you. It is imperative to wish the secretary or interview coordinator before leaving. Remember that they play a major role in influencing decisions because they see you ‘off guard’ and can form another perspective about you.



If you're working on your qualification so that you can get one of those jobs you might want to apply, you can appear in the job interview just for the experience of it. In this case, the important thing to remember is that you are realistic about your chances of getting the job.

Many employers want to hire people when they are at the beginning of their career so that they can shape them and guide them in the direction that they need. This can work to your advantage if you're just out of university and are looking for an entry level job. Some employers want to hire people who have the qualification as well as the experience that they are looking for. This often means less training costs for the company. When you go to your job interview, be honest about the knowledge and the experience that you have. You may not always get the job but every interview should be a learning experience that prepares you for the next one.

WHY DO CANDIDATES GET REJECTED?

In my experience with interviews over the years and by asking the views of other interviewers, I have found the following common reasons as to why candidates get rejected:



RÉSUMÉ

- Poor résumé
- Untidy résumé
- Incomplete résumé
- Stated profile unsuitable for the job
- Under-qualified/over-qualified
- Poor/No cover letter

PERSONALITY

- Badly dressed and ill-groomed
- Lack of courtesy and manners
- Lack of confidence
- Aggressive and flashy
- Dishonest
- Lack of tact and diplomacy
- Immature
- Lack of sincerity
- Artificial
- Lack of vitality
- No eye-contact
- Feeble handshake
- Name dropper (uses influential names to get selected)



- Uses parents influence
- Lazy
- Low moral standards
- Non-punctual
- Extreme ideas and values
- Not a team player
- Bluffer
- Poor posture—sloppy
- Casual approach
- Disrespectful
- Is a clock-watcher (more interested in the number of hours than job completion)
- Restless and fidgety
- Proud and aloof
- Does not fit in with the organisation culture
- Strong prejudices
- Overbearing and arrogant
- Immature

INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Late for the interview
- Does not shut the door
- Sits without permission
- Poor poise
- Unable to comprehend questions
- Disorganised answers
- Superficial answers
- Answers to questions are unconvincing
- Does not ask questions
- Criticism of past employer
- Evasive in answering some questions
- No knowledge of the new organisation

COMMUNICATION

- Poor communication skills
- Poor listener
- Uses slang and jargon
- Inaudible
- Speaks too loud
- Lack of humour
- Uses gesticulations to express
- Rude
- Excitable when expressing

MOTIVATION

- Over emphasis on money than growth
- Lack of career goals
- Over ambitious
- Unrealistic aspirations

JOB KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

- Lack of job knowledge
- Lack of experience
- Not committed to profession
- Lack of past achievements
- More bookish than hands-on
- Has not upgraded himself/herself recently
- Lack of product knowledge

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Disturbed family circumstances
- No mobility in transfers due to family commitments
- Inflexible with time
- Residence far away from office
- Has no personal transport (for outdoor sales jobs)
- Joining time from previous job far too long
- Does not possess a passport (for overseas assignments)
- Poor health
- Under or over aged
- Salary expectations too high
- No career plan



Of course, even great answers to the questions will not get you a job offer if you come in with other problems. Here, in order, are the 10 **attitude** strikeouts that most often condemn job candidates.

1. Doesn't ask questions
2. Condemnation of past employer
3. Inability to take criticism
4. Poor personal appearance
5. Indecisive, cynical, lazy
6. Overbearing, over aggressive, "know it all" attitude
7. Late for the interview
8. Failure to look at interviewer during the interview
9. Unable to express herself/himself clearly
10. Overemphasis on money

chapter

6

Techniques that Interviewers Employ

INTRODUCTION

This chapter would be most useful to you as it contains views from the interviewer who is always on the other side of the table. You will see how interviewers attempt to get information out of you. I have often heard candidates proclaiming that they did well at the interview but were shocked and disappointed when they were not selected. Now, the question is—what went wrong? The failure in all probability lay in the techniques employed by the interviewer and the trap that the candidate unknowingly fell into. Here is a glimpse from the other side of the table.

1. WHILE WAITING

INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUE

Be ready. Your assessment could well start while waiting in the foyer to the interview room. Modern offices may have a CCTV (closed circuit TV) where a camera is positioned in the foyer and the interviewer observes you on the monitor. Alternatively, a receptionist/secretary is positioned to coordinate the interview. He/She may be 'planted' to observe your behaviour while waiting.

YOUR TACTIC

Try to be friendly with the receptionist with small talk. Try to find out about the organisation and the name of the interviewer if you don't know it. You

could ask for the company brochure to browse through while waiting. If there are other candidates, make friends with them. It shows your confidence and people orientation. Don't just sit there. Do something as explained earlier. If you don't have anything to do then review your resume and make notes. While waiting, don't slouch in the chair, sit upright. The interviewer will observe the following:

- (i) Your congeniality
- (ii) Your dress
- (iii) Your posture
- (iv) Your active disposition
- (v) Your eagerness to know more about the organisation

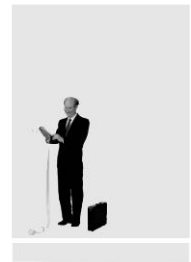
2. ENTRY

INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUE

The interviewer keeps a distance between the door and the interview table. It is said the interviewers form an opinion about you within the first 30 seconds and thereafter try to defend that opinion. This is an unfortunate reality. Let us hope that the first impression is a positive one because the interviewer will overlook some negative aspects during the interview. If your first impression is bad then you will have to perform outstandingly to overcome the first negative impression. The first 30 seconds is largely spent on your entry and greeting. The impact must be outstanding to form the first positive opinion.

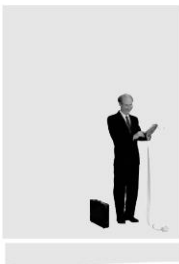
YOUR TACTIC

Make sure that you have groomed impeccably as explained earlier. Smell nice. Spray a deodorant or light cologne. The tap on the door must be firm but not too loud. Seek permission to enter by simply saying "May I enter, Sir/Madam?" If you have learnt the name of the interviewer then use it while seeking permission to enter; it immediately breaks barriers. Once given the permission, *shut the door* behind you. Interviewers get peeved with the door left open. You should not hear, "Please close the door behind you!" Shut the door softly while facing the interviewer. Walk erect to the interview table with a *smile*. The smile tells that you are confident and makes the environment pleasant and amiable. The interviewer is likely to smile back at you. Some may not — don't bother. They may be trying to put pressure on you perhaps. Greet the interviewer by saying, "Good morning Mr./Ms, nice to meet you." Offer a handshake firmly if the interviewer offers it. Wait to be given permission to sit. Sit with your back upright to the back of the chair, with your knees together, and your hands clasped on your lap. You may place your document folder on the desk. By now, the interviewer would have already made the first impressions of you such as:



- (i) Well groomed (would be a good representative of our company)
- (ii) Polite with manners (can trust him with our clients)
- (iii) Smells nice (personal hygiene is good)
- (iv) Has a firm handshake (is confident)
- (v) Knows my name (has taken trouble to find out)
- (vi) Has an upright posture (person with spine)

3. SEATING



INTERVIEWER TECHNIQUE

Sometimes, the interviewer will keep a desk or table between you and him/her. This may be done to establish that the interviewer is the boss. He/She enjoys that superior power by creating ominous environment. The interviewer may keep your chair at a distance from the table to observe your posture and to evaluate the volume of your voice from distance. Unprepared candidates will be intimidated. All that the interviewer wants is respect. Some candidates prefer the table in between. It acts as a psychological ‘protection’ from the onslaught of questions.

Better trained interviewers will have a sofa seating without a table in between. They use this technique to make the environment casual to make you feel less intimidated and relaxed. Some candidates feel ‘exposed’ in such a seating and therefore, uncomfortable. Interviewers sometimes pause to see whether you seek permission to sit.

YOUR TACTIC

First wait for the interviewer to give you the permission to sit. Your posture is the key factor here. Sit upright with your back to the chair. Keep your knees together and hands on the lap. Keep your documents on the table. Low sofas can become a problem when there is a tendency to slouch. In such a case sit upright at the edge of the sofa with the documents and hands clasped on your lap. Whatever is the seating arrangement, always show respect towards the interviewer and convey confidence by smiling. The interviewer will make the following mental notes about you:

- (i) Good posture
- (ii) Confident (is not intimidated)

4. PUTTING AT EASE

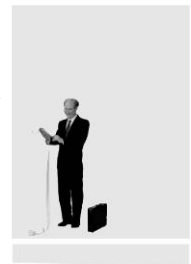
INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUE

The moment you sit, the interviewer will ask light questions to put you at ease. The interviewer may ask questions like, “Did you have difficulty finding this

place?” or “I see that you are a cricket enthusiast!” or “The weather has been bad recently, isn’t it?” The intention is to set the ball rolling. This first question could come from the interviewer within the first 30 seconds before he forms any impression about you.

YOUR TACTIC

Recognise the question and its purpose. Give a brief answer, but do not give a “yes” or “no” as your answer. Your reply could well set the tone for the interview. Convert such a question to your advantage. Lets take an example of the first question mentioned above, you could answer the question, by saying, “No, Mr. ... I had made it a point to see the location a few days ago to make sure I wasn’t late for this interview”. The interviewer will see that you took the trouble to locate the site and were indeed on time. What an impressive way to start! If the opening questions are on your hobbies and interests then it is an opportunity for you to showcase your knowledge on the subject. Impress them with the depth of information you have on the subject. The interviewer will value your commitment to your interest and will believe that you will continue this trait in your job when hired. Lets take another example mentioned above—the third question which could be answered with, “I am an all weather person!” Naturally these answers should be rehearsed while preparing for the interview. Be cheerful while answering.



At this stage the interviewer would have assessed the following:

- (i) Your communications skills
- (ii) Your positive thinking
- (iii) Your flow of thought and logic
- (iv) Your commitment to interests and hobbies
- (v) Your cheerfulness
- (vi) Your amiability
- (vii) Your interest
- (viii) Your thoroughness

5. QUESTION TECHNIQUES

INTERVIEWER’S TECHNIQUES

An interviewer has an array of question techniques to get what he/she wants. Basically, there are three kinds of question techniques:

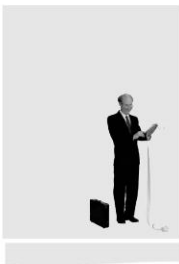
1. Closed Questions

These are used by the interviewers to find specific information about you. They can be answered with a “yes” or “no” or a single sentence. They are usually used to check facts or clarify details in the resume. Such questions would normally start with **Do, Have, Will**, etc. Examples of such questions

are, “Do you have to serve a notice period?” or “Have you got a certificate?” or “Will you be leaving town in the next fortnight?” These questions can be answered with a “yes” or “no”.

2. Open Questions

These questions are asked to get the maximum information from you and to ascertain your knowledge on the subject. Open questions start with **What, Where, Which, When, Why and How**. Such questions cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no”. Examples of open questions are: “Why do you wish to leave your present job?”, “What are your present responsibilities?”, “When do you plan to join if selected?”, “How do you plan to reach office from where you stay?”, etc. Such questions require detailed answers.



3. Hypothetical Questions

These questions are used to evaluate your analytical ability. Such questions would start with **If, Suppose, or Imagine**. Some examples of such hypothetical questions are: “If you were selected, what would you do on your first day?”, “Suppose you had to put together a project team, how would you go about it?”, “Imagine that your equipment broke down, what emergency methods would you employ?”, etc. Such questions are meant to evaluate your analytical ability, logic, and experience.

YOUR TACTIC

Recognise these questions. Be brief with your answer which should preferably be a “yes” or “no” where applicable, to closed questions. Open questions need detailed explanations but do not be verbose while replying to open questions. Cover the topic in a concise fashion. Regarding hypothetical questions, there are perhaps no specific answers to them. The interviewer is evaluating your logical thought process and how well your experience will apply to the situations cited.

6. LISTENING

INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUE

A good interviewer will speak less and make you speak more. They are good listeners and will evaluate every word you say. When the question is posed, the interviewer uses the excess capacity of his/her mind, to understand, analyse, and evaluate what you say.

YOUR TACTIC

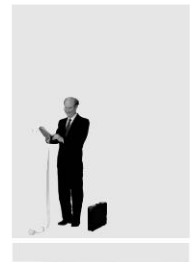
While answering notice the posture and expression of the interviewer. Your success is indicated by the interviewer's eye-contact, nod of the head, smile and even leaning forward while listening to you. Lack of interest

is indicated by break in eye contact, fidgeting with something on the table, leaning back in boredom, yawning or interrupting your discourse. It is important that the interviewer shows interest at all times. You can recapture the interest of the interviewer by modulating your voice, changing the direction of your topic or asking him/her a question such as, “Would you like me to continue?” Enthusiasm is a sure way to captivate your interviewer.

7. INTERVIEW FATIGUE

INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUES

This is a common ailment of most interviewers, especially those who interview candidates back-to-back throughout the day. They break the monotony between interviews by taking a walk, sending important faxes, making phone calls, ordering coffee, or visiting the cloak room. But, if the fatigue sets in during the interview, they would prefer to stand and interview you, pace up and down the room, order black coffee, etc. One effective technique employed by interviewers is to ask open-ended questions to get the candidate to talk more, giving a break in questioning. It is the timing of these questions that distinguishes between probing questions and ‘break’ questions, which come towards the end of the interview. Fatigue questions can descend from the serious to the lighthearted ones such as “Tell me about you” or “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” or “How was your college life?” Sometimes they break the interviewing process by asking to see your certificates.



YOUR TACTIC

Recognise the interviewer's fatigue. Symptoms would be—slumping in the chair, tired gestures, walking up and down the room, having no more questions to ask, idly thumbing through your résumé, or ordering coffee. The interviewer may ask you to join in coffee. Refuse the offer, because the interviewer wants to be in control of time and does not want to lengthen the interview process with you having to finish the coffee. Interview fatigue does not mean taking things easy. Remember, the interviewer is tired, not you. This is a golden time to suggest questions to the interviewer such as “Would you like me to tell you about my achievements in my last job?” The interviewer would welcome it especially if he/she cannot think of any more questions to ask. Remember, the interviewer is listening and it is the time to be enthusiastic and give good accounts of you. Enthusiasm can be energising to both, you and the interviewer. Even when posed with a lighthearted question as mentioned before, treat it seriously and answer it to the best of your ability. **Humour** is magic in such situations. Making the interviewer laugh is energising. But be humorous only if you are good at it.

8. EVALUATING PERSONAL QUALITIES

INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUES

Employers look for something more than technical or specific job-related skills, when hiring new employees. Employers look for some personal qualities during the hiring process through observation and question techniques. Knowing these qualities and identifying them in yourself will lead to your success at interviews. This will increase your chances of getting the job that you desire.

To identify your strengths in these areas, the interviewer may ask behaviour-based or situational questions, such as “Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker, and how you resolved it?” This type of question is becoming more and more common in interviews nowadays.

Many employers are asking **behavioral questions** in the job interviews. This means that rather than focusing on your resume and your accomplishments the interview will focus more on questions that are open-ended. This means that there won't be one single right answer to a question but a wide spectrum of answers instead. You'll be given real life circumstances and your response to these situations will be scrutinised by the interviewer. You can give your experiences while answering such questions.

For instance, you might be asked to describe a certain event, experience, or project. You may have to talk about how you handled a particular situation and what the end result was. The goal behind this type of interviewing is to rate your performance in everyday situations that may arise while you're on the job. Your experience in handling those situations is important.

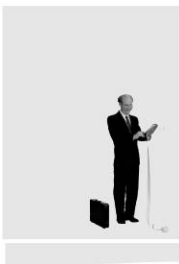
YOUR TACTIC

It is more difficult to prepare for behavioural questions than the traditional questions with a right or wrong answer. However, you can prepare for behavioural questions by focussing on your behaviour. Take some time to review your past performance as well as your personal work ethics and how they might apply to the company that you want to work for. Always answer behavioural questions with a great deal of honesty and candidness. Employers want to see you exactly as you are so that there are no surprises for them when they hire you.

Interviewer will ask you questions that require detail, understanding, and depth in your response. For example, interviewer might ask you, “What were you thinking when that happened” or “Tell me more about how you handled that incident and why”. There is no way you can prepare for these types of questions but you can be ready to answer all questions with enthusiasm and integrity. Ask someone to give you a practice interview by coming up with questions that are open-ended such as

1. talk about the riskiest decision that you've made,
2. describe a time where you were in danger of missing a deadline, or
3. give an example of a bad decision that you've made and what the end result was.

Think about your reply before answering such questions.



Behavioural questions in the job interview give employers a good idea of how you think and how you'll fit into their company view. The key to a good interview is to take your time before answering and to be as candid as you can.

Make sure to offer examples when asked open-ended questions. Answering with just a “yes” or “no” leaves the employer wondering if you honestly stand by your answer.

Personal Qualities

Manners

This is ascertained by observation, especially when you seek permission to enter the room or sit down. The interviewers observe whether you wish them when you first meet them and how you address them in the course of the discussion. They also notice whether you say words like “Please”, “Thank you”, “I beg your pardon”, “Kindly” and “Excuse me”. Use these words regularly. They are cheap but get you a lot of mileage.

Loyalty

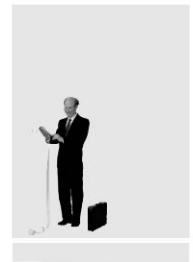
Questions such as “Why are you leaving your present organisation?” or “Tell me about your boss” are full of intention. They want to see whether you would let down your previous organisation or uphold it. Interviewers like candidates who fiercely defend their previous organisation because it implies that they would do the same with their organisation. Never let down your present or previous organisations or those who work for them.

Job-hopper

No organisation likes a job-hopper. *A job-hopper is one who changes jobs very frequently.* If you are a person who changes jobs frequently, then beware, because any interviewer will fear that you will do the same to them. Unfortunately, in present times those between 20–30 years of age change jobs frequently for better remuneration. This applies to males more than females who stay for much longer time in a company. Most candidates give the reason of *better prospects* in their résumé or in person. This is wrong as it implies that you are a money chaser rather than a career person. If you have several job moves in your résumé, then you will need to think of a smart answer. A disagreeable superior is a bad reason to cite. It shows you cannot get along with your superiors. Domestic reasons are another wrong reason to quote. It shows that your personal life is interfering with your professional life. I would like to share one good reply I received—“*In my earlier years I was not sure of what I wanted in terms of my career, hence the several job changes. I know now what I want and find that your organisation meets my aspirations.*” This explanation did not let his previous organisations down but in fact gave importance to the organisation he was applying for.

Integrity

This is evaluated through questions like, “What would you like to be—good or famous?” If your answer is “good”, it indicates your priority to be law abiding,



honest, and fair. The answer “famous” may indicate on the positive side, ambition and a desire to achieve but on the negative side, it could also mean attaining fame at any cost. There was one candidate who gave an acceptable answer by saying, “*I could be good while achieving fame.*”

Teamwork

This is one quality valued in all organisations. Most interviewers must evaluate whether you are a team person or not. They are most likely to pose a hypothetical question such as, “It is your day off and a colleague asks you to come in and help clear the backlog of work. What would you do?” Obviously, your answer should be that you would like to help your team members.

Attitude

Your attitude towards life would be important to an organisation. They could ask a question like, “If you won a lottery of a million how would you spend it?” or “If you had a long week-end ahead, how would you spend it?” Most organisations would like a person who is purposeful and achievement-oriented. One good answer I received for the former question was, “*I will keep a large portion aside for my personal development by attending courses which as you know are very expensive.*” I was personally impressed with the answer because it indicated that the candidate would always be on the quest for continuous improvement and education.

The second question on the weekend solicits how you value time. For heaven’s sake do not say that you sleep or watch television the whole day. It shows an inert person who does not use time gainfully. Going out of town on a bike is a better answer. Time-based answers must show how productive you make your time for your betterment.

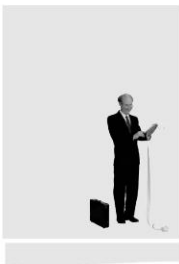
Risk-taking

This quality is evaluated by a hypothetical question like, “Suppose you had a choice to pick or not to pick one of two cards. One card will double the money in your wallet while the other will confiscate whatever you have. What choice would you make?” Naturally, the one who picks a card is a risk-taker whereas the one who does not, plays safe. Are any of these options right or wrong? Not necessarily. It gives an input for the job profile.

9. PRESENTATIONS

INTERVIEWER’S TECHNIQUE

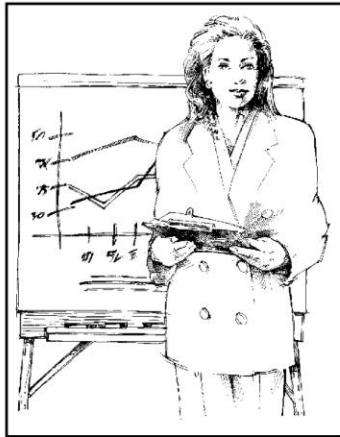
Sometimes an interviewer will ask you to make a presentation on a subject. These are usually asked at middle management positions that require considerable communication skills with logic and knowledge. They will give you a case or topic and give you time to prepare and present. They want to see whether you are able to communicate before a panel or not. They also want to



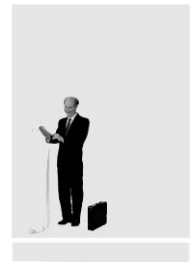
check your confidence, your communication skills, your depth of knowledge, your experience, and the logical way you put your ideas.

YOUR TACTIC

Ask for the tools you may need to prepare a presentation. It could be a laptop to help you make your presentation using PowerPoint software. A PowerPoint



presentation would be more effective. Alternatively, you can ask for flip chart, paper and pens. In case of a flip chart you can put bullet points to guide you through. If either is not available, then use your notebook to pen down your salient points. You could keep the notebook open while presenting. Remember, diagrams speak better than words. So it is desirable that you represent your ideas through flow charts. Use information you know. Do not elaborate on facts you are sketchy about. Familiarity with the contents will give you confidence.



10. CLOSING AN INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER'S TECHNIQUE

An interviewer will indicate that the interview is concluded by several methods:

1. He/She could ask a question, "I have nothing more to ask, do you have any questions?"
2. The interviewer may close your file.
3. The interviewer may stand up.
4. The interviewer may say, "Thank you for coming for the interview, you shall hear from us shortly".

YOUR TACTIC

Make sure you have asked questions before the close of the interview. The types of questions to ask have been mentioned earlier. In the above-mentioned first point, the interviewer gave you the chance to ask questions. This is a trained interviewer, but many may not be trained and may use other options. You may ask questions by simply saying, "May I take a little of your time to seek some clarifications that I have?" No interviewer will deny your request. Be brief. It is better to list them in writing in a diary and read them out. An interviewer will appreciate the preparation you made to pen down questions. It also shows your interest in the organisation.

Chapter

7

Types of Interviews and Selection Methods

INTERVIEWS

As mentioned earlier, an interview is an opportunity provided to you to be evaluated for selection and for you to evaluate whether the organisation is suitable for you or not. Organisations approach this task in many ways, with specific purposes and objectives. It is important to ascertain quickly as to what type of interview you are facing, to be able to make a stance that fulfils the purpose of the interview. Some of these types of interviews are mentioned below.

DIRECTED OR STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Most professional interviewers would use structured interview, especially when there is constraint on time and they have predetermined exactly what they want to know from the candidate. The interviewer, very often, would have the questions or a checklist prepared in advance. Such interviews are not personal and are based on soliciting facts. It leaves very little room to understand you as a person. This kind of approach is adopted by employment bureaus, preliminary screening boards, or placement consultants at pre-screening stages. The best way to face such type of interviews is to have your facts ready with the supporting certificates and testimonials.

UNDIRECTED OR UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Undirected or unstructured interviews are the most popular type of interviews. Their objective is to probe you thoroughly. This is achieved by the interviewer by asking open-ended questions to facilitate you to speak more. Normally, they use these questions to clarify your résumé or to solicit information that is not usually found in résumé such as your motivations, aspirations, personality traits, etc. Detailed explanation and frequently asked questions about undirected interview are mentioned in Chapter 9 of this book, which will give you a taste of undirected interviews with probable answers.

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

A preliminary interview is conducted initially either in person or by phone, to determine whether you have the basic qualifications to warrant a subsequent interview. This interview is conducted usually by the HR department of the organisation. The interview could be a combination of direct and indirect questions to gather facts and also to understand your personality, ambitions, and intentions. Such preliminary interviews could typically ask questions like:

1. Why do you wish to join our organisation?
2. What are your career goals?
3. What are your interests?
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

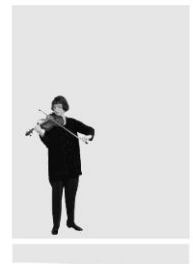
MULTIPLE INTERVIEWS

Multiple interviews follow preliminary interview. Multiple interviews could be with one person who makes the decision or with several people, individually or in a panel. In these interviews, the focus is on how you would perform the job in relation to the company's goals and objectives. After the interviews are completed, the interviewers meet and pool their information about your suitability for the job. A variation on this approach involves a series of interviews in which unsuitable candidates are screened out at each succeeding level.

PANEL INTERVIEWS

Panel interviews are popular because they *save time*. Panel interviews include all interviewers who are involved in the hiring decision. They meet together to question you from their respective perspectives and later they discuss about you and give their decision then and there. A panel may have two to seven people.

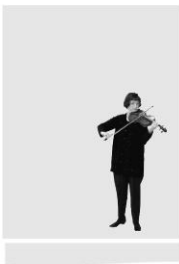
Of all the interviews, a panel interview can be the most stressful one because you find yourself trying to sway several decision-makers rather than one or



two. Try to relate to each interviewer in the panel when he/she asks a question. It may appear difficult, but it is not impossible.

Your preparation would be the same, as it were for an individual interviewer, except that now the questions are asked by different people.

Remember, that individuals like to hear their name during a conversation. It's important to know who is interviewing you, so ask their names and write them down within your notes—in order of where each interviewer is seated. Don't be afraid to use their names or ask questions throughout the process. Addressing them by name works like magic. Conversely, using the wrong names can backfire.



Another great technique to utilise within a panel interview, or within any other group setting, is to cross reference the latest question with a previous one. For example, if you answered a question by Jane Doe, and you can incorporate that answer into another question asked by Frank Doe, you'll start navigating the outcome of the interview. An answer might be:

“I understand why you are asking specific questions about my acquisition skills, Mr. Doe. As Ms Jane mentioned a few minutes ago, acquisitions are a vital aspect to businesses your size and without a trained and seasoned acquisition person at the helm, it can cost your company money. To answer your question, and expand upon what Ms. Jane asked earlier, I ...”

Do you see where I'm going with this? This answer is now tending to the concerns of two individuals on the panel, rather than one.

During the process, members of the panel will mention facts that you will need to remember. Just as you jotted down the name of each panel member, you can also make small notations of each person's concerns or specific questions. For example, the department manager may have focused his or her questions on specific administrative portions of the job. The key, however, is to mark down items that are relevant to each interviewer. Although they are a team and have one common goal, but each has differentiating concerns.

It's difficult to give enough eye contact to each individual without making your head and neck look like a lawn sprinkler. Try your best to look individuals in the eye and focus on speaking to each person equally, focusing heavily towards the one who asked the question.

Unfortunately, a panel interview can be stressful for jobseekers because they feel outnumbered. It's important to remember that you can be a possible asset to their business, and they obviously feel you're a viable candidate, or they wouldn't have scheduled the interview. Stay positive, remain calm, and answer each question thoroughly and effectively.

BOARD INTERVIEWS

Board interviews are normally held at the final selection stage or for senior appointments. The board consists of senior members of the organisation, who bring collective experiences to ascertain your suitability for

the organisation. Such interviews can appear to be harrowing as the candidate appears like a hapless victim in front of a large number of panelists. Finding a common denominator is hard to find. The best way out is to recognise that you have reached this stage and that you matter to them. Treat each panel member as an individual and answer them one by one, while sweeping your eyes over them periodically to include them in the discussion. It would be wonderful to know their individual names and use them when addressing them. It is important to keep yourself calm and confident.

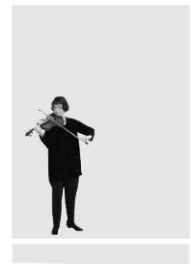
STRESS INTERVIEWS

The interviewer intentionally attempts to upset you, so that they can see how you react under pressure. You may be asked questions that make you uncomfortable or you may be interrupted when you are speaking. Although, it is uncommon for an entire interview to be conducted under stress conditions, it is common for the interviewer to incorporate stress questions as a part of a traditional interview. There are two types of stress—*physical* and *emotional*. Physical stress can be evaluated in physical group tasks. It is the emotional ones that are tricky. There are ethical issues on the use of stress interviews. Candidates feel humiliated and cornered bringing out sometimes unusual responses including anger, crying, blank outs, uncontrollable giggles, etc. Be alert, when asked such questions. Recognise that it is a stress question. Be calm and even make light of the situation. Some examples of stress questions are:

1. I don't like you. Convince me to start liking you.
2. I don't like the colour of your dress. Why did you wear it?
3. I don't think that women will be able to do this job. Why should we select you? (asked to a woman candidate)
4. You look nervous. Why are you so?

SITUATIONAL INTERVIEWS

In this method, situations (caselets) are given of common problems you may encounter on the job. Your responses to these situations are measured against pre-determined standards. This approach is often used as one part of a traditional interview, rather than as an entire interview level. Some interviewers may even employ role-play, which is acting a situation out. One that I commonly used was asking a candidate to sell me a pen. I was the customer and he/she the salesperson. When presented with a situation like this, compose yourself. You may even pause to think and decide how you are going to approach this situation. There is no magic formula except to put yourself into the situation and imagine how you would approach the situation using your experience and skills.



GROUP INTERVIEWS

Group interviews are used by selection panels for the following two reasons:

1. When there are too many candidates to interview in a given day, this method enables the interviewer/s to assess large bodies of candidates and also saves time. This process takes place at the preliminary stages of a selection process.
2. This method helps the interviewers in observing your behaviour in a group. This is important as organisations consist of large bodies of people working together towards a common objective. Such large bodies are further broken down into sub-groups, who further distribute activities into teams. For example, an organisation divides its workforce into several functions, each with its own distinctive specialisation like marketing, finance, operations, human resources, etc. These departments will then have sub-sections, like in the case of finance, the responsibilities will be distributed among audit, income accounting, credit, payroll, cashiering, etc. Each sub-section would have its own team to fulfil larger goals. Interviewers want to see if you can work in a team or not.



It must be understood that group interviews are a part of the selection process and not an end in itself. Group behaviour is only one part of an individual's total personality. Group interviews are taken essentially in three ways:

I. GROUP DISCUSSION (GD)

A group of candidates will be asked to sit in a semi-circle or a full circle with or without a table in between. The group will be given a topic for discussion. Some groups may be given time to prepare while most will have to discuss spontaneously. Sometimes, interviewers give two to three topics for the group to choose from but assess how they go about choosing it. Once the topic is chosen the group is given 15–30 minutes to discuss the topic. The interviewer/s observes the following in the group discussion:



1. Role Behaviour

It is believed that when individuals are placed in undefined circumstances, they adopt roles that they are most comfortable with. The following roles emerge:

Leader

It is misconstrued that the leader is one who talks the most. So each member of the group tries to out-talk the other resulting sometimes in chaos. The leader is the one who initiates the discussion if the group is frozen. If there is

someone else who initiates the discussion the leader is one who contributes to the discussion with quality and content. He/She is the one who offers various alternatives to the point of discussion. The leader is the one who listens just as much as he/she contributes by speaking. One major role of the leader is to see that everyone gets a chance to speak. He/She will ensure the psychological and emotional health of the group and diffuse unhealthy disagreements. He/She finds solutions and alternatives to deadlocks. An important role of the leader is to keep account of the time. He/She nudges the group forward and keeps the discussion flowing, especially when the group is spending too much time on a topic. The leader likes to arrive at a conclusion to offer to the interviewer/s at the end of the debate. A leader is one who sets norms of the discussion such as permitting everyone to speak, or an agreement that a conclusion must be reached in a given time. The leader may even assign roles to everyone such as time-keeping, noting down points, etc.

The Challenger

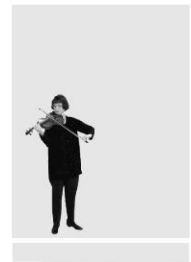
A leader is distinguished by his quality of having courage to disagree with the trend or point of discussion. He/She offers plausible arguments against the motion but tends to be firm in his/her stance. He/She creates 'tension' in the group thereby generating excitement and liveliness in the group. There is nothing wrong in challenging the trend of the debate provided the person is willing to listen to others in the group and is able to get his/her viewpoints across in a civil manner. There is a difference between *assertion* and *aggression*. Assertion is when you uphold a belief, while aggression is when you attack a personality. Assertion is preferred and interviewers are quick to distinguish between the two.

Active Debater

He/She is the one who gets into the discussion almost immediately. He/She contributes on the strength of his/her confidence with people and his/her communication skills. He/She adds the content to the discussion and other debaters take stances for or against him/her. Such members are valued provided they add content and quality to the discussion and not speak just for the sake of saying something. There are some who are excitable and itch to be on the move. Such people are valued provided they give others a chance to give their point of view. They keep the ball rolling.

Maintainers

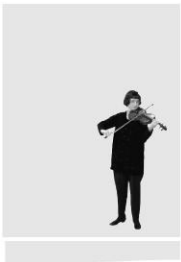
There are some members in the group who prefer to care for the health of the group. They try to diffuse heating up arguments with their wit and humour. They pacify members who are hurt with comments and stop those who become aggressive. The leader takes on this role in the absence of a group health monitor.



Isolationist

He/She is the one who is overcome with the assertion and communication skills of other members. He/She would stay quiet during most of the discussion. It is not that he/she is not alert to the discussion. He/She may have some brilliant ideas but does not get the chance to enter the discussion. The leader is quick to notice this and draws this person into the mainstream. Sometimes the isolationist may start parallel discussions out of the mainstream because he/she is unable to get into the mainstream.

We cannot say which role is important or unimportant. It really depends on the position/s for which selections are being held. Management positions obviously value leaders; debaters are preferred for jobs that involve public interface like customer service, public relations, sales and marketing, purchasing, etc; the health monitors may be suitable for human resource jobs while the isolationists may be suitable for lonely jobs like research, accounting, IT, etc.

**2. Communication Skills**

Another important outcome of a group discussion is the *proficiency in communications*. A group discussion throws up an individual's ability to put forward ideas forcefully, articulately, and logically. The command over the language is essential for successful communication. The ability to listen and integrate others' viewpoints with one's own is also assessed. Customer contact jobs may need better communication skills than backoffice ones. Leadership roles will need good communication skills than those who follow the leader, who have to be good listeners.

3. Content

Very often group members feel that it is the quantity of speaking which matters and not its quality. This is a misguided opinion. *It is not how much you say but what you say that matters*. The content is measured by your depth of knowledge and how logically and clearly it is put forward. Alternative viewpoints are always welcome to make the discussion richer. The interviewer must be *stirred* by the discussion.

4. Emotional Stability

Members in a group are under a bit of pressure, especially since all are aspiring to be selected. An immature group would build up this pressure by being inconsiderate to others. Some become argumentative, dogmatic, overbearing, biased, or emotionally aroused while others become insecure, quiet, withdrawn, and nervous. Interviewers look for balanced individuals who are cool and composed yet assertive enough to hold their ground.

SOME FAQs ABOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Some frequently asked questions about group discussions are mentioned below:

Q1. Is it important for me to open the discussion?

A. It is not necessary though desirable. You will make an impact of opening the discussion only when the group is **frozen**.

Q2. How much should I speak?

A. It is not how much you speak but the quality of your inputs that matters. You may speak two or three times only, but if you are able to give new dimensions to the debate, it will be appreciated.

Q3. Which stance should I take?

A. Be natural. You cannot be what you are not. The interviewer can make out when you are bluffing. Be conscious of the profile of the job and what qualities are best suited. Fulfil those in the group discussion.

Q4. What if I do not get a chance to speak?

A. Assert yourself by saying, "Excuse me, I have something to contribute." The interviewers will see whether other group members will let you contribute. It works against them if they do not let you do so.

Q5. Where should I sit in the discussion room?

The seating in a group discussion plays an important role. In some group discussions seating is pre-assigned while some allow the group members to choose their seating. Let us see how seating plays an important role in a group discussion using the diagram below:

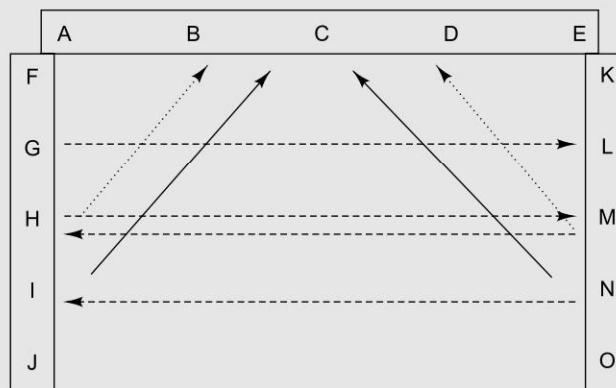
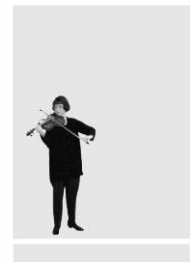
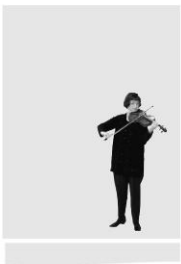


Figure 7.1 Seating in a Group Discussion

The above diagram shows that the most influential position in the seating arrangement is C. Position C can assume the leadership





role because everybody would look at the person sitting at position C due to human tendency to look to the centre. If you are positioned there then take the advantage of asserting yourself as a leader. Positions B and D would normally support the leader Position C in arguments and hence act as 'henchmen'. Positions A, E, F, and K would act as cornerstones to the structure and may most possibly take on the maintainer's roles of keeping the group in harmony. Positions H and M would become the challengers as, being the centre of the limbs, they would assume leadership roles. The dotted lines show their opposition to leader C. Positions H and M may even try to ignore C. Positions G, I, L, and N would act as 'henchmen' to the challengers and would be the activists of their cause as represented by broken lines. There may be heated debates between the two limbs because the two limbs face each other in opposition. The leader will have to keep the debate between the two in check. Positions J and O are unfortunate as they may get isolated. The isolationists need to beware of being cut off from the debate. Avoid these positions if your natural tendency is non-assertive. These two positions may start their own discussions because of being out of the mainstream. The leader will have to make special efforts to bring them into discussion.

It is good to know the power or handicap of seating positions to make that special effort to promote your natural tendencies. So if active debaters are put in positions J and O, they will have to assert themselves extra to be in the discussion. Similarly, if challengers are cornered in positions of A, E, F, and K, they will have to make their special effort to gather support for their ideas and influence the leader. A leader will find it difficult to manage the group if seated in any other position.

Q6. What if I know nothing of the topic?

A. Listen to the discussion and understand it. You can support one of the arguments by saying, "I agree with this point" and may even repeat a point. It is indeed unfortunate if you do not understand the subject.

Q7. What if I have poor communication skills?

A. Tough luck! It will work against you. The best you can do is agree or disagree by summarising points already stated.

Q8. Is there a sure way of knowing if I have done well?

A. No! Many candidates who speak a lot feel they had done well, but at times they get rejected. Remember, quality, not quantity is important.

Some popular topics for discussion are:

1. US war on Iraq—justified or not
2. Role of UN in peacekeeping
3. Position of women in India compared to other nations

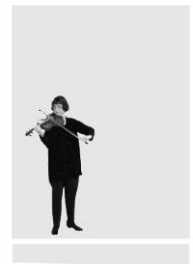
4. Environment Management
5. Is China better than India in software?
6. Should Sonia Gandhi be made the PM?
7. BPOs in India—a success or failure
8. Government contributions to IT
9. Will punchlines rule the Advertisement world?
10. Pre-marital sex
11. Is China a threat to the Indian industry?
12. India or West— which is the land of opportunities?
13. Should water resources be nationalised?
14. How can we maintain a balance between career and family?
15. What is the effect of cinema on youth?
16. How is education in India compared to education in foreign nations?
17. Is it necessary to ban Coca Cola in India?
18. Are studies more beneficial in India or abroad?
19. Are women taking over the workplace?
20. America's war on terrorism—success or failure?
21. Environment—whose responsibility is it?
22. Women's march from bedroom to boardroom
23. The Future of Africa
24. War on Iraq
25. How can we bring back hockey's past glory in India?
26. Should America occupy Iraq?
27. India's failure in the cricket World Cup—what went wrong?
28. Should India be a military superpower?
29. Present state of Indian Cricket team
30. Love marriage vs. Arranged marriage
31. Advantages of Co-education

Hot Topics

1. How do we deal with international terrorism?
2. Should we pursue our policy of dialogue with Pakistan?
3. Are peace and non-violence outdated concepts?

Current Topics

1. Developed nations should help underdeveloped nations for the earth's survival
2. What shall we do about our ever-increasing population?
3. Corruption is the price we pay for democracy
4. Foreign television channels are destroying our culture
5. What India needs is a Dictatorship?
6. With media publishing and telecasting trivia, censorship is the need of the hour
7. 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' is less about knowledge but more about money and personality
8. Beauty contests degrade womanhood





9. The rise of regional blocs threatens independent nations like India
10. Six billion and one bronze!
11. Is dependence on computers a good thing?
12. Should the public sector be privatised?
13. China and India are similar nations with contrasting ways
14. Is India a soft nation?
15. Value-based politics is the need of the hour
16. Religion should not be mixed with politics
17. How to deal with high oil prices?
18. Are cricketers to blame for match fixing?
19. Why can't we be world players in industry as we are in software?
20. Multinational corporations—are they devils in disguise?
21. Should there be limits on artistic freedom (the controversy on *Fire*)?
22. Should there be private universities?
23. Can banning fashion shows and New Year parties save our culture?

Social Topics

1. Should premier educational institutions have quota system?
2. Films are corrupting the Indian Youth
3. A Gandhian state selling liquor is an anomaly
4. Bride burning and dowry may look bad, but are an integral part of India
5. Our Culture is Decaying
6. We are not serious about saving wildlife/environment
7. The education system needs serious reforms
8. The impact of MTV on our psyche
9. Showing violence and crimes should not be allowed in films and on television
10. Let us legalise gambling
11. The Global World—How has it affected us?
12. Secularism has become a tool to justify the wrongs done by the minorities
13. Media is a mixed blessing/How ethical is media?
14. To fight AIDS, stop being coy about sex education
15. What should India strive for—Westernisation or Modernisation?

Management Topics

1. Is management an art or a science?
2. The rush for MBA is really a rush for big money
3. Ethics in business is just a passing fashion
4. The objective of management is to maximise profits
5. Do professional managers have a chance in family-run businesses?
6. The internet is an exercise in hype
7. Is an MBA necessary to succeed in life?
8. Family-owned business vs. professionally run businesses

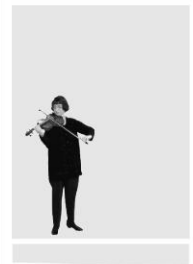
9. Smaller businesses and start-ups have more scope for professional growth
10. Dot com or doubt com

Creative Topics

1. The wheel is turning round and round
2. If I were the Finance Minister/Prime Minister, what would I do?
3. There is no right way to do a wrong thing
4. Group Task—How can we have Mount Everest in India?
5. Do beauty and brains go together?
6. When I woke up in the morning I saw...
7. A ship docked in harbour cannot face the storms
8. Up and down the staircase
9. Just as we have smoke-free zones, we should have child-free zones
10. Marriage is a social trap

Economic Topics

1. Developing countries need trade, not aid
2. Why do we lag behind China?
3. Capitalism is a very flawed system but the others are so much worse
4. Flexibility of labour laws is the key to attracting more Foreign Direct Investment
5. Is the business of business only business?
6. In our economic matters, there is an excessive tendency towards thinking rather than doing
7. Every cloud has a silver lining
8. Can the economy achieve an eight percent growth rate?
9. Is disinvestment really that good for India or is a rethink in order?
10. Are co-operatives relevant in today's globalised environment?
11. Foreign aid is a dangerous drug that can stimulate in small doses but become fatally addictive in larger doses
12. Modern day sport in industrialised society is an industry as anything else
13. Government should clean its own hands before pointing finger at the private sector for corruption
14. Is the NPA ordinance too harsh?
15. Reforms have to grow up
16. The future lies with globalisation
17. Is the consumer really the king in India?
18. Globalisation versus Nationalism
19. Conditional access system for cable TV watchers—boon or bane
20. If India is poorly governed, the reason is that we have designed our system of governance for protecting, if not encouraging, corruption
21. Commercialisation of health care—Good or Bad
22. For globalisation to succeed in India people must be able to see what it has for them
23. Is the US economy headed the Japanese economy way?





24. Economic freedom and not old fashioned theories of development will lead to growth and prosperity
25. Markets left to themselves encourage greed
26. The global economy is creating regional common markets for survival
27. Should businessmen run the finance ministry?
28. Should important services like transport be left to market forces?
29. Is there any point in having a business strategy when the world changes from month to month?
30. Is the patents bill good for India?
31. Globalisation is good for developing countries
32. Public sector being a guarantor of job security is a myth
33. Is industry-less growth here to stay?
34. Is Capitalism better than Socialism?
35. How can business get rid of the bad name that it has earned?
36. Government pumping money into the economy is not the solution for our economic problems
37. Business ethics are no longer a luxury for corporates but a necessity
38. How should privatisation proceeds be utilised?
39. Is the budgeting exercise of any use?
40. Should agricultural subsidies be stopped?
41. Will Mumbai's film industry ever evolve into a truly modern corporatised one?
42. Will market reforms enrich rich states further, while poorer ones lag further?
43. Why do we lag behind China?
44. Who says MNCs are superior to Indian companies?
45. Why not use a brand index to measure national prosperity?
46. What we need to reduce scams is better regulatory bodies.
47. War rhetoric is misplaced in a country like India which is trying to globalise its economy
48. Trade can help the poor
49. The power ministry should cut off supplies to all the defaulting SEBs
50. Steal a few lakhs and you're a criminal. Steal a few hundred crores and you become an industrialist
51. Should PSUs be divested through strategic sale or public offer?
52. The state is above the law

Political Topics

1. Reserving seats for women in Panchayat has not only been a farce but has prevented developing a more genuine voice of women.
2. Have the nuclear tests of 1998 benefitted or harmed India?
3. Voters, not political parties, are responsible for the criminalisation of politics
4. The voters are required to be well informed and educated about their candidates so that they can elect the right aspirant by their own assessment

5. India should go for the presidential form of democracy

Management Education Topics

1. Managerial skills learnt in the classroom can never match those learnt from experience
2. Democracy is hampering India's progress
3. MBA in India is highly overrated
4. Religion is a private affair and should be of no concern for the state
5. Decreasing defense expenditure and increasing social expenditure is the need of the hour

II. GROUP TASK

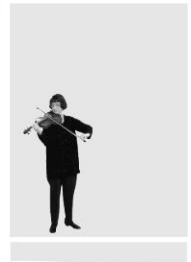
Group task is a selection process where a group of 5–10 participants are given a physical task to accomplish. The task has several hurdles that require leaping, twisting, swinging, etc to test physical prowess. This method is used by military selection boards but is increasingly used by other commercial ventures which



require outdoor physical prowess such as in oil rigs, adventure sports organisation, etc. The human skills involve working as a team as well as leadership qualities like encouragement during failure, recognition in success, assisting members who are falling short of expectations, allotting responsibilities and setting personal examples. Physical abilities include endurance, stamina, coordination of the body, etc.

While the above is usually performed outdoors, there are some group tasks which are also performed indoors. Groups are pitched against each other to complete a task that requires teamwork and inter-group coordination. Interviewers evaluate your behaviour in a team as well as interaction with other groups. Within the group, members adopt natural roles. Typical roles that emerge are the leader who provides the plan, strategy, and direction; the negotiator who is comfortable to interact with other groups and negotiate for resources; the maintainer who looks after the psychological and emotional health of the group by managing differences within the group, especially when they are under pressure or crisis; the worker who is comfortable with industry and manual effort to complete the task; the loner who waits to be invited to take part in the discussion or is totally disinterested in the group's effort; and the philosopher who gives ideas and creative ways of looking at the task.

The interviewer also sees the interaction with other groups—whether the members are cooperative or selfish, trusting or suspicious, fighting or sabotaging—and pride for the group—whether the members support the group or bring it down. There are many other assessments that interviewers can make through group task.



III. DIALOGUE PANEL

In this instance the discussion is held between the candidates and interviewer who skilfully brings out personal qualities, attitudes, and motivations of candidates by clever questions. In this method, the interviewer ensures that everyone gets a chance to speak. The topic could be any topical issue. In such selection processes, there are certain golden rules:

- (a) Be involved and participative in the discussion.
- (b) Give qualitative inputs.
- (c) Listen carefully to what others are saying because you may be asked by the interviewer to respond to it.
- (d) Be cool and composed. Do not lose your cool or get into an argument.
- (e) Be assertive not aggressive.
- (f) Be natural, don't act.
- (g) Sit in an upright posture.
- (h) Don't be excitable but remain composed in your deliberations.



CASE STUDIES

WHAT IS A CASE QUESTION?

A case question is a fun, interactive interviewing tool which is used to evaluate the multi-dimensional aspects of a candidate. You, with others, are presented with some information and asked to analyse, synthesise, and articulate a solution.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CASE QUESTION?

Interviewers use case questions to see how well candidates listen, think, and articulate their thoughts under pressure. Interviewers also gauge the logic behind the thoughts of the candidates using case questions. Consulting firms ask case questions to gauge the level of candidate's self-confidence, discover the candidate's personality, and to see if problem solving genuinely intrigues them.

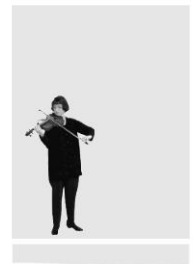
WHAT'S THE OBJECTIVE OF A CASE QUESTION?

The objective is not to determine if the interviewee got the *right answer*, but rather to evaluate the process the candidate used to structure a competent approach to derive a solution. They test how you:

1. Analyse information
2. Sort through an excess of data and identify main points
3. Think logically, structure your thought process, and organise your answer
4. Maintain poise and clearly communicate under pressure
5. Display personality and characteristics that are considered a good “fit” with the company.

They observe if the candidates are:

1. Relaxed, confident, and mature
2. Engaging and enthusiastic
3. Good listeners
4. Able to determine what is truly relevant
5. Asking insightful and probing questions
6. Organising the information effectively and developing a logical framework for analysis
7. Stating assumptions clearly
8. Approaching the case creatively
9. Comfortable while discussing the multifunctional aspects of the case
10. Trying to quantify their response at every opportunity
11. Displaying both business and common sense
12. Exhibiting strong social and presentation skills



ARE ALL CASES VERBAL OR DO SOME FIRMS ASK WRITTEN CASES?

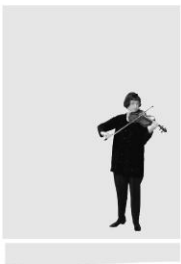
While most cases are written, some firms give a verbal case. The candidate is given 30 to 45 minutes to read the case and make notes. He/She is then questioned about the case. Sometimes this is done on a one-to-one basis, and sometimes the candidate is called as part of a group to solve the case. This is done to see how well a candidate can work as part of a team with strangers. Is the candidate trying to dominate the interview or is he/she building on what another candidate said? Is he/she communicating laterally as well as vertically?

Tips for handling cases

- Read the question and determine what are they looking for?
- Make notes of key points if the case is read out to you.
- Read the case carefully and underline those points that have a bearing on the question.
- Ask for clarifications.
- Make assumptions for your arguments.

What the interviewers observe while studying the case?

- Are you writing down the case information?
- Are you clear about the question and what you have to solve?
- Have you asked about the client's objective(s)?



- Have you clarified questions about the company, the industry, the competition, and the product?
- Are you laying out a logical structure to their answer?

What the interviewers observe during discussion?

- Are you enthusiastic and do you project a positive attitude?
- Are you logical and make good business sense?
- Is your answer well-organised?
- Did you state your assumptions clearly?
- Are you creative?
- Are you engaging and bringing others into the conversation?
- Are you asking probing questions?
- Are you quantifying your answer as far as possible?
- Are you listening to others?
- Are you bogged down in details?
- Have you gone off the tangent?
- Did you use buzz words and business terms correctly?
- Did you have trouble with math, percentages, etc?
- Did you summarise the answer?
- Were you assertive or aggressive?
- Did you keep to the time limits set?

HANDLING VERBAL CASE QUESTIONS

- Keep a notebook and pen/pencil handy to jot down key points of the case and the question. Repeat it back to be clear.
- Think before you answer. Don't jump off the mark and give the first answer that pops into your head. Take your time and analyse the information and then answer.
- Ask for numbers. It will help you quantify your answers. If the numbers aren't an important part of the case, they will tell you not to focus on them.
- Prioritise and then address the issues one at a time. Your interviewer may not expect you to get through all of them in the allotted time.
- Turn the interview into a conversation. A five-minute monologue will do more to hurt your chances than any other mistake. Remember, you ask questions not only to get additional information but also to draw the interviewer into the case with you.
- If you are getting lost during your answer, stop and summarise what you have said so far. This will hopefully show you a new path to take.
- Keep track of time. You must reach a conclusion.
- Remember that there is no right or wrong answer. It is your process of arriving at your answer that matters.

The 12 Most Popular Case Scenarios

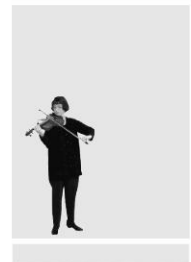
Business cases traditionally have focused on either business strategy or business operations. However, with today’s more complex cases, candidates are getting cases that cover both categories and multiple scenarios. Few examples of case scenarios are given below:

Strategy Scenarios

- Entering a new market
- Developing a new product
- Pricing Strategies
- Growth Strategies
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Starting a new business
- Competitive response
- Industry Analysis

Operating Scenarios

- Increasing sales
- Reducing costs
- Improving the bottom line
- Turnarounds



BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWS

Behavioural interviews discover how you acted in specific employment-related situations in the past. The logic is that your past behaviour will predict your future behaviour in similar situations i.e. past performance predicts your future performance.

TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW VS. BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW

In a *traditional interview*, you will be asked a series of questions which typically have *straightforward* answers like “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” or “What major challenges and problems did you face and how did you handle them?” or “Describe a typical work week.”

In a *behavioural interview*, an employer has decided beforehand what skills are required in the person they hire and will ask questions to find out if the candidate has those skills or not. In behavioural interview, questions will be more pointed, more probing, and more specific than traditional interview questions. Few examples of such questions are:

1. Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
2. Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
3. Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you implemented it?
4. Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?
5. What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
6. Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they weren’t thrilled about? How did you do it?

7. Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
8. Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

Follow-up questions will also be detailed. You may be asked what you did, what you said, how you reacted, or how you felt.

PREPARATION FOR THE POTENTIAL BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW

Remember that you won't know what type of interview will take place until you are sitting in the interview room. So, prepare answers to traditional interview questions.



Then, since you don't know exactly what situations you will be asked about, if it is a behavioural interview, refresh your memory and consider some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You may be able to use them to frame your responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you solved problems successfully or performed memorably. The stories will be useful to help you respond meaningfully in a behavioural interview.

Finally, review the job description, if you have it, or the job posting or the advertisement. You may be able to get a sense of what skills and behavioural characteristics the employer is seeking by reading the job description and position requirements. Recall some situations in your experience that brought out those behaviours.

DURING THE BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW

During the interview, if you are not sure how to answer the question, ask for clarification. Then be sure to include following points in your answer:

1. A specific situation
2. The tasks that needed to be done
3. The action you took
4. The results i.e. what happened

It's important to keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer. The interviewer is simply trying to understand how you behaved in a given situation. How you respond will determine if your skills are according to the requirements of the position the company wants to fill. So, listen carefully, be clear and detailed when you respond and, most importantly, be honest. If your answers aren't what the interviewer is looking for, this position may not be the best job for you anyway.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

A telephone interview may seem simpler and less pressured than a face-to-face one but this is not the case in reality. Phone interviews are perceived as being an informal means of securing a job, and unfortunately, job seekers make some of the most critical mistakes during the telephone interview.



Don't make the mistake of thinking that a phone interview is less formal than an interview that is conducted in person. This could be one critical mistake that could cost you the job you really want. Many times a phone interview is your way of securing a face-to-face meeting. Phone interviews are one way that recruiters often narrow down their list of potential people to talk to. You should try to pass the phone interview with flying colours

so that you could make it to the next round of the interview process.

It's important to recognise why phone interviews are becoming popular. Time is one of the biggest factors. As employees are taking on more responsibilities, they're trying to find time-saving techniques. Fitting into busy schedules, the interviewers can discuss matters with a potential candidate prior to an official meeting; clarify discrepancies or concerns; conduct an informal introduction; discuss the position; and/or ask for additional career information.

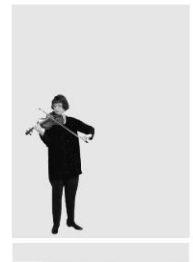
Although a phone interview suits employers, it may be inconvenient to you. It is impromptu, leaving you breathless from trying to catch the phone, or receiving the call at an awkward moment, or caught off-guard for even the simplest of questions. Whether the interview was scheduled or not, you should have a *cheat sheet* by your phone to ensure preparedness regardless of which situation you find yourself in. Prepare as much in advance for your phone interview as you can. You should have a résumé on hand that you can refer to as well as a notepad that you can use to write down information that is given to you by your interviewer. One good thing about a phone interview is that your interviewer will have no idea when or not you're using your notes.

Without an outline or list of potential answers, these types of discussions (interviews) can get casual. A casual phone interview can provoke unrelated and untargeted answers.

Create an outline that might resemble this:

1. *Specific Skills (broken down)*
2. *Position and Industry*
3. *Specific Accomplishments*
4. *Successful Cost-cutting Measures*
5. *Unique Assets as an Employee*
(e.g. language skills, cutting-edge technology, techniques)

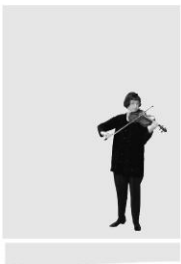
There are some specific things that you can do to make sure that you score high in the phone interview. The first thing that you need to do is eliminate or minimise the number of distractions that can occur while you are on the phone. This includes even subtle noises such as your dog barking, your cell phone ringing, or any other background noise like washing of dishes, etc. Try to schedule your phone interview in a quiet place so that you don't have to fight



against distractions. You need to be as focused as you can be so that you can concentrate on the answers to the questions asked. If you are in a movie hall or party, tell the person where you are and that you will step out and call back.

Make sure that your verbal skills are good. You won't have the luxury of looking into your interviewer's eyes, so you need to rely on other ways to leave a lasting impression. Your voice should reflect your enthusiasm for the interview but at the same time you should maintain your professionalism by using language that is grown up and precise. The best way to get a right tone in your voice is to smile while you are talking. Avoid using words that a teenager would use such as "cool" or "dude".

You'll want to follow up on your phone interview in a few days to see how you did. Send a thank you note so that you can highlight your selling points as a new employee. Exude as much confidence as you can, so that you will be considered for that second round of interview that will be face to face.



LUNCHEON INTERVIEWS

There may be times when your job interview is conducted over lunch or another meal. This is because many employers have busy schedules and they will try to kill two birds with one stone—their meal and your interview. There are some companies that arrange one interview at breakfast with one interviewer followed by the next interview at lunch with another interviewer and then the third interview at dinner with yet another interviewer. At each "meal" interview, you'll be required to answer questions over and over again with confidence and reliability.

One reason why many employers conduct a meal interview is that they want to see you in a variety of social settings, particularly if this is something that is part of your job description and the job requires you to meet with clients on a regular basis. The other reason could be that your interviewer may simply have only a limited amount of time to spend on your interview and so he is trying to fit as much as possible into his schedule. No matter what the reason is for the meal interview, you need to prepare as you would for a regular interview. Be ready for anything that may come along. Conducting an interview around a meal is rather "laid back," however, not an unheard of process. This type of interview could be performed amongst friends and maybe previous colleagues, or possibly as a final test before selecting the winning candidate. Sometimes lunch interviews are conducted to manage time in a hectic schedule of the interviewer.



A luncheon interview has some benefits. This relaxed setting can provide a forum for candidness. The interviewee can provide answers freely rather than repeating textbook versions of what the employer “wants to hear.” Used to discuss management obstacles, short- and long-term business goals, employee relations, confidentiality issues, and operations logistics, this type of meeting can turn out to be quite informative.

Tips for Luncheon Interview

Dress: Dress formally as though you were attending an office interview. Though the setting is informal the occasion is formal.

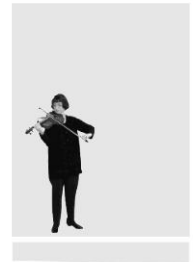
Be on Time: Make sure that you agree to a venue known to you. If the interviewer has made the choice already make sure you get directions to the venue if it is not known to you. Plan to arrive early by at least ten minutes. It is important that you wait for the interviewer and not the other way around. Inform the restaurant hostess where you are seated or ask for the table reserved for the interviewer. Leave your name with them. If nothing else, wait in the foyer.

Seating: Wait for your interviewer to sit down before you do. This shows respect and courtesy and will leave a lasting positive impression. Your interviewer wants to see how you conduct yourself in a social setting, so take the opportunity to show off your best professionalism. Sit up straight while keeping your feet flat on the floor. Crossing your legs can come across as too casual.

Be Confident: It can be disquieting when someone watches you eat? Actually, a person’s confidence level can be determined by the poise he/she has while eating. A confident person will eat with poise and correctness while a nervous one will not be able to concentrate on anything else. In such settings, your social etiquettes, especially for jobs where you have to entertain clients, are noticed.

Manage Your Food: Unfold your napkin. Order the least expensive item on the menu. Again, this is all about common courtesy and your interviewer just wants to see how you handle yourself in this type of a situation. Choose those items that are easily manageable. Lamb chops will need deft slicing just as a chicken piece. A salad is easily managed. Handle your food carefully. Practice beforehand, if necessary. You will certainly make a bad impression if you can’t handle your own food. Follow the below mentioned simple rules:

1. Break bread into small and manageable bites.
2. Avoid anything that can spill.
3. Don’t suggest or order alcoholic beverages (even if the interviewer does).
4. Order something similar to what your interviewer orders.
5. Use your napkin to wipe mouth and disguise picking teeth (or visit the restroom).

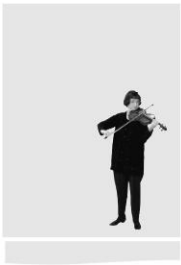


6. Never use fingers unless the meal consists of a sandwich or finger food.

Eat slowly by taking small bites. You'll most likely be asked questions while you're eating and you should be able to answer without food spitting out of your mouth or choking on large pieces. Keep your arms off the table. Use the correct cutlery as dictated by what you're eating. Remember the purpose of your meal: this is a job interview and you want to do the best that you can so that you get the job or move on to the second round of interviews.

Offer to Pay: Generally, the interviewer will charge the lunch to the company. Offer to pick up the tab. Your gesture to pay will be received well. Ensure you attend the meeting with enough cash to cover your meal and the tip.

Thank the Interviewer: As with any interview, thank everyone present in the room with a firm handshake. Approximately 70 per cent of interviewees do not send a thank you letter after the meeting; so, set yourself apart from the rest ... SEND A HAND-WRITTEN NOTE!



APTITUDE TESTS

Aptitude tests reflect the hierarchical structure of your intelligence in relation to an average worker. Aptitude tests are composed of numerical, verbal, and spatial ability scales brought together as a test battery. They can then be scored and interpreted individually as a specific ability or aptitude measure, or together as part of a general ability measure. You cannot bluff through these tests. Be natural. Aptitude tests are only one of the inputs of a selection process. An aptitude test is never an end in itself. Aptitude tests actually measure your abilities and talents in the four criteria mentioned above. So an accountant must be high in numeric ability; a salesperson must be good at verbal ability; while an advertisement person must be good at spatial ability. Aptitude tests are usually administered for entry level jobs and trainee positions.

PERSONALITY TESTS

Personality is a term which is commonly used in everyday language but which has been given a particular technical meaning by psychologists. When we discuss personality we must remember that it is not a single independent mechanism but closely related to other human cognitive and emotional systems. There are many personality tests for different levels of jobs and can bring out aspects of leadership, team spirit, emotional make-up under stress, etc.

Chapter

8

Profiles of Interviewers

INTRODUCTION

I am sure that most of you would like to know what interviewers are like. Interviewers differ as they have different values, cultural backgrounds, and thought processes. It is difficult to cover all these characteristics but this chapter tries to simplify the complex process of identifying different types of interviewers by grouping them in a few styles. Remember, whatever is their style, their intention is the same: *to get the right person for the job*. Their styles vary because unfortunately not all interviewers are trained. Many interviewers are line managers or in functions other than human resources. Human resource professionals are expected to be trained interviewers. Before we see the various styles that untrained interviewers adopt, let us see what are the qualities of a trained interviewer:

1. A trained interviewer is acutely aware of being a representative of the organisation and he/she also takes care of their grooming for the interview. He/She chooses a pleasant environment for the interview. Generally, an interviewer also speaks politely to the candidate. He/She makes sure that he/she reaches on time for the interview.
2. A trained interviewer strives to improve his/her interviewing skills continuously. He/She will look upon every interview as a learning opportunity and will try new techniques and methods to improve his/her skills. Be aware that you could be teaching him/her something too.
3. A trained interviewer learns new concepts and ideas from candidates and evaluates whether they can be used in his/her own organisation.
4. A trained interviewer prepares for the interview. He/She reviews the resume thoroughly and notes down questions that do not reflect in the résumé.

5. A trained interviewer upgrades himself/herself on the job subject, so they don't look stupid at the interview.
6. A trained interviewer is well informed on the legal aspects of the job being offered as well as questions he/she can or cannot ask in an interview.
7. A trained interviewer uses an interview rating form to record his/her comments about the candidates for other decision-makers to see.
8. A trained interviewer believes in the 80:20 principle, where the candidate speaks 80 per cent of the time and the interviewer speaks 20 per cent of the time.
9. A trained interviewer will put the candidate at ease on the belief that a relaxed candidate will be able to perform better at the interview and will be more forthcoming with information. He/She will show gestures like offering water or coffee.
10. A trained interviewer believes that experience is more important than academic qualifications. He/She is willing to accept theoretical principles only if they have a basis in real situations.
11. A trained interviewer feels secure while writing down the positive qualities of a candidate. He/She is cautious of writing negative ones unless he/she is absolutely sure about them. He/She finds out the negative traits of the candidate's personality by artfully asking other questions. He/She would prefer to discuss negative points further with other interviewers before recording negative comments. So your negative quality would get into the records only if you will consistently show it during the interview.
12. A trained interviewer wants to be in control of the interview and alter its direction whenever convenient.
13. A trained interviewer feels uncomfortable to tell a candidate that he/she is rejected. He/She takes into account your feelings of hurt and disappointment. He/She prefers to send a letter of rejection.

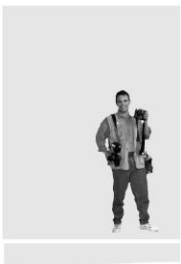
Most candidates must be unaware of these characteristics of a trained interviewer. This information will give them some insight into the process of the interview. Remember that the interviewer is not an omnipotent person but a normal human being like you.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWERS

There are, however, many interviewers who are not trained and seem to show some dominant style during the interview. You should be prepared for different types of interviewers and know how to deal with them.

THE BRAGGART

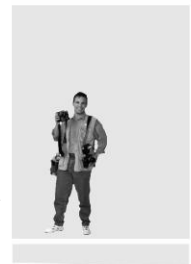
The braggart loves talking about his own achievements and experiences. He is basically an insecure person and has an overwhelming need to prove his self-worth. You become his 'captive audience'. You can best respond



to such an interviewer by admiring his achievements. The more you 'applaud' him, the better are the chances of being selected. He will ask very little about you. It is best to listen to him and wait for those moments when you can offer something about yourself, with connecting statements like, "I had a similar experience" or "I can see what you mean. In my experience....."

THE PERSECUTOR

He is a person who perhaps is persecuted by others within the organisation and looks at you as his *whipping board*. He asks questions that perhaps cannot be answered. He prides himself in humiliating you. It is unfortunate if you come across such an individual. To deal with him, show humility to the point he feels satisfied pitying you; this is the best stance to take in such a situation. You can offer what you want him to know through suggestions but be prepared to have your suggestions vetoed. Speak with confidence. He perhaps wants to see if you will wilt under his pressure or not. Do not argue.



THE DREAMER

He/She is the one who will let you talk as much as you want. However, he/she may appear not to be listen as he could easily get distracted by something else. He may not even maintain eye contact. Do not be disappointed. He has probably trained his mind to concentrate on two things. He could sign papers or shuffle through them while remaining alert to what you are saying. He will interject only when he thinks it is necessary. Respond by telling him as much as you can about yourself—your achievements and experiences. You will have to **sell** yourself to make an impression on him. Vary your tone or speed to grab his attention. Humour would work with him.

THE PROFESSOR

He/She is patronising with a "knows it all" attitude. He/She gives those supercilious smiles that may have a discomfoting effect on you. His questions will be perfect but mostly bookish. He would like to end the interview by giving you some advice. Humility works well with him. The best way to deal with such an interviewer is to show interest in his advice and acknowledge that it is the best you have ever got.

THE PROGRAMMER

He approaches the interview as though it is a programme with a definite schedule. He has decided precisely what he wants to know and would have, more often than not, written down his questions. He will ask them in sequence.

It is best to answer him in a precise and lucid manner. He would like the answers to be in a logical form; therefore, it is best to give answers in a point-wise fashion.

THE FRIEND

He has a very open and casual style. The interview gets very personal and he reveals a lot of himself and expects you to do the same. He is more concerned with your personal qualities than your work experiences. Play along with his mood but punctuate the joviality with something positive about yourself and your achievements. Be professional. Do not mistake his informality as being too casual. Sometimes the friend can con you into revealing things that you would normally not speak about in an interview.



THE HARASSED

He/She is the person who is not organised. He/She does not brief his secretary to hold all phone calls during the interview. He/She answers those phone calls during the interview which spoils the rhythm of the interview. He/She may also issue instructions or memo during the interview. You may have to repeat yourself after the distraction with sentences like, "As I was saying..." He/She will apologise for the interruptions all the time with the explanation that he/she is very busy. He/She may revive the interview by saying, "Where were we?" He/She may ask you questions but with his/her mind elsewhere. It would be quite in order to seek another time, if he/she is busy. This would also be a hint to him/her that he/she is not respecting your time. In all probability, he/she will then focus on you.

Whatever the style adopted by the interviewer, keep a professional image. Your objective is to sell yourself. That can be done by recognising and adapting to his style. Remember, you have to concentrate on the questions asked by the interviewer, not the style the interviewer adopts.

Chapter

9

101 Frequently Asked Interview Questions and Answers

INTRODUCTION

After years of interviewing for various positions, either singly, with another person or in a panel, I have found that certain questions arise very often. These are general questions which are relevant to everyone. In this chapter, I wish to present some typical questions and how to approach them.

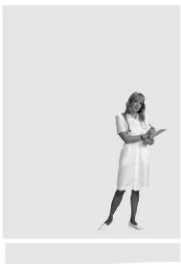
Before we move ahead into the actual questions, it is important for you to know the internal processes of an organisation and how they reach the point of interviewing you. In this chapter, we would see the different stages of interviews and what the interviewers are looking for at each stage. The questions have been sorted in a manner to address each stage of interview.

INTERVIEW

As soon as a vacancy arises, the supervisor/manager of that job position prepares a job specification, outlining the profile of the person desired for doing the job. This is attached to the job description (a profile of the job with duties and responsibilities) of the vacant position and sent to the human resources department. The HR manager checks if the position is sanctioned within the budget. If not, he/she will ask the originating supervisor/manager to get a formal approval for the position. Armed with a formal sanction, the HR Manager then proceeds to first look internally for a person suitable to fill

the position. This is an opportunity to give someone a promotion thereby providing advancement; a lateral transfer to provide growth and new experiences; a re-assignment to someone doing a similar job located elsewhere (like another branch). Only when internal candidates are not available will the HR manager advertise the job using various sources explained in Chapter 2, 'Job Search'. The HR manager then receives the résumés and proceeds to screen them by matching them to the job specification. Those most matched make the first shortlist. Those who have most qualifications but have some deficiencies make the second shortlist. Sometimes the HR Manager may involve the supervisor/manager concerned in the screening process. Then the HR Manager sets up three stages of interviews.

- (a) With the HR manager;
- (b) With the supervisor/manager and the functional head; and finally
- (c) With the senior management which includes the CEO/Owner.



INTERVIEWS WITH THE HR MANAGER

The HR Manager will typically be the first contact with you. The purpose of HR Manager is to clarify the following points with you:

1. Facts in the résumé
2. Your motivations
3. Your aspirations
4. Your personality traits
5. Your strengths and weaknesses



INTERVIEWS WITH THE DIRECT SUPERVISOR/MANAGER

In the second stage you have to face the interviews with the direct supervisor/manager or panel. They are more concerned with the job and those elements that influence it. Their questions would typically determine the following:

1. Your technical proficiency
2. Nature of your experience
3. Your performance record
4. Your achievements in the past jobs
5. Your job fit
6. How you fit in the functional team
7. Your leadership style (for supervisory positions)
8. Ability to work under pressure/stress/difficulties
9. Your work habits
10. Your specific job motivations



11. Your personality traits specific to the job
12. Customer orientation (if the job requires it)
13. Ability to work with the immediate superior
14. Salesmanship (if the job requires it)
15. Your creativity and innovation
16. New ideas and experience you bring to the job

FINAL INTERVIEW

The final interview would include all the top management but definitely the CEO/Owner, Functional Head, and the HR Manager. They would be concerned with the following:

1. The culture fit to the organisation
2. The real commitment to the new company
3. Future potential
4. Flexibility in job positioning
5. Honesty and sincerity
6. Ability to look at the big picture
7. Image as a representative of the company
8. Whether the organisation can fulfil your short- and long-term aspirations
9. Result orientation

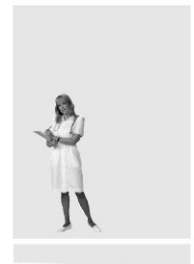
The above objectives are in broad terms. It does not mean that they cannot be included in various interview stages. The matter of salary is treated separately as it is discussed at the last stage, usually when the candidate is found fit for the organisation.

Here are 101 frequently asked questions for you to prepare for your interviews:

HR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q1. TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

This is a general question which you can answer by saying almost anything about yourself. Unfortunately, most candidates use this window of opportunity to recount their résumé, which is already in front of the interviewer. This is indeed very boring to the interviewer. This is the opportunity when you can tell things about yourself other than what is stated in your résumé such as strengths in your personality at work or with people, etc. You could also tell about your traits, special qualities, achievements, aspirations, motivations, and ambitions. The interviewer will be alert to your responses because he/she cannot find these inputs in your résumé. The more you say about yourself, the more you would use the opportunity to impress the interviewer. For heaven's sake! do not give a two-sentence answer.



Many candidates feel awkward talking about themselves, especially their achievements. They think that it comes out as boasting. They prefer to project themselves as humble. The interview is the only occasion where you are licensed to showcase yourself in glowing colours. The interviewers expect you to do so; they are appalled if you give them little knowledge of yourself. This question requires preparation.

You can even list down your qualities while preparing your response for this question and refer to the list at the interview. The interviewer will not object to your approach. Only refer to the list; do not read it out.

Start with the present and tell why you are well qualified for the position. Remember, that the *key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications to what the interviewer is looking for*. In other words, you must sell what the 'buyer' wants to buy. This is the single most important strategy in job hunting.

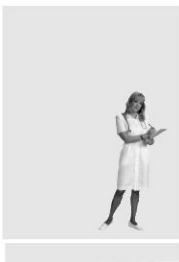
So, before you answer this question or any other question, it's imperative that you try to uncover your interviewer's greatest need, want, problem, or goal. To do so, take the following two steps:

First Step: **Do all the homework** you can before the interview to uncover this person's wants and needs (not the generalised needs of the industry or company).

Second Step: As early as possible, ask for a **more complete description** of what the position entails. You might say, "I have a number of accomplishments I would like to tell you about, but I want to make the best use of our time together and talk directly about those that satisfy your needs. To help me do so, could you please tell me more about the most important priorities of this position?" Then, **always** follow-up with a second and possibly, third question, to draw out his needs even more. Surprisingly, it's usually this second or third question that unearths what the interviewer is most looking for. You might simply ask, "And in addition to that?..." or, "Is there anything else you see as essential to success in this position?"

This process will not seem to be easy or natural at first—because it is easier simply to answer questions—but only if you uncover the employer's wants and needs will you be able to give most convincing and sensible answers. Practice asking these key questions before giving your answers. The process will make you feel more confident than other candidates. Don't feel shy. Talk candidly.

After uncovering what the employer is looking for, describe why the needs of this job bear striking parallels to tasks you have succeeded at before. Be sure to illustrate with specific examples of your responsibilities and especially your achievements, all of which are geared to present yourself as a perfect match for the needs the interviewer has just described.



Q2. I DIDN'T GET TIME TO READ YOUR RÉSUMÉ, TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

This question is similar to the above question, but this time you have to detail out your résumé also. You can follow the directions given below:

1. PERSONAL AND EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

This part is used to give the interviewer relevant information about you personally and about your educational background. This does not include personal information such as marital status, children, etc. but this does include information such as your hometown or state and/or personal attribute(s). The education should be either the latest obtained and/or major field if relevant to job objective.

2. EARLY CAREER/LIFE EXPERIENCES

This part is used to share your past work and life experiences relevant to the job objective with the interviewer.

3. RECENT WORK HISTORY/LIFE EXPERIENCES

This is the time for the job seeker to relate to the employer two accomplishments/results of the job seeker that indicate why he/she is the best candidate for the position sought.

4. WHY YOU ARE HERE

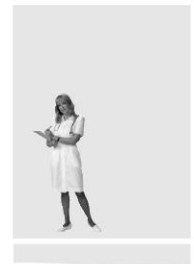
In this part, the job seeker speaks with enthusiasm that he/she is here for the specific position sought.

Q3. WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS?

This could well be one of the earliest questions to make you feel comfortable with a familiar topic. When preposing your résumé, write about a few of your hobbies and interests that you know about thoroughly. The interviewer's belief is that if a person who has a hobby or interest is thorough about it, he/she is most likely to be thorough about the job he/she chooses.

Try to gauge how this company's culture would look upon your favourite activities and be guided accordingly. You can use this question to shatter any stereotypes that could limit your chances. If you are over 50 years, for example, describe your activities that demonstrate your physical stamina. If you are young, mention an activity that connotes wisdom and institutional trust, such as serving on the board of a popular charity trust.

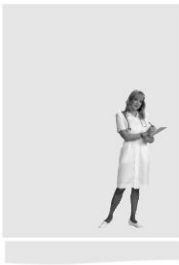
The interviewer will judge your commitment to your interest and also whether he/she can harness that talent for the organisation. For example, a golfer would be useful to 'hook' senior clients with the same interest by playing with them, an accomplished cricketer could represent the company in inter-organisation tournaments, or a person interested in gardens could



contribute to the landscape of the company premises. Though the main focus is in the competencies of the job, interests show your other competencies, which nobody would come to know otherwise.

Q4. TELL ME ABOUT THE HIGH POINTS OF YOUR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

This question is often asked to those young candidates who are entering the job market. Interviewers ask this question with the belief that your achievement orientation in your academics could well manifest itself in achievements in your career. As an interviewer, I had disdain for those who had no achievements. It gave me the impression that the candidate would be another passenger in the organisation. Some notable high points in school and college could be awards in academics, sports, leadership roles, representation of the educational institution in public forums and competitions. Boast about them in the interview bringing out the odds against which you had to compete. Make sure that you have your certificates, photographs, and awards well catalogued when appearing for the interview so as to present proof of your achievements.



Q5. WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

This question has stumped many candidates in my experience. It shows a lack of preparation on behalf of the candidate. An interviewer asks this question on the belief that a person who knows himself/herself is more likely to be effective in life. This question is an open window provided to you like the previous question but many candidates find it difficult to verbalise their strengths and weaknesses. Some shy away from talking about their strengths as sign of being self-opinionated. Others find it difficult to mention weaknesses with the fear that verbalising them, may work against the candidates. Nobody is perfect and everyone has weaknesses. *It is the knowledge of weaknesses that makes you strong.* So, it is necessary to prepare for such a question. Mention those strengths and weaknesses that will lend support to the job you are applying for. Weaknesses can be so crafted as to actually appear as strengths in certain circumstances. Here are some examples—**Strengths:** hardworking, committed, achievement-oriented, strong in communication skills, team person, detailed in execution, quality conscious, loyal, honest, etc. **Weaknesses:** perfectionist, strive to be better than others, ambitious, work till the job is complete which may go well after closing time, intolerant to dishonesty, slow at times to ensure safety and quality, will need time to continuously upgrade myself, etc.

Remember, whatever you say will be tested out in the course of the interview. So, it is important to be consistent throughout the interview with what you say. So, if you are hardworking, you cannot be a person who is a clock-watcher!

Assure the interviewer that you can think of nothing that would stand in the way of your performing, in this position with excellence. Then, quickly review

you strongest qualifications. For example, “Nobody’s perfect, but based on what you’ve told me about this position, I believe I’d make an outstanding match”.

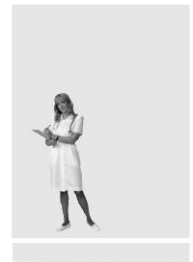
When I interviewed candidates, I looked for two major things—qualifications to do the job well, and the motivation to do it well. To show these two traits, you can say, “Everything in my background shows that I have both the qualifications and a strong desire to achieve excellence in whatever I take on. So I can say in all honesty that I see nothing that would cause you even a small concern about my ability or my strong desire to perform this job with excellence. These are my reasons.....”

You can have an alternate strategy for this question. Instead of confessing a weakness, describe what you like most and like least, making sure that what you like most matches up with the most important qualification for success in the position, and what you like least is not essential to the job position. Prepare for this.

Let’s take an example, Let’s say you’re applying for a sales position, you can say, “If given a choice, I like to spend as much time as possible in front of my prospects selling, as opposed to shuffling paperwork back at the office. Though I am good at paperwork, what I really love to do is sell”. This would be music to the interviewer’s ears if he is the Sales Manager.

Sometimes an interviewer will harp on a weakness you might have. As any salesperson knows, that objections in every sale are part and parcel of the buyer’s anxiety. The key is not to exacerbate the buyer’s anxiety but diminish it. Whenever the interviewer highlights your weakness, be completely honest, open, and straightforward to him about admitting your shortcoming. Show the interviewer that you have nothing to hide. This diminishes the interviewer’s anxiety. Do not apologise or try to explain it away. You know that this supposed flaw is nothing to be concerned about, and this is the attitude you want your interviewer to adopt as well. Add that as desirable as such a qualification might be, its lack has made you work all the harder throughout your career and has not prevented you from compiling an outstanding track record of achievements. You might even give examples of how, through a relentless commitment to excellence, you have consistently outperformed those who do have this qualification.

Of course, the ultimate way to handle objections is to prevent them from arising in the first place. You will do that by uncovering the employer’s needs and then matching your qualifications to those needs. Once you have gotten the employer to start talking about his needs and goals for the position, help him see in a step-by-step fashion how perfectly your background and achievements match up with those needs. This way you would have one very enthusiastic interviewer on your hands, one who is no longer looking for objections.

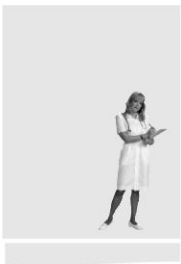


SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Some alternative questions on strengths and weaknesses are mentioned below:

Strengths

1. Why should we hire you?
2. What are your three greatest strengths?
3. What can you contribute to our organisation?
4. What is your greatest strength?
5. We've interviewed a number of highly qualified candidates for this position. What sets you apart from the others?
6. What part of your current job are you most comfortable with?
7. What are your strong points and how have they helped you to succeed?
8. In order to successfully meet the responsibilities of this position, which of your personal qualities will be of the greatest benefit?
9. Tell us about the passion in your life as it relates to your work.
10. What aspects of your work do you get most excited about?
11. What are your most outstanding qualities?
12. If you were to start your own company, what would that company do?
13. Tell me about the last book that you read.
14. What is your favourite colour and what does it reflect in your personality?
15. Rate yourself on a scale of one to ten—with ten being best—on your work ethic.



Weaknesses

1. What is your greatest weakness?
2. What are your worst qualities?
3. Name your three greatest weaknesses.
4. Which is the worst of your three greatest weaknesses and why?
5. What are your weaknesses?
6. What part of your current job are you least comfortable with?
7. What are your weak points and how have you overcome them?
8. What about yourself would you want to improve?
9. In which area do you need to make improvements?
10. Tell me about something you failed to do that you regretted later.

Q6. DO YOU HAVE ANY REGRETS IN YOUR JOB?

This is an artfully framed question that seeks to bring out your weaknesses. You may bring out non-consequential regrets or use your own tactic to answer the question. Pause as though it never occurred to you, then say, "As a general principle, I've found that the best way to avoid regrets is to avoid causing them in the first place. As a practice, at the end of each day, I mentally review the day's events and conversations to evaluate whether I would have any regrets. I immediately rectify them before regret occurs."

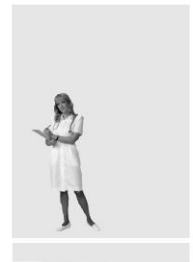
Q7. WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR PRESENT JOB?

This question is asked to ascertain your loyalty and future plans. Never let down your organisation or the people you work for. Some of the reasons you can give are:

- Proximity of workplace to your residence
- The new job fulfils your career objectives
- Need for career growth
- Ready for a larger responsibility
- You want to join a larger company
- The new job is a greater match for your skills and experience

Emphasise that the new job is what you were always looking for and elaborate on how you can add value to the organisation. Let the interviewer feel that you have specially chosen the new organisation which is supported by your knowledge of it. The interviewer will be upset if he/she feels your application was just a 'shot in the dark'. Also emphasise that you want to work for a long time and that you are not a *job hopper*.

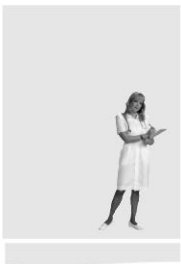
If you're not yet 100 per cent committed to leaving your present job, don't be afraid to say so. It shows your strong loyalty to your present job. Since you have a job, you are in a stronger position than someone who is without a job. But don't be coy either. State honestly what you would be hoping to find in a new job. Of course, as stated often before, your answer will be stronger if you have already found out what this position is all about and matched your desires to it.



SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

1. Our company is more widely recognised than the current company that you are working for, why do you think that is?
2. What interests you in a career with us?
3. What is the most attractive aspect of the job you are interviewing for?
4. What is the least attractive aspect of the job you are interviewing for?
5. In order to successfully meet the responsibilities of this position, which of your personal qualities will be of the greatest benefit?
6. What part of the job that you are interviewing for do you most look forward to?
7. What part of the job that you are interviewing for do you least look forward to?
8. What aspect of our organisation has the greatest appeal for you?
9. Knowing our organisation and the position that you are interviewing for, where can you make the greatest contribution?
10. How will the job you are interviewing for, fit into your career plans?
11. Why did you choose this profession and this specific job?
12. What do you think your responsibilities will be if you're hired?
13. Why are you interested in the position?

14. What are you seeking from this job?
15. What challenges do you think that you will face in moving from your current position to this position?
16. What aspect of the job announcement interested you the most?
17. In comparison to your current position, what do you think will be different in your new position?
18. Tell us why you believe you are ready to move to the next level of management.
19. What can you contribute to our company?
20. What interests you about a career in the field of a new job?
21. Why should we give you a chance to perform in this job?
22. Why should we hire you instead of the other candidates?
23. We have 24 candidates. Many of them have more experience than you do. Why should we hire you instead of one of the other candidates?
24. Why do you want this job and how does it fit you?
25. What do you intend to accomplish in the new job with our company?
26. Why should we hire you?



Q8. WHY AREN'T YOU PRESENTLY EMPLOYED?

This is a tricky question as it lowers your bargaining power. Organisations like to hire those with a consistent work record and those presently employed. One reason is possibly that they suspect you were fired from your previous job. Never lie about having been fired. It's unethical—and can be easily checked. Deflect the reason from you personally to other reasons such as a management takeover, merger, division wide layoff, etc., Do not sound bitter but say that you would have done the same if you were in charge. This shows that you see the company's point of view. Your stature will rise immensely and, most important of all, you will show you are healed from the wounds inflicted by the firing. You will enhance your image as first-class management material and stand head and shoulders above the legions of firing victims who, at the slightest provocation, zip open their shirts to expose their battle scars and decry the unfairness of it all. They let down their organisation.

Make sure you've prepared a brief reason for leaving. Best reasons to give are:

- (i) Seeking better job
- (ii) Greater responsibility
- (iii) Opportunity for growth,
- (iv) Better learning opportunity
- (v) Higher position
- (vi) Larger organisation
- (vii) Leadership opportunity
- (viii) Need for a greater challenge
- (ix) Relocation to another area

- (x) Not sure of the career direction earlier
- (xi) More academic qualifications received
- (xii) Logistics of transport

Another strategy to this question is to say, “I found that while working, I was too busy to look for ideal opportunities for myself. Now with free time I am able to evaluate each organisation better, so that I can have a long innings with the organisation I finally choose.”

Another good reason could be that you were going back to study to improve your qualifications. Make sure that you are enrolled in a course.

Q9. WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR PRESENT JOB SO SOON?

This question is asked if you have recently joined an organisation and want to leave. This situation is tricky. An interviewer is suspicious of someone who changes jobs quickly. It forebodes that you are a possible job-hopper; not loyal to any organisation; you do not know what you want; you were found unsuitable during the probationary period; you did not get along with your boss; etc. You will have to give a real good reason. Some acceptable reasons could be:

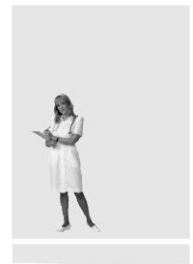
1. Job was not as it was described
2. Organisation changed its focus/goals
3. Mismatch with your talents/skills
4. Change in management...wanted to bring in own staff
5. Downsizing, reorganisation
6. Hired for a short-term project.

All of these will probably prompt a follow-up question. Support your answer with facts and be consistent. Note that this job need not be included in your résumé since it was of such a short duration but may have to be included in an application form if it looks to account for all your time.

Circumstances also come to play. Your ideal job was not readily at hand and that you took your present job to gain some experience. Emphasise that that the job you have now applied for is your dream job. If you have held other jobs for substantial periods and you took the other job in good faith, stress your past performance. You are not a job-hopper. You have skills to offer and want to put them into good use.

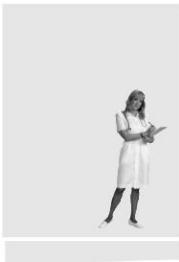
Q10. WHAT ARE YOUR SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS?

The question is aimed to ascertain your **aspirations**. The organisation may not be able to fulfil your unrealistic aspirations. I once interviewed a 23-year-old, who wanted to head the organisation in five years time. While this may be possible in small organisations, it was not possible in the large bureaucratic undertaking that I worked for. The organisation must be able to support achievers and reward them with fast growth. Such organisations are possibly Dot.com companies, restaurant chains, etc. but not large organisations which



have several layers of hierarchy to trudge through. Another girl saw herself in the same position for many years. Her personal circumstances forced her to stay in one position only. This may suit organisations who want stability but not the organisations that want leaders on the fast track.

To answer this question, it is important to understand the size of the organisation, its organisation structure and the experiences of the present and past employees. Be realistic to the organisation. Remember that progressive organisations value growth not only for the organisation but also for the individuals who work for it. They do not want to lose good talent for the want of growth opportunities. However, they have their pace of growth which must be understood. Ten years may be far away but five years can be realistic.



The interviewer ascertains how good you are in making long-range plans and if you have any goal that is in harmony with the goals of the organisation. One way to answer this question is to hark back upon your accomplishments to date by saying, “I started out in my profession as a junior clerk while I completed my college studies during the evenings. Once I had my degree, I applied for a transfer to a more advanced position, citing my on-the-job training. This has been the pattern for my career with my past two employers. I learn quickly on the job and am willing to take classes and workshops to augment my experience. I have been able to assume greater responsibilities and add more value to the organisation. I do not think in terms of titles...I think more in terms of how can I solve a problem? Since this has been my career style to date, I do not imagine it to change. In five years, I feel I will have continued to learn, to grow into a position of more responsibility and will have made a significant contribution to the organisation.”

No one can make goals for you. It comes down to where you are in your professional life and what you want to do. Most people have five-six careers in their working lifetime.

The best advice is to relate your answers to the organisation that interviews you. Do not make a point of having goals that cannot be realised. You cannot state aspirations for foreign assignments when the organisation is strictly domestic. If you do your research into the organisation, and into what you truly want to do in future, you will be able to come up with reasonable responses. No one is going to come back to you in five years and chastise you for not meeting these goals!

Examples of good responses are given below:

- “My long-term goals involve growing with a company where I can continue to learn, take on additional responsibilities, and contribute as much of value as I can.”
- “I see myself as a top performing employee in a well-established organisation, like this one. I plan on enhancing my skills and continuing my involvement in (related) professional associations.”

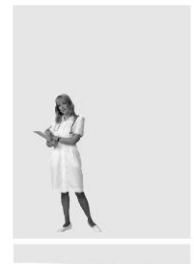
- “Once I gain additional experience, I would like to move on from a technical position to management.”

Reassure your interviewer that you are looking to make a long-term commitment and that this position entails exactly what you are looking to do and what you do extremely well. As for your future, you believe that if you perform each job at hand with excellence, future opportunities will take care of themselves.

SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Some similar alternative questions are mentioned below:

1. Where do you want to be after five years from now in your career?
2. What are your long-term career goals?
3. What prompted you to take your current job?
4. Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
5. Why did you make a career change?
6. Why do you want to leave your current position?



Q11. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PARTICULAR FIELD OF WORK?

This question is asked to know about your *temperament*, *attitudes*, and *personal qualities*, and how they link to the job. The perfect matching brings about commitment. For example, an accountant may like to be detailed, patient, have the ability to sit at the workplace for many hours, is good with figures, finds challenge in numeric problems, etc. A salesperson on the other hand is extrovert, likes pleasing people, finds negotiation a challenge, is energetic, loves travel, likes to dress well, finds achieving sales targets exciting, etc. These examples perfectly match the personal qualities to the chosen field of work. Some of the horrifying answers I received were—“I don’t like it but one has to work to live”; “My father chose this profession for me”; “I like it because it is convenient to my personal life”. Make sure that you have matched your personal qualities to the job. In any case, a mismatch would spell doom for you.

Q12. LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR CAREER?

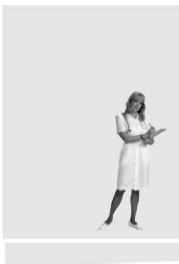
This question could well be a trap to the earlier question. It is asked to confirm your commitment to what you are presently doing. By this question, the interviewer wants to find out whether you celebrate life or whether you are a moaner.

Indicate that you are a happy, fulfilled, and optimistic person and that, in general, you would not change a thing. For example, you could say: “It’s been a good life, rich in learning and experience, and the best is yet to come. Every experience in life is a lesson in its own way. I would not change a thing including my profession.”

Q13. WHAT DO YOU WORRY ABOUT?

Redefine the word 'worry' so that it does not reflect negatively on you. For example, say, "I would not call it worry, but I am a strongly goal-oriented person. So I keep turning over in my mind anything that seems to be keeping me from achieving those goals, until I find a solution. That's part of my tenacity, I suppose."

Q14. WHAT MAKES YOU ANGRY?



Give an answer that will uplift your personality and your management skills. To answer this question you should do some homework and come prepared with a good reply.

Some reasons which look good in an interview are:

- (i) When people tell lies.
- (ii) When people are not meeting time frames.
- (iii) When people do not achieve your high standards.
- (iv) When people do not show humility.
- (v) When situations are unfair.
- (vi) When bosses rebuke in public.
- (vii) When subordinates are not cost-conscious.
- (viii) When people are habitually absent from work.

You will see that your personality traits are highlighted. In other words this will show that you are honest, meet deadlines, have high standards, are humble and fair, uphold people's self respect, are cost-conscious and punctual. Wow! I would love to have such a person in my organisation.

Q15. WHAT MAKES YOU TICK?

This is a wonderful open question, to promote yourself as best as you can. Here, the interviewer wants to know what motivates you. Some good motivational spurs are: challenge, innovation, problem-solving and result-oriented situations, team work, higher responsibilities, targets, etc. Choose one or more that can lend itself to the job at hand.

Q16. WHY AREN'T YOU EARNING MORE MONEY AT THIS STAGE OF YOUR CAREER?

There can be many reasons why you are not making more money. Few reasons are mentioned below:

- (i) You were in the learning mode when experience was more important than money.
- (ii) You preferred to work for a professional company that paid less than an unprofessional one that paid more.
- (iii) You respected the company values that were more important than money.

- (iv) There were tremendous growth opportunities in future.
- (v) You prefer to work for a stable company.
- (vi) The quality of work-life was better in the companies you worked.
- (vii) You wanted to work for a company with a reputed brand name.
- (viii) You preferred the perfect job which motivates you.

The interviewer will not see you as a dollar chaser but someone who is a well rounded personality. Here is one good answer I received for this question, “I guess everyone has their ballpark as to what is enough for them. What I earn is enough for my needs. I rather concentrate on a better job where I can perform better and earn more money through performance than get good money and be miserable.”

Q17. WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

This is a wonderful question to evaluate your own benchmarks. Have a few heroes in mind with qualities of good professionalism. Industry leaders may add to your professional image. There is nothing wrong in mentioning sports stars, musicians, or philanthropists as long as you can highlight the special qualities you admire. Relate them to your performance and attitudes. Some laudable qualities you can work around are:

- (i) Excellence
- (ii) Perfection
- (iii) Humility
- (iv) Consistency
- (v) Compassion
- (vi) Achievement-oriented
- (vii) Concern for others
- (viii) Reliability

SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTION

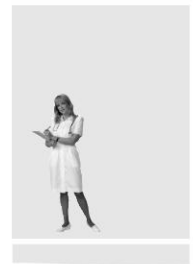
A similar alternative question is mentioned below:

1. Who is or was your idol?

Q18. WHAT SPORT DO YOU PREFER?

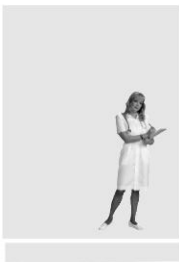
This question is asked for several reasons:

- (i) To find out whether you are active or passive. Those who participate in sports are considered physically active than those with sedentary pursuits like reading, painting, etc.
- (ii) It ascertains whether you are an active sportsperson or a passive one. There are those who continue with a sport like squash, tennis, golf, swimming, etc. There are others who are armchair sportspersons who follow games avidly on television and other media.



- (iii) It elicits whether you prefer individual sport or team sports. Individual sports are tennis, swimming, badminton, golf, etc. while team sports are football, hockey, cricket, etc. Those in team sports are more likely to understand teamwork to attain goals while individual sport brings out personal proficiency and could be loners suitable for jobs in research, audit, accounting, etc.
- (iv) It evaluates whether you have gone in depth in your sport of choice. It shows your real commitment to the game and the extent to which you learn the game.

Whatever is your choice of sport, be proud of your choice. It may be difficult to change your sport to serve the interviewer only. Make sure that you know everything about your choice of sport.



Q19. TELL ME A TIME WHEN YOU FAILED AND WHAT YOU DID TO RECOVER.

To err is human. To go through life without failures is impossible. What interviewers are really seeking is the response to such failures. Choose a failure in your life that will be inconsequential to your job. One good answer I received was, “I lost a crucial tennis tie against a leading college. I was representing my college. I felt I had let my college down. As soon as I lost I went straight to the practice courts to correct some of the faults I had made. I was determined to beat my opponent at the forthcoming championships. I forgot everything else and concentrated with a single mind to improve my game. I beat my opponent and won the cup for the college. My failure had indeed made me a better person”. This was indeed a wonderful answer.

Q20. WHY SHOULD WE SELECT YOU?

Treat this as a gift question. Sell yourself completely. Stress on how you are qualified for the job; talk about those personal qualities that will suit the job; reflect on your competencies, and most of all your goals, aspirations, and motivations. This question should swing the interview in your favour absolutely.

Q21. TELL US ABOUT YOUR VALUES AS RELATED TO THE JOB.

Values are your beliefs that translate into action. Interviewers want to know whether you will be an upright person for the organisation. Some notable values are: honesty, hard work, conscientiousness, teamwork, respect for others, helpfulness, customer orientation, positive attitude, and open to critique. Build your answer around these.

Q22. WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER OPTIONS RIGHT NOW?

Prepare for this question by thinking of how you can position yourself as a desired ‘commodity’. If you are still working, describe the possibilities at your

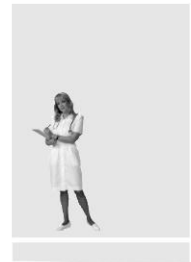
present firm and why, though you are greatly appreciated there, you are looking for something more like challenge, money, responsibility, etc. Also mention that you are seriously exploring opportunities with one or two other firms.

If you are not working, you can talk about other employment possibilities you are actually exploring. But do this with a light touch, speaking only in general terms. You don't want to seem manipulative or coy.

Q23. WHY HAVE YOU BEEN OUT OF WORK FOR SO LONG?

You want to emphasise factors which have prolonged your job search by your own choice. For example, you can say, "After my last job, I made a conscious decision not to jump on the first opportunity that came along. I decided to take whatever time I needed to think through what I do best, what I most want to do, where I'd like to do it...and then identify those companies that could offer such an opportunity. Yours is one of them".

You can use another approach provided it is true. You can say, "There is a recession in the (banking, financial services, manufacturing, advertising, etc.) industry and to find a job where I can effectively contribute is hard to come by. I do not want to take anything that comes my way. So between my being selective and the companies in our industry downsizing, I have a good enough reason to be without a job." You can say, "Once I get a perfect fit as this job in question I look forward to a long innings."



Q24. YOU DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE IN THIS AREA.

Before going to any interview, you would have assessed your match for the position. If you fall short of experience then prepare the best answer you possibly can.

To get past this question with flying colours, you are going to rely on your master strategy of uncovering the employer's greatest needs and then matching them with your strengths. Since you already know how to do this you are in a much stronger position.

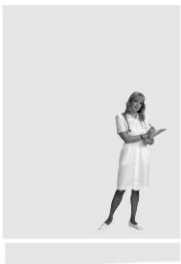
When the interviewer poses such an objection, agree with him or her but explain that your other strengths more than compensate for this weakness. Then review the areas of your greatest strengths that match up most favourably with the company's needs.

This is a powerful way to handle this question for two reasons. First, you are sharing your interviewer's concern. But more importantly, you are shifting his focus away from this one isolated area and putting it on the unique combination of strengths you offer, strengths which tie in perfectly with the company's greatest wants.

Q25. YOU HAVE BEEN WITH YOUR FIRM A LONG TIME. WON'T IT BE HARD SWITCHING TO A NEW COMPANY?

Most interviewers are worried that a long-timer with a company might leverage an offer to get a better career break with the old company. To overcome this objection, point the ways you have grown and adapted to changing conditions at your present company. Show that it has not been a static situation. Highlight the different responsibilities you have held, the wide array of new situations you have faced and conquered.

As a result, you have learned to adapt quickly to whatever is thrown at you, and you thrive on the stimulation of new challenges. You have now reached a stage for greater and new challenges which are not forthcoming in your present company. Describe the new dimensions of the position you are applying for and how it will enrich your experience. Explain that it is a deliberate move in keeping with your career plan.



Q26. WHY HAVE YOU CHANGED SO MANY JOBS?

This is a tricky question as it establishes you as a job-hopper. No one likes a job-hopper as they suspect that your tenure with them will also be short. But what if you have changed too many jobs? First, while composing the résumé before the interview stage, you should try to eliminate job entries that are less than a year. You may concentrate on the longer tenures you have served. You can round off the years than being detailed in months.

Example:

Instead of showing three positions this way:

Position at XYZ	6/1982—4/1983
Position at ABC	8/1983—12/1983
Position at MNO	1/1984—8/1987

You can simplify it as:

Position at XYZ	1982—1983
Position at MNO	1984—1987

In other words, you have dropped the position at ABC altogether. Note that, what a difference this makes in reducing your image as a job-hopper.

Once in front of the interviewer you must try to reassure him. Describe each position as part of an overall pattern of growth and career destination. Be careful not to blame other people for your frequent changes. But you should attribute certain changes to conditions beyond your control. For example, you can say, "There was talk of a merger and I suspected my department to be axed. I made the career change before that eventuality". If possible, also show that your job changes were more frequent in your younger days, while you were establishing yourself, rounding out your skills, and looking for the right

career path. At this stage in your career, you are certainly much more interested in the best long-term opportunity. You might also cite the job where you stayed the longest and describe that this type of situation is what you are looking for now.

Q27. WHAT GOOD BOOKS HAVE YOU READ LATELY?

This question is asked to ascertain whether you keep yourself updated on developments and information in the field. You are not expected to be a literary whiz kid unless interviewing for a position that requires such skills. It would work to your advantage, if you have read a handful of the most recent and influential books in your profession and on management. Actually, reading recent bestsellers in your field should be part of your regular professional life. It helps you in keeping abreast with the latest concepts, jargon, buzz words, etc.

Consider it part of the work of your job search to read up on a few of these leading books. But make sure they are quality books that reflect favourably upon you. Finally, add a recently published bestselling work of fiction by a world-class author and you will pass this question with flying colours.



Q28. MAY I CONTACT YOUR PRESENT EMPLOYER FOR A REFERENCE?

Express your concern that you would like to keep your job search private, but that in time, it will be perfectly okay. For example, you can say, “My present employer is not aware of my job search and, for obvious reasons, I would prefer to keep it that way. I would be most appreciative if we kept our discussion confidential right now. Of course, when we both agree the time is right, then by all means you should contact them. I am very proud of my record there and am sure that they will vouch for it.”

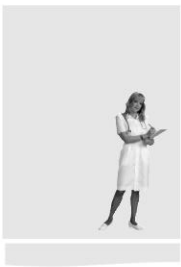
Q29. GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

You would have already listed your greatest and most recent achievements during your preparation for the interview. Your achievements could be a presentation that landed your company with a lucrative contract, or your participation in a trade show that secured new business, or introducing a new concept of marketing in your company.

You may ask yourself a question, “What if I have no achievements?” Well you are not going to get a good job without achievements. But do not chastise yourself. You would at least have met your targets. If that is also not true then concentrate on achievements in school and college. It is not possible that you have no achievements. It is just that you have not thought about them.

Q30. HOW COULD YOU HAVE IMPROVED YOUR CAREER PROGRESSION?

First, make sure in your interview preparation, you have a career plan. If your career has been haphazard then make sure you have logical reasons for making such decisions. For example, if you had known something earlier in life which was impossible to know at the time (collapse of the industry, force majeure that effected the industry, etc.) you might have moved in another direction sooner. *Stand by your career progress.* Take responsibility for where you are, how you have gotten there, where you are going, and that you harbour no regrets. Emphasise that the position you are interviewing for is a step in the right direction.

**Q31. WHAT INTERESTS YOU ABOUT THIS JOB?**

The best way to respond is to describe the qualifications listed in the job advertisement and then connect them to your skills and experience. That way, the employer will see that you know about the job you are interviewing for (not everyone does) and you have the necessary qualifications to do the job.

For example, if you were interviewing for a Human Resources Manager job where you would be responsible for recruiting, orientation, and training, you have to discuss how you were responsible for these functions in your past positions, and why you are interested in continuing to develop your expertise in Human Resources management.

Q32. TELL ME ABOUT A SPECIAL PROJECT YOU DID?

This is a fabulous cue to showcase yourself and your abilities. If you have not prepared for such a question then you need to be shot! The Human Resources person may not be sometimes qualified to ask technical questions about many jobs and therefore, asks a generalised one such as this. While many technical aspects of the project may fly over the interviewer's head he/she is actually looking at other things such as:

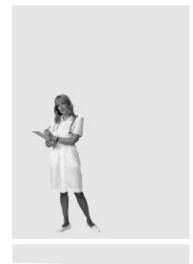
- (i) The enthusiasm with which you speak about the project.
 - (ii) The personal qualities that emerged during the project.
 - (iii) Your ability to work in a team.
 - (iv) Your ability to lead a team (if you were the team leader).
 - (v) Your time consciousness in completing the task.
 - (vi) How you planned your work.
 - (vii) Your system of monitoring and control.
 - (viii) Your quality consciousness.
 - (ix) The number of hours you put into the work.
 - (x) The innovation you introduced.
 - (xi) The systems and procedures you followed.
- Go ahead and blow your trumpet.

Q33. WHAT CAN YOU ADD TO WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ASKED YOU THAT SHOULD MAKE US WANT TO HIRE YOU?

This is the moment of truth. Fill all the things about yourself that did not emerge during the interview so far. Think grocery shopping...all those brands in the soap aisle begging for your attention. Each one comes with its own key selling points.

What are your key selling points? This must be planned by you before the interview. It should be brief and to the point. Think a one-minute infomercial about yourself. Think about your core strengths—communicating with clients, being a mentor to other colleagues, being able to keep updated in your field, etc.

Think about what is needed to be successful in the job and how you specifically meet those needs. Provide examples with perhaps statistics and percentages. Offer some proof from your past experience to support your claims. It is your ability to assess the situation and analyse your potential contributions that will sell your eligibility for employment.



Q34. HOW DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE DONE IN THIS INTERVIEW?

Such questions are asked to put you on the spot. If you say 'well' it may appear boastful, while if you answer 'Not so well' it may cross out your chances of success. The best way to approach this question is to say, "I think you have been wonderful to get all there is to know about me?" Then add, "The purpose of my meeting is to give you all the information necessary to see my suitability for your needs. I feel that by now we both see the common areas of suitability."

Q35. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

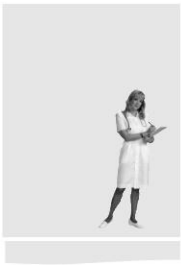
There are good questions and dumb questions and, worst of all, no questions at all. The interviewer's last question is the most important one. That's when the interviewer smiles and asks it. Your response at this point often determines if you would continue as a job seeker or transform into a job getter.

Candidates exhibit the following five behaviours in job interviews. What behaviour do you think recruiters find most unforgivable?

- (i) Poor personal appearance
- (ii) Overemphasis on money
- (iii) Failure to look at interviewer while interviewing
- (iv) Doesn't ask questions
- (v) Late to interview

The answer is number (iv). Surprised? Candidates who do not ask any questions represent the number (i) behaviour that causes recruiters to lose confidence. Still, it's not too bold to make this statement; you cannot succeed in a job interview without asking a number of well-considered questions. Remember the *concept of mutuality*.

If you don't ask questions in the interview, many recruiters will think, that you avoid asking questions on the job. "If I set up a scenario for a technical candidate, and they don't ask qualifying questions, I really wonder if that is how they would approach an application development project," says Kathi Jones, Director of Employee Central at Aventail, a Seattle-based provider of extranet services. "Are they letting ego get in the way of asking the hard questions? Do they play on a team or play against the team? I think you can learn as much from someone's questions and their thought process as you can from the answers," she adds.



Recruiters expect candidates to ask enough questions to form a good opinion about whether they want the job or not. If you don't ask enough questions, recruiters who may otherwise be willing to make you an offer may nevertheless reject you because they don't have confidence in you and you would never know what you would be getting into. "At the end of the day, as the interviewer, I need to feel satisfied that the candidate has enough information on which to make a decision in case I make an offer," says Richard Kathnelson, VP of Human Resources at Syndesis, Inc. in Ontario, Canada. Open-ended questions that generate information-rich answers signal to Kathnelson that he is talking to a resourceful candidate who knows how to make informed decisions, a skill vital to any job.

Listen to Susan Trainer, Senior Information Systems recruiter with RJS Associates in Hartford, CT. She interviews hundreds of candidates to determine if they represent a good fit for her client companies. "It makes me crazy when I ask a candidate if they have any questions and they respond with either 'No, you have answered them already' or 'How many vacation days does your client give?'"

"There are so many things you can ruin in a job interview and not asking thoughtful questions, when you have the opportunity, is probably the biggest one. Interviewers want to know how candidates collect information, and the easiest way to know that is by listening to candidates ask questions," Trainer says.

"The questions you ask, and how you ask them, do as much to differentiate you from the competition as the questions asked by the interviewer," Trainer insists. As you prepare for the job interview, your questions have to be as carefully coordinated as your attire and shoes. If you miss the opportunity to leave your interviewer with any one of these impressions, you risk losing the main prize and that is your job.

Thoughtful questions emphasise that you are taking an active role in the job selection process, not leaving the interviewer to do all the work. Being active is good. Great questions demonstrate that, far from being a passive participant, you are action-oriented and engaged, reinforcing your interest in the job.

Asking questions is an excellent way to demonstrate your sophistication and qualifications. The questions you choose indicate your depth of knowledge of the field as well as your general level of intelligence. Asking questions also

enables you to break down the formal interview/candidate relationship, establish an easy flow of conversation, and build trust and rapport. The matter of rapport is critical. Remember, most finalists for a job are more or less evenly matched in terms of qualifications. What gives the winning candidate the nod is rapport.

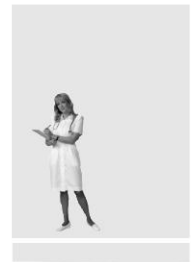
Your questions steer the interview the way you want it to go. Questions are a form of control. You can also use questions to divert an interviewer's line of questioning. If you sense the interviewer is leading up to a subject that you would rather avoid—your job hopping, for example—ask a question about another topic. After a lengthy exchange, the interviewer may not return to his/her original line of questioning.

The more senior the position you seek, the more important it is to ask sophisticated and tough questions. Such questions demonstrate your understanding of the subtext and context of this position, as well as your confidence in challenging the interviewer. Hiring managers will judge you as much on the inquiries you make as on the responses you provide. If you don't ask sufficiently detailed questions, it will demonstrate lack of initiative and leadership qualities that a senior level position demands.

Here are some issues that you can frame questions around:

1. The company's mission and objectives
2. The organisation's expansion plans
3. The nature of the job applied for and its detailed responsibilities
4. What is the current state of the organisation/industry?
5. What are the key problems and issues currently being faced by the organisation?
6. What are the key barriers or roadblocks that stand in the way of solving these problems?
7. What knowledge, skills, and capabilities are needed to remove these barriers?
8. What are the organisation's strategic goals?
9. What new knowledge, skills, and capabilities will be needed to realise these goals?
10. What are the organisation's values?
11. Who would you be reporting to?
12. What is the organisation structure of the department?
13. What your career path would be like?
14. Company benefits in case of domestic/overseas travel?
15. When you would be required to join (also informing the notice period with your current organisation)?
16. Does the organisation have an orientation programme?
17. What training and development opportunities are provided by the company?
18. Is assistance provided for local transportation and accommodation?

You will notice that the list of questions does not include the one about salary. Let the interviewer broach that subject first. You do not want to give the

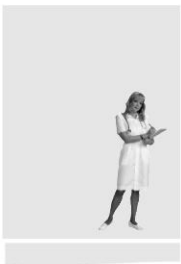


impression that you are chasing money only. Also remember that you would have answers to some of these questions and want to fine tune the information with an 'insider'.

THE DUMB DOZEN

Following are the dumb questions candidates actually asked:

1. Is it possible for me to get a small loan?
2. What is it that your company does?
3. Can I see the break room?
4. What are your psychiatric benefits?
5. How many warnings do you get before you are fired?
6. Can you guarantee me that I will still have a job here a year from now?
7. Would anyone notice if I came in late and left early?
8. What does this company consider a good absenteeism record?
9. The job description mentions weekend work. Are you serious?
10. What is the zodiac sign of the company president?
11. How do you define sexual harassment?
12. Will my office be near an ice machine?



FUNCTIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

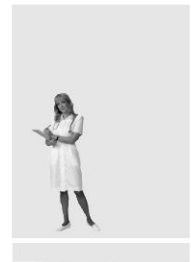
Q36. WHY DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF SUITABLE FOR THE JOB?

For a question of this nature, prepare yourself well in advance to tailor-make it to the job you are being interviewed for. The job profile is often given in the job advertisement but will also depend on your enquiry from past and present employees and any other organisation's literature. Your answer should please the interviewer. Primarily, an organisation is interested in knowing whether you have the requisite qualifications, knowledge, skills, experience, and competencies for the job. They are also concerned about whether your personality which includes your psychological and emotional make-up, upbringing, values, and motivations fit the job or not. While some of these may be already described in your résumé, they want to hear your personal attestation. Your preparation to the previous question on strengths and weaknesses can give you adequate fodder for the question you can expand on—the nature of your experience, your past achievements as a forerunner to what you are bringing to the organisation, your customer orientation, team work, honesty, commitment, etc.

By now you can see how critical it is to apply the overall strategy of uncovering the employer's needs before you answer any question. If you know the employer's greatest needs and desires, this question will give you an edge upon other candidates because you will give him/her better reasons for hiring you than anyone else.

Whether your interviewer asks you this question explicitly or not, this is the most important question of your interview because it exposes your single-most motivation for applying.

A sample answer would sound like this, “I understand that you are first and foremost looking for someone who can manage the sales and marketing of your book publishing division. As you have said you need someone with a strong background in trade book sales. This is where I have spent almost my entire career. I believe that I know the right contacts, methods, principles, and successful management techniques as well as any person can in our industry. You also need someone who can expand your book distribution channels. In my prior post, my innovative promotional ideas doubled, then tripled, the number of outlets selling our books. I am confident I can do the same for you. You need someone to give a new shot in the arm to your mail order sales, someone who knows how to sell in space and direct mail media. Here too, I believe I have exactly the experience you need. In the last five years, I have increased our mail order book sales from \$600,000 to \$2,800,000, and now we are the country’s second leading marketer of scientific and medical books by mail.” Every one of these selling points matches the needs of the organisation.



SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Few similar alternative questions are mentioned below:

1. Why should we hire you?
2. What is the most attractive aspect of the job you are interviewing for?
3. What part of the job, do you most look forward to?
4. What aspect of our organisation has the greatest appeal for you?
5. Knowing our organisation and the position that you are interviewing for, where can you make the greatest contribution?
6. How will the job you are interviewing for fit into your career plans?
7. Why did you choose this profession and this specific job?
8. What do you think your responsibilities will be if you are hired?
9. Why are you interested in the position?
10. What are you seeking from this job?
11. What challenges do you think that you will face in moving from your current position to this position?
12. What aspect of the job announcement interested you the most?
13. In comparison to your current position, what do you think will be different in your new position?
14. Tell us why you believe you are ready to promote to the next level of management.
15. What can you contribute to our company?
16. What do you know about our company?

Q37. AREN'T YOU OVERQUALIFIED FOR THIS POSITION?

As with any objection, don't view this question as a sign of imminent defeat. It's an invitation to teach the interviewer a new way to think about this situation, seeing advantages instead of drawbacks. Few good responses are given below:

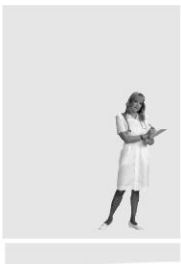
- "I believe that there could be very positive benefits for both of us. Because of my unusually strong experience I could start to contribute right away, perhaps much faster than someone who would have to be brought along more slowly."
- "There's also the value of all the training and years of experience that other companies have invested on me. You would be getting all the value of that without having to pay an extra dime for it. With someone who has yet to acquire that experience, he would have to gain it on your time and money."
- "I also have the potential for higher responsibilities whenever you are ready. It will be an internal promotion than having to go back to the market to find someone. You could also use my strengths to upgrade the staff and bring in the latest practices. I will be the mentor and coach to lesser experienced teams."
- "Most important, I can train the future generation of employees with all the qualifications and experience I have."
- "I am looking to make a long-term commitment in my career now."

The main concern behind the 'overqualified' question is the fear that you will leave your new employer as soon as something better comes your way. Anything you can say to demonstrate the sincerity of your commitment to the employer and reassure that you are looking to stay for the long-term, will help you overcome this objection.

Q38. THIS JOB IS NOT A BED OF ROSES. WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO JOIN IT?

Interviewers ask this question to check your real commitment. They are concerned about the high cost of recruitment and want to make the right selection. They want to protect the organisation from someone who will leave at the slight prospect of discomfort. A candidate who works for a few months shows the failure of the selection process. Interviewers sometimes deliberately paint a gloomy picture to ascertain your real interest in the job.

The best approach to adopt is to tell them that you have given this job a great thought before applying and that you feel it is the best for you. Show your keenness and conviction in spite of the negatives. Remember, it is a trap and that you should not fall into. The best way is to confirm why you like the job. The following reasons can be cited: the culture of the organisation; the job fits in with your career objectives; the job provides you with new experiences; etc. One good reply I received was, "Every job has its plus and minus points. In the final analysis I find that the strengths of the job outweigh the weaknesses of this job. I see that the weaknesses really are a challenge and a chance to contribute to my career growth."



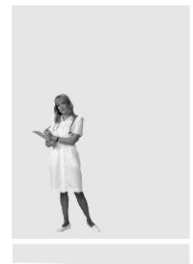
SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Few similar alternative questions are mentioned below:

1. What is the least attractive aspect of the job you are interviewing for?
2. What part of the job that you are interviewing for do you least look forward to?

Q39. WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM THE JOB?

Interviewers are anxious about whether they will be able to give you job satisfaction or not. One answer that impressed me was, “I would like a job that will use my qualifications, experience, and talents. I want to be challenged now and then and given additional responsibilities that will help me learn and grow”. In this answer the candidate showed his enthusiasm to contribute, his willingness to accept challenges, and his desire to learn and grow, if he were given responsibilities over and above his normal duties. He was selected.



Q40. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU FIND DIFFICULT TO DO?

The interviewer is looking to determine how well you know yourself, how you react to difficult situations/tasks, and what you learnt from your past experience. Look back over your work experience for examples like speaking in public at a meeting; disagreeing with a manager over an important issue; being asked to use a software program you have not had an opportunity to learn etc. Lessons that you learnt from such experiences and steps that you took to rectify your shortcomings for the future are important.

The following is an example of an answer to such a question:

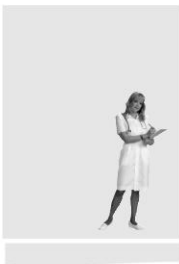
“I always seem to need a day or two to prepare myself to give a presentation to department heads. When I know I have to give a report on my projects, I plan out all the details in advance and rehearse. One time, there was a problem with a supplier and I was asked to update senior management immediately. The supply chain was crucial to the completion of an important project we had been working on for five months and decisions had to be made based on the information I had to present at a moment’s notice. I gathered the information and presented it in a simple but detailed manner. It was much easier than I thought it would be without the hours of concern and practice at my disposal. The facts spoke for themselves. Since I understood the situation, I was able to make it clear to management and get a rapid decision. I learnt that if I had the facts then presentations need not be so overwhelming. I need to be abreast of facts at all times. However, I still prefer advance notice but I know I can deliver when asked to.”

Q41. WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES A GOOD TEAM MEMBER?

This question is aimed at ascertaining whether you will make a good team member or not. Ideally, you should have an opportunity to research and find

out the culture of the new organisation. Are teams strictly formal and matter of fact or are they casual and amorphous?

Model your responses to the organisation. Obviously, you want to describe yourself as a good team member. Your ideas of what makes a good team member may be very different from the organisation. So your understanding of the organisation will enable you to give answers that they will like to hear. Your answer also depends on where you are likely to be in the new team—a new member, leader, or support staff. Your main objective will be to ensure the team's success. Some possible ways are mentioned below:



1. Understanding thoroughly the team objectives.
2. Understanding thoroughly each team member's strengths and weaknesses, with a view to fill in the gaps caused by weaknesses.
3. Being friendly and approachable.
4. Having thorough knowledge of systems and procedures.
5. Understanding the local terms and jargon.
6. Complementing the skills of others.
7. Helping others when they are under stress.
8. Providing information to keep the team abreast.
9. Giving respect to members.
10. Willing to coach others as well to learn from them.
11. Upholding the team's concern for quality and safety.
12. Adding value to the team.
13. Upholding the disciplinary norms of the team and counselling those who are errant.
14. Creating enthusiasm in the team.

Q42. WHY DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD HIRE YOU FOR THIS POSITION?

A question like this can be answered only if you had done the following preparation before the interview:

1. You have researched the job and the organisation and have listed the level of knowledge, skills, and experience required for the applied position.
2. You have researched yourself and matched to the job profile, what you have in terms of skills, experience, competencies and personal traits.

Create a list with the following headings:

Needs of the new Job

What I can provide

Having matched this, you would find that you seem eligible for the job. Now see how you can add value to the job based on your previous experience. At the interview you will list your skills, experience, competencies, and personal

traits. You will then explain enthusiastically, how you can add value to the job. Remember, that the organisation has a problem of finding a suitable person to fill a vacancy. Sell yourself by mentioning the benefits of hiring you, as the solution to their problem.

Q43. DESCRIBE A CHALLENGING WORK YOU HAD TO FACE AND HOW YOU DEALT WITH IT?

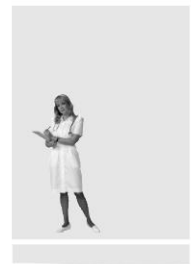
You will approach this question through preparation much in the same way as the previous question. Except now you will add a new column to the list:

Needs of the new Job

What I can provide

Proof from my past job

By this you can quote examples that reflect on the new job. This will make a greater impression on the interviewer than an example that is unrelated. Note that by preparing these lists you get a greater confidence to face the interview because you now know the requirement of the new job needs.



Q44. HOW DO YOU HANDLE CONFLICT?

On the job, there are many sources of conflict. Conflicts can occur with:

- Fellow employees
- Management
- Rules, procedures
- Clients, customers
- Demands of work vs. personal life, family

The best way to approach this question is by looking at it from the employer’s point of view. They want problem-solvers not problem-creators. You can offer an answer such as, “I know everything cannot run smoothly at work all the time. When there is a conflict, I usually try to determine the source of the problem and see if it can be solved. This might involve other members of the work team, discussing the problem and offering possible solutions. I would then try to pick the solution which appears to have the best outcome and put it into action.”

Another way to handle this question is to prepare an example from your past to relate as a story. However, the example that you choose must fit the new job profile. The interviewers must visualise you solving their problems.

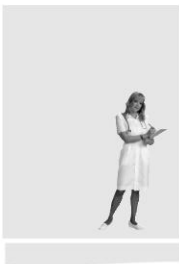
Q45. TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU TRIED AND FAILED?

Remember, no one is perfect and the interviewer must have failed too. As the saying goes, “to err is human.” The interviewer will frown on someone who claims not to have erred ever. The interviewer is more interested in your ability to cope with mistakes, to learn from mistakes, and to deal with others who are less

than perfect. If you have an example, certainly pick one that happened a while back, was not earth shattering in results, and provided you with the knowledge and learning that you applied recently in successfully solving another problem.

Q46. TELL US ABOUT YOUR ANALYTICAL SKILLS

Analytical skills make use of logic and rationale. You should attend short-term courses to equip you with negotiation skills, time management, problem solving, decision making, computer skills, training skills, etc. This should be easy if you have done a realistic skill inventory of yourself while preparing for the interview. This list will also offer proof of each skill (where you learned it and where you last used it). Working off your inventory, focus on various analytical skills and match them to the skills you feel are most important for the job you are considering. You can now give specific examples of skills you can offer. (Do not neglect skills obtained in extracurricular activities in school and college, such as volunteer work, debating, creative skills, etc. Some can have a relevance to the work place).



SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Similar alternative questions are mentioned below:

1. Are you analytical? Give us one example of your analytical abilities.
2. Tell us about your analytical skills.
3. Tell us about a particularly difficult problem that you analysed and your recommendation.
4. What steps do you take when analysing complex problems?
5. How would you rate your analytical ability? Why?
6. How would your manager rate your analytical ability?
7. Tell us about a situation where the analysis that you performed was incorrect. What would you have done differently?

Q47. WHAT DOES CUSTOMER SERVICE MEAN TO YOU?

This is an important question for jobs with customer contact. Interviewers want to see how customer oriented you are. The best way to approach this question is to think of yourself as a customer. Ask yourself, “What do I expect from a salesperson regardless of the circumstances and/or the problem?” An example may be *respect* and someone who *solves my problem*. If it makes sense, then convince the interviewer. An easy way of being convincing is to give a brief story or two of what you have witnessed as extraordinary examples of customer service behaviour. By using yourself as a focal point, you will be able to enunciate clearly your understanding of customer service. For those who are still not able to articulate their experiences, here are some quick tips to memorise and build on through examples.

Quick Tips

Four Cs of Taking Good Care of Your Customers

How can you keep your existing customers and win back ones you have lost? Become a customer caretaker. Here are the four Cs of excellent customer care:

Concern

Sincerely care about your customers' complete satisfaction, and convey that caring in all your interactions with customers. *Not only is this doing the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing.* After all, customers' satisfaction and continued business can definitely impact your job security.

Courtesy

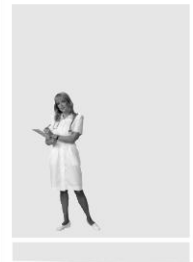
Customers relish good, old-fashioned courtesy, and genuine kindness. Even when you are tired or stressed, act as though you were feeling energetic and cheerful. Your customers will appreciate your efforts.

Conscientiousness

Always do what you promised in a timely manner. This is essential to earning customers' trust, and that trust is the key to gaining repeat business.

Cooperation

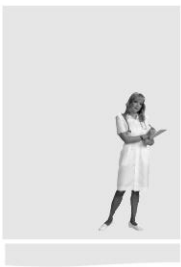
If one of your co-workers needs a hand in order to provide excellent service, roll up your sleeves and help out, even if you know your co-worker may get all the credit afterward. It does not matter who gets the glory; what does matter is whether or not the customers' needs are met completely.



SIMILAR ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What are the steps involved in successfully handling an irate customer?
Note: Your steps should include listening to the customer, letting the customer vent, identifying the problem, taking immediate action to solve the problem, and following-up with the customer.
2. What does good customer service involve?
3. Tell us, how you have handled a dissatisfied customer in the past?
4. Tell us about your experience in dealing with the public.
Note: Include a situation where you provided exemplary service.
5. A customer becomes irate because his permit application cannot be found.
How will you handle the customer?
6. A salesperson comes in to talk to your boss without an appointment.
How will you handle the salesperson?
7. What do you think your customers would say about your work?
8. Give us an example of a situation you handled exemplifying superior customer service.
9. Tell us about a situation where you dealt with a customer and what you would have done differently?

10. How would you handle a customer who uses abusive language?
11. Tell us about your experience in working a public service counter?
12. A customer calls in and states that one of your company's trucks rammed into her gate. How will you handle the customer?
13. Name five criteria essential for establishing effective service standards?
14. Name some of the criteria that may be included in a citizen satisfaction survey.
15. What are some of the ways to measure customer/user satisfaction?
16. What steps can you take to establish a "customer first" attitude in the organisation?
17. In what ways can an organisation transfer a "customer first" attitude to the Internet?
18. Tell us about the customer service training programs that you have implemented.
19. In what manner can business processes reinforce customer service training?



Q48. WHAT IN YOUR OPINION MAKES A GOOD SUPERVISOR/MANAGER?

This is a question for those who are aspiring for supervisory/managerial positions (sometimes for the first time). For those who have already had a supervisory or managerial experience, the question should not be so difficult. For those who are entering supervisory/managerial positions for the first time, here are some tips:

A good supervisor/manager should:

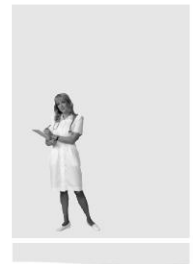
- (i) Be a good leader by balancing task and human aspects.
- (ii) Set objectives for the team and consult the team on how to achieve them.
- (iii) Understand his team members individually including their strengths and weaknesses.
- (iv) Assign responsibilities to the strengths and capabilities of each team member.
- (v) Be a good listener.
- (vi) Coach his team members.
- (vii) Command respect by being firm yet fair.
- (viii) Recognise good work in public and reprimand in private.
- (ix) Help the team members grow.
- (x) Be aware of the aspirations of team members and guide them towards their goals.
- (xi) Protect team members from external threats.
- (xii) Be hands-on during crisis.
- (xiii) Be inspirational.
- (xiv) Maintain the code of conduct.
- (xv) Ensure that team members meet quality standards.
- (xvi) Ensure that work methods used are safe.

- (xvii) Show empathy in dealing with team member's personal problems.
- (xviii) Praise in public, reprimand in privacy.
- (xix) Counsel employees and act as a mentor to them.
- (xx) Use delegation as a tool of development while keeping the accountability.

CASELETS

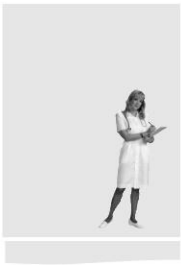
You may be presented with small caselets that will demonstrate your supervisory or managerial style such as:

1. Two employees come to you about a verbal disagreement. One says the incident happened one way, and the other employee has a different story. There are no other witnesses. What will you do?
2. You have an exemplary employee who suddenly starts coming in late. How will you handle this situation?
3. You supervise a group of employees, one employee complains that the office is too hot and another employee complains that the office is too cold. How will you handle this situation?
4. An employee complains that you gave another employee a benefit that the employee did not receive. He states that this is not fair. How will you handle this employee?
5. A supervisor from another group comes to you and complains that your employee visits the other group constantly and disrupts the work. What steps will you take?
6. An employee from another group comes to you and complains that your employee visits the other group constantly and disrupts the work. What steps will you take?
7. An employee is not performing the assigned tasks correctly. What will you do as a supervisor?
8. An employee continues to make careless mistakes. How will you address the situation?
9. You notice that an employee is continually on personal telephone calls. What steps will you take?
10. Your organisation does not have a dress code. However, one of your employees continues to come to work in inappropriate attire. How will you handle this situation?
11. An irate customer calls regarding one of your employees who was speeding on the expressway. What steps will you take regarding the employee?
12. A work stoppage has just concluded. A number of employees participated in the work stoppage, while others came to work. To ensure that your organisation continues to work effectively, what steps can you take?
13. Your employee complains that an employee from another group has been coming over and disrupting work. How will you handle this complaint?
14. An exemplary employee starts to become listless at work, misses deadlines, comes in late, and takes extended breaks. As the supervisor what action will you take?



15. It's your first day on the job. Your new job includes the supervision of 10 employees. What is the first thing you will do?
16. You smell alcohol on an employee. What will you do?
17. Your employee operating a piece of heavy equipment appears to be under the influence of alcohol. What action will you take?
18. Two of your staff are involved in a verbal altercation in your office area. How will you handle this situation?
19. One of your employees is using derogatory language on a telephone call. You and a number of your staff hear the employee. What will you do? If you pursue disciplinary action, what will the charges be?
20. During a routine audit, you find that the timekeeper credited herself with more overtime than was actually worked. How will you address the situation?

Use the principles of a good supervisor/manager when answering these caselets. Interviewers are more interested in the principles you will use, rather than the solution itself.



SIMILAR RELATED QUESTIONS

Few similar related questions are mentioned below:

1. What is the most important quality a *supervisor* should have?
2. An employee approaches you with a sexual harassment related problem. In your discussion with the employee, what items of information will be most important?
3. What are the characteristics of an effective supervisor?
4. What qualities make for a good boss?
5. What steps can a supervisor take to improve the capabilities of staff?
6. How should an assignment be made to an employee?
7. How would a supervisor evaluate an administrative employee's performance?
8. What are the three most common weaknesses of managers and supervisors?
9. Why is feedback important?
10. What are some of the ways in which an employee starts to behave that usually indicate a potential problem?
11. What guidelines should be followed in counselling an employee?
12. Name the major sources of conflict in organisations.
13. Describe the process by which conflict in an organisation should be addressed.
14. What are the five functions of a supervisor?
15. What considerations should be made in establishing organisational goals for your unit?
16. What actions can a supervisor take to ensure that subordinates support the mission and goals of an organisation?
17. Vacations during the holidays are popular among employees. Describe the actions a supervisor can take to ensure that service levels are unaffected during these times.

18. What are the guidelines to follow in constructively criticising an employee?
19. What are some of the signs that show your staff may be suffering from burnout?

Q49. TELL ME HONESTLY ABOUT THE STRONG AND WEAK POINTS OF YOUR BOSS (COMPANY, MANAGEMENT TEAM, ETC.)

Remember the golden rule: Never be negative of your previous boss or company. Stress only on the good points, no matter how charmingly you are invited to be critical. Your future boss could well be sitting on this interview panel. Your interviewer does not really care about your previous boss. He/She wants to find out how loyal and positive you are, and whether you will criticise him or her behind his or her back, if pressed to do so by someone in this own company. This question is your opportunity to demonstrate your loyalty to those you work with.

Q50. TELL ME ABOUT A SITUATION WHEN YOUR WORK WAS CRITICISED?

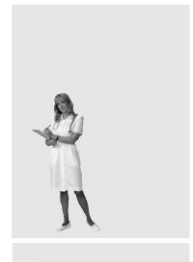
Begin by emphasising the extremely positive feedback you have got throughout your career and (only if it's true) that your performance reviews have been uniformly excellent. Also assure that you value critique as it helps you improve and perform better.

Of course, no one is perfect and you always welcome suggestions on how to improve your performance. Then, give an example of a not-too-damaging learning experience from your past career and relate the ways this lesson has since helped you. This demonstrates that you learned from the experience and the lesson is now one of the strongest points. Mistakes in your early career are more acceptable to the interviewer as it is the period of learning.

If you are pressed for a criticism from a recent position, choose something fairly trivial that in no way is essential to your successful performance. Add that you have learned from this, too, and over the past several years/months, it is no longer an area of concern because you have mastered it. This mastery is what you can bring.

Another way to answer this question would be to describe your intention to broaden your mastery of an area of growing importance in your field. For example, this might be a computer programme you have been meaning to sit down and learn, a new management technique you have read about, or perhaps a seminar on some cutting-edge branch of your profession that you want to attend. You consider it your ambition to perfect.

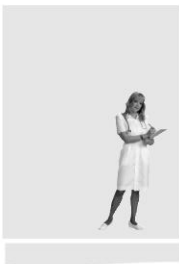
Again, the key is to focus on something not essential to your brilliant performance but which adds yet another dimension to your already impressive knowledge base.



Q51. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT REPORTING TO A YOUNGER PERSON (MINORITY, WOMAN, ETC)?

Emphasise the fact that you believe in equal opportunity and greatly admire a company that hires and promotes on merit alone and you could not agree more with that philosophy. The age (gender, race, etc.) of the person you report to would certainly make no difference to you.

Whoever has that position has obviously earned it and knows his/her job well. Both the person and the position are fully deserving of respect. You believe that all people in a company, from the Receptionist to the Chairman, work best when their abilities, efforts, and feelings are respected and rewarded fairly, and that includes you also. That is the best type of work environment you can hope to find.



Q52. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO YOUR BOSS IF YOU DISAGREE WITH HIS IDEA?

In any conflict between values, always choose integrity. You can say, “I believe that integrity overrides anything else. It is my job to point out things which may seem dishonest and will impact upon the boss and department. In terms of job-related matters, I will point them out in a constructive way as specifically, objectively, and factually as I can. I owe my boss my honesty. If he still goes ahead after my inputs I will respect and support him, after all he has the broader picture. I am sure my boss will consider my point of view.”

Q53. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A COLLEAGUE’S LACK OF PERFORMANCE IS BADLY AFFECTING YOUR DEPARTMENT?

This is a question to those in leadership positions. Remember some basic principles: counsel in private and establish what is the barrier in the way of performance—personal/professional problems, need for additional coaching, systems and procedures he/she is unaware of, etc. You can say, “Good human relations would call for me to go directly to the person and explain the situation in private, to try to enlist his help in a constructive, positive solution. If I sensed resistance, I would be as persuasive as I know how to explain the benefits we can all gain from working together, and the problems we, the company and our customers will experience if we don’t work together.”

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP QUESTION

Q54. AND WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF HE STILL DID NOT CHANGE HIS WAYS?

Answer by saying, “One thing I would not do is to let the problem slide, because it would only get worse and overlooking it would set a bad precedent. I would try again to solve the problem, involving others if necessary. If the problem

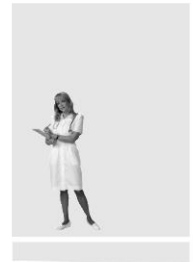
persists I will recommend a hard decision which may include a termination of service. After all the performance of the company must not suffer”

“I might add that I have never yet come across a situation that could not be resolved by harnessing others in a determined and constructive effort.”

Bosses want to see if you have the guts to take hard decisions if needed.

Q55. WHAT ARE THE AREAS THAT YOU CAN IMPROVE UPON?

This may be a trap question asked later in the interview and is linked to your stated strengths and weaknesses. This is a question to ascertain how much you know about yourself and your commitment to constant improvement. Keep this answer, like all your answers, *positive*. A good way to answer this question is to be aware of and consistent with your stated weaknesses. Choose an area which is not threatening to your employer’s needs. Tell them the steps that you have already taken and how excited you are about the improvements. Examples can be a new technology introduced or how to participate in a trade show.



Q56. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WORKING LATE AND ON WEEKENDS?

Remember that modern work environments demand long hours and sometimes employees have to work on weekends. This is particularly true of the service industry like BPOs, banks, hotels, etc. If you are a confirmed workaholic, make it clear to the interviewer by saying this kind of schedule is just your style. Add that your family understands it as well. Indeed, they are happy for you, as they know you get great satisfaction from your work.

If, however, you prefer a more balanced lifestyle, answer this question in the following manner: “A smart performer finishes his work in the allotted time. This means that his productivity is high. I am one of them. However, I believe in job completion and if I am required to work extra hours sometimes then I shall very willingly do it.”

If the timings do not suit you, say so, but phrase your response positively: “My family likes to see me after work and on weekends. My family members bring balance and richness to my life, which in turn helps me to be happy and productive at work. If I could handle some of the extra work at home in the evenings or on weekends, that would be ideal. This way you would get a person of exceptional productivity who meets your needs with strong credentials. And I would be able to handle some of the heavy workload at home where I can be under the same roof with my family. Everybody would win.”

Q57. DO YOU HAVE THE STOMACH TO FIRE PEOPLE?

Describe the rational and sensible management process you follow in both hiring and firing.

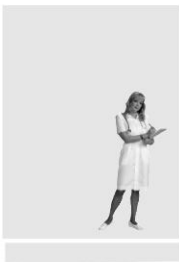
You can say: “My whole management approach is to hire the best people, train them thoroughly, get them excited, and make them proud to be part of

our team, and then work with them to achieve our goals together. I believe that if you do all of that right, especially hiring the right people, you don't have to fire very often."

"So with me, firing is the last resort. But when it's got to be done, it's got to be done, and the faster it is done, the better. A poor employee can wreak terrible damage in undermining the morale of an entire team of good people. When there's no other way, I have found it's better for all concerned to act decisively in getting rid of offenders who won't change their ways."

Q58. COULD YOU HAVE DONE BETTER IN YOUR LAST JOB?

Don't be negative. You can say something like this, "I suppose with the benefit of hindsight you can always find things that you could have done in a better way, of course, but off the top of my head, I can't think of anything of major consequence." If they press for an incident then choose the one with the least consequences.



Q59. DESCRIBE A SITUATION WHEN YOU SUFFERED DUE TO CONDITIONS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL.

This question is asked to see how you react to adverse conditions beyond your control. Treat this question as an opportunity to bring out your strengths under difficult circumstances. You can say something like, "I had prepared a beautiful PowerPoint presentation for a business client to clinch a lucrative contract. On that day the power went out and I was left to make the presentation in the dark. Thank goodness I have good communication skills, logical thinking, and the ability to stay calm. I had also planned the presentation thoroughly. I gave the presentation verbally under a dim emergency light. We got the contract!"

Q60. CAN YOU WORK UNDER PRESSURE?

There is no other answer but "Yes". Prove it with a vivid example or two of a goal or project accomplished under severe pressure. You may also add that you get an adrenaline rush under pressure. The more the work pressure, the better you perform.

Q61. WHAT WAS THE TOUGHEST DECISION YOU HAD EVER TO MAKE?

Be prepared with a good example, explaining why the decision was difficult, the process you followed in reaching it, the courageous or effective way with which you carried it out, and the beneficial results it brought about.

Q62. TELL ME ABOUT THE MOST BORING JOB YOU HAVE EVER DONE.

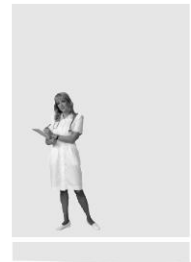
Claim that you have never allowed yourself to grow bored with a job and you don't understand it when others let themselves fall into that rut. For example:

“Perhaps I have been fortunate, but that I have never found myself bored with any job I have ever held. I have always looked for creative challenges requiring energetic and enthusiastic solutions. I believe that, if anyone is bored with his work, it is probably because he/she is not challenging himself/herself. I prefer to go to my boss for more duties to letting my job get monotonous.”

Q63. WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN YOU HIRE PEOPLE?

This question could be asked if one of your job components is to hire people. Obviously, you would like to state the obvious:

- Is he/she qualified for the position? (Academic attainment, experience, personality traits, competencies, skills, etc.)
- Is he/she motivated?
- Will he/she culturally fit into our organisation?
- Is he/she a team player?
- Does he/she show potential to grow?



Q64. SELL ME THIS STAPLER.

This is a question often asked to those who have a direct sales role. The most important secret of salesmanship is “to find out what people want, and then show them how the product fits that want.”

To do this a good salesman must know both his/her product (its features and benefits) and his/her prospect before he/she sells anything. Then proceed to ask questions to establish the buyer’s needs. Some questions you can ask are:

- (i) What specific use will you have for it?
- (ii) What features are you looking for?
- (iii) Are you particular about a colour or will any colour do?
- (iv) Are you particular about the brand name?
- (v) Is there anything else?

Give suggestions:

- (i) Would you like it to be reliable?
- (ii) Would you like it to be small and compact?
- (iii) Would you like the staples to be easily available?
- (iv) Wouldn’t you like a stapler that can use any brand of staples?

Once you have asked these questions, make your presentation citing all the features and benefits of the stapler and why it is exactly what the interviewer just told you he/she is looking for.

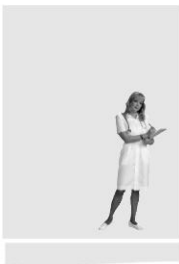
Then close with, “Just out of curiosity, what would you consider a reasonable price for a quality stapler like this?” Whatever he says, (unless it’s zero), say, “Okay, we have got a deal.”

If he/she knows anything about salesmanship, then the interviewer should give you a standing ovation.

Tip: You would be most likely asked to ‘sell’ items that are often found on an office desk (e.g. pen, desk calendar, desk clock, etc.)

Q65. HAVE YOU BEEN ABSENT FROM WORK MORE THAN A FEW DAYS IN ANY OF YOUR PREVIOUS POSITIONS?

Emphasise your excellent and consistent attendance record throughout your career, if you have been regular. Describe how important you believe such consistent attendance is to keep the operation running smoothly. Remember that the service industry gives a heavy weightage to punctuality and attendance. If you are interviewing for a managerial position then emphasise, how important it is to set an example to your team.



Q66. WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE IF YOU CAME ON BOARD?

To answer this question, it is important that you are thoroughly familiar with the job profile and the manner in which work is done. If not then a good answer would be: “Well, I wouldn’t be a very good doctor if I gave my diagnosis before the examination. Should you hire me, as I hope you will, I would want to understand thoroughly the nature of work and why it is being done that way. I would like to conduct in-depth meetings with you and the other key people to get a deeper grasp of what you feel you are doing right and what could be improved. The solution is a collective decision.”

Another way you can answer this question is by asking, “Are there any specific concerns you have?” When stated, proceed to ask them relevant questions. What matters is the kind of questions rather than the solutions that you give. The interviewer will evaluate whether you are asking the right questions or not.

Q67. HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK DO YOU NORMALLY WORK?

This is a question to evaluate whether you are a clock-watcher or flexible with time to get the job done. If you are, in fact, a workaholic and you sense this company would like that, state it. Emphasise that job completion is more important to you than the hours of work. Also confirm that you have the support of your family.

If you are not a workaholic, say you have always worked hard and put in long hours. It goes with the territory. In one sense, it shows that it’s hard for you to keep track of the hours. Confirm that you enjoy nothing more than meeting challenges and solving problems.

If hours of work do matter to you, then re-evaluate whether you wish to join a job that will keep you for long hours.

Q68. WHAT’S THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF BEING IN THIS POSITION?

First, take the word “difficult” to mean “challenging” which sounds more positive. Then, identify the area of your work which everyone in your profession considers challenging and in which you excel. Describe the process you follow

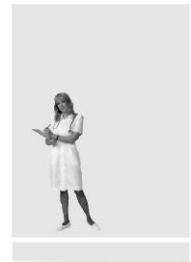
that enables you to get splendid results and be specific about those results. For example, say, “I think every sales manager finds it challenging to motivate the team in a recession. But that’s probably the strongest test of a top sales manager. I feel this is one area where I excel.” Explain that you always have a plan B ready for any critical situation.

Describe the rational and methodical process you would follow in analysing this problem, people you would consult for generating possible solutions, the best course of action you would choose, and how you would monitor the results.

Remember, in all such “What would you do?” questions, always describe your process or working methods, and you will never go wrong.

Q69. WHAT WAS THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE YOU’VE EVER FACED?

This is an easy question to answer, if you are prepared for it. Have ready a recent example that demonstrates a quality in you which is the most important to the job or a quality that is always in demand, such as leadership, initiative, managerial skill, persuasiveness, courage, persistence, intelligence, etc.



Q70. WHY SHOULD WE HIRE YOU INSTEAD OF PROMOTING SOMEONE FROM WITHIN?

The perennial question facing every organisation is whether to hire from outside or promote from within. Well obviously, professional organisations would have career plans and in some cases succession plans for critical positions. The general rule is to promote from within. It is healthy and it motivates internal employees; it gives growth; it is cheaper; the organisation has an employee who knows the culture and systems of the organisation well; and there are no recruitment costs. But still job sites keep screaming for external people to fill vacancies. There are many reasons why organisations seek people from outside. These reasons can be used as your arguments towards this question:

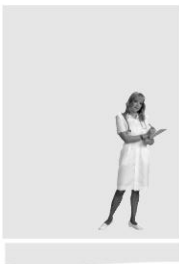
- (i) They do not have a qualified and experienced internal candidate.
- (ii) They are growing fast and so require additional people on board.
- (iii) They want fresh ideas coming into the organisation.
- (iv) They need an objective person to lead a team.
- (v) There is a shortage of qualified manpower.
- (vi) Vacancies are more than those on board.
- (vii) They have changed their organisational structures.
- (viii) They have entered into a new product range.
- (ix) They have opened business in a new geographical area.
- (x) They have introduced a new technology or process.
- (xi) It is a start-up company.
- (xii) Attrition of staff is faster than input.
- (xiii) Sudden vacancies.

Help the interviewer to see the qualifications that only you can offer to them.

For example, say, “In general, I think it’s a good policy to hire from within. Obviously you must have given it your first thought and still want to see options outside. I am here to add value to your operations. Maybe my contributions will help add new dimensions.”

Q71. WHAT KIND OF BOSS DO YOU PREFER?

This is a tricky question as your future boss sitting on the interview panel could be the opposite of what you desire. If he/she is, then it is just as well that you do not join the organisation. One good answer I received in an interview was, “Every boss wants someone to bring hurrahs to him and the team. He is one who recognises performance and gives me the flexibility to use my talents and creativity within the broad guidelines of policies and procedures. I see my boss as a partner and my objective is to see him succeed. In partnership there is open communication and that we solve problems together”. I found this answer spectacular as it clearly stated the objective as the boss’s success. This answer will disarm any boss.



Q72. WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM THE JOB?

In many cases, interviewers will want to know what you expected from your last job when you were hired, so, be prepared to answer the interview question, “What were your expectations for the job and to what extent were they met?”

There is no right or wrong answer to this question. The best way to respond to this question is to discuss what you expected when you took the job and give examples of how the position worked out for you. If the job was not exactly what you had expected, it’s fine to mention that. However, you should focus on the job itself, not the company, your boss, or your co-workers (if they were a problem). Be careful how you answer this question and don’t focus too much on the negative points. Instead, address the highlights of the job.

When responding, be specific. Prepare some examples to share with the interviewer in advance.

Q73. WHAT ARE YOUR PRESENT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

When you are asked questions related to your current or previous positions, it’s important to be specific and positive about what you did.

Describe your responsibilities in detail and connect them to the job you are interviewing for. Try to tie your responsibilities in with those listed in the job description for the new position. That way, the employer will see that you have the qualifications necessary to do the job. Focus most on your responsibilities that are directly related to the new job’s requirements.

It’s also important to be honest. Don’t embellish your job, because you don’t know who the hiring manager will be checking with, when they check your references.

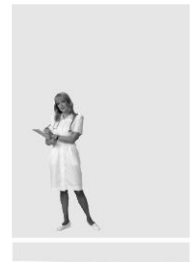
Q74. HOW DO YOU HANDLE CHALLENGES?

Be sure to include specific examples of how you handled a particularly difficult situation. Discuss how you researched the issue and contributed to finding a solution. Ensure that those qualities mentioned will be useful to the challenges in the new job. Always keep the new job in focus while answering your old experiences.

Q75. WHAT WAS THE MOST AND LEAST INTERESTING PART OF YOUR JOB?

Make sure that the things you say are least rewarding are not the responsibilities that are going to be a major part of the job you are interviewing for. For example, if you hated tele-selling in the last job and it is crucial to the new job, don't mention it. (You should not be appearing for the interview in any case!) Choose those that have least consequences in performing your new job. You can mention perhaps the chore of requisitioning supplies from stores.

Focus on the tasks that were most rewarding and highlight those. Be aware of the job you are interviewing for and tailor your response accordingly. Try to accentuate the positive, regardless of what question you have been asked, because you don't want to be construed as someone who is negative about work, in general.



Q76. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN YOUR PRESENT OR LAST POSITION?

Your potential employer will want to know what you accomplished, and what you didn't, in your current or last position. He/She wants to see how high you raise your bar of accomplishment.

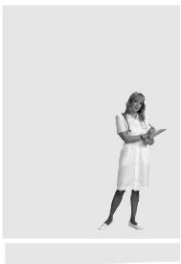
The best way to respond to this question is to give an example of something you accomplished that is directly related to the job you are interviewing for. Review your résumé and review the job posting. Find the best match and use that to show how and what you accomplished will be beneficial to the company you are interviewing with.

For example, if you are interviewing for a job at a school where you will need to manage student registration, explain to the interviewer how you registered students for courses, designed and managed registration software, and solved customer problems. Your accomplishment then is not the tasks themselves but the numbers involved or the time you took in achieving them or the quality of work that got you recognition.

Some other accomplishments could be consistent above average rating in your performance appraisal; winning the 'Best Employee of the Month' recognition; achieving a great contract, etc. If you didn't fail at anything, say it honestly.

Q77. WHAT WAS IT LIKE WORKING FOR YOUR SUPERVISOR?

This is a follow-up trap question to Q49 (Tell me honestly about the strong and weak points of your boss). This question is asked to ascertain your consistency about your relationship with the boss. Speak glowingly about the relationship you had with your boss even if you had the worst experience with him or her. Bring out the qualities you liked most in him/her and suggest what you would like your new boss to do, such as individual development, flexibility to use your initiative, setting standards of performance and training you to those standards, etc.



Q78. HOW DO YOU HANDLE STRESS?

This is a typical question asked to ascertain, how you handle on-the-job stress. Examples of good responses are given below:

- (i) “Stress is very important to me. With stress, I do the best possible job. The appropriate way to deal with stress is to make sure I have the correct balance between good stress and bad stress. I need good stress to stay motivated and productive.”
- (ii) “I react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn’t become stressful.”
- (iii) “I actually work better under pressure and I have found that I enjoy working in a challenging environment.”
- (iv) “From a personal perspective, I manage stress by visiting the gym every evening. It’s a great stress reducer.”
- (v) “Prioritising my responsibilities, so I have a clear idea of what needs to be done has helped me effectively manage pressure on the job.”
- (vi) “If the people I am managing are contributing to my stress level, I discuss options for better handling difficult situations with them.”

It’s a good idea to give examples of how you have handled stress to your interviewer.

Q79. WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

There is no right or wrong answer to this question. The interviewer is trying to understand the key to your being successful in the job you are interviewing for, and wants to make sure it is a good fit. Consider in advance, what actually motivates you and come up with some specific examples to share during the interview.

Your response will vary based on your background and experiences, but, you will want to share your enthusiasm and what you like(d) best about your job. Here are some examples:

- (i) “I like taking responsibility and being made accountable for it.”
- (ii) “I found I was good at heading development projects. The teams I led achieved 100 per cent on-time delivery of software products. I was

motivated both by the challenge of finishing the projects ahead of schedule and by managing the teams that achieved our goals.”

- (iii) “I have always been motivated by the desire to do a good job at whatever position I am in.”

Q80. WHAT RELIGION DO YOU FOLLOW?

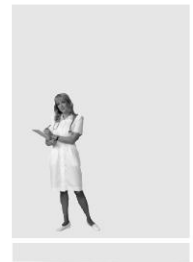
This is an illegal question. Many states stipulate certain questions that are illegal. *Illegal questions* are those that *deny you of equal opportunity*. They really are not related to your ability to perform the job. Illegal questions can include (based on the state):

- (i) Your age
- (ii) Number and ages of your children or other dependents
- (iii) Marital status
- (iv) Maiden name
- (v) Religion
- (vi) Political affiliation
- (vii) Ancestry
- (viii) National origin
- (ix) Birthplace
- (x) Naturalisation of your parents
- (xi) Income of your parents
- (xii) Spouse or children
- (xiii) Diseases
- (xiv) Disabilities
- (xv) Membership to clubs (unless professional clubs)
- (xvi) Spouse's occupation
- (xvii) Arrests, though you can be asked about convictions.

Interviewers are aware of these taboo questions in fear of lawsuits. Yet you may encounter untrained interviewers, usually at the functional level, who may ask such questions.

You can handle an illegal question in several ways given below:

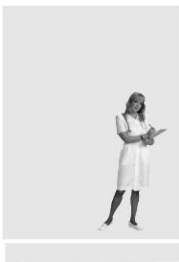
1. You can assert your legal right not to answer. This could frighten or embarrass your interviewer and destroy any rapport you had.
2. You could ignore your concern over privacy and answer the question as a matter of fact, if you feel the answer could help you. For example, your interviewer may have seen you at a social club. You may talk about the club as it could be the topic of common interest.
3. You can diplomatically answer the concern behind the question if you do not want your privacy invaded, without answering the question itself. For example, if you are over 50 and are asked, “How old are you?” You can answer in a friendly manner reflecting the interviewer's concern, whether your age may affect your performance. Follow this up by



reassuring the interviewer how fit you are and that your age and experience are the most important advantages you offer the employer.

Another example: If asked, “Do you plan to have children?” you could answer, “I am wholeheartedly dedicated to my career”, perhaps adding, “I have no plans regarding children.”

Remember that illegal questions arise from a fear that you won’t perform well. Even those who do not ask them may still have the fear. Some interviewers are trained to ask them in discrete ways. For example, an interviewer may ask a single mother, “I am looking for a good crèche for my child, which one you send yours to?” So it is best to anticipate their concerns and answer them before they become a concern. Counterbalance information to more than reassure them that there is no problem in the area they may be doubtful about. The best answer of all is to cite examples of your successes in your previous job. All concerns and fears will then vanish, replaced by respect and appreciation for your work.



Q81. ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN, RATE ME AS AN INTERVIEWER.

This is a question asked by untrained interviewers who want a feedback on their own performance to improve themselves in future. Don’t be negative. The interviewer will only resent criticism coming from you. This is the time to show your positivism.

However, don’t give a numerical rating. Simply praise whatever interview style he has been using. If he/she insists on a rating then give a high one. You can say, “You have been thorough in getting to know me.”

If he has been methodical, say, “You have been very methodical and analytical, and I am sure that approach results in excellent hires for your firm.”

In other words, pay him a sincere compliment based on the behaviour you have just seen.

Q82. TELL ME SOMETHING INNOVATIVE YOU HAVE INTRODUCED AT YOUR WORKPLACE.

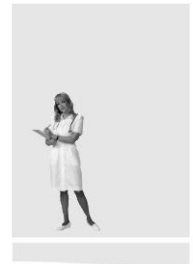
Remember that an organisation survives on innovative ideas of its employees to get the competitive edge. Innovation has become the cornerstone of performance management systems. Your best bet to get a job is the innovation that you bring with you. Organisations hire people from the external environment to enthuse new ideas into the organisation which may have become rather insular. Interviewers may overlook other negative aspects, if you are going to energise the organisation with your new ideas. This is a time to showcase your new ideas to counter any negative qualities of your candidature. (Just make sure that you have new ideas, otherwise you are out of the job market!).

FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q83. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR COMPANY?

This question is asked to evaluate your real interest in the organisation. It brings out the preparation you have done to learn about the company. The interviewer believes that your interest in a company can only stem from your knowledge about it. A person who comes for an interview without any knowledge or a sketchy knowledge cannot be interested and is only driven by monetary gains. If you can relate your knowledge in addition to the area that you would be involved in, it would show the depth of your interest. For example, if you were interested in marketing you can say, “I understand that you are one of the top 10 companies in sales to Asia but are currently interested in expanding your market into Europe. Competition is keen in that area but you have an advantage in that your product offers features that others do not, such as....”

It is not only showing that you have done the research but also that you like/know what you have learned about the company and have applied to it to add value to the position.



Q84. DESCRIBE YOUR IDEAL COMPANY, LOCATION, AND JOB.

This question is asked to ascertain your commitment to the organisation and whether the organisation can hold you for a long innings or not. The only right answer is to describe what this company is offering; be sure to make your answer believable with specific reasons, stating with sincerity why each quality represented by this opportunity is attractive to you.

Remember that if you are coming from a company that is the leader in its field or from a glamorous or much admired company, industry, city, or position, your interviewer and his company may well have a complex. That is, they may feel a bit defensive about being the second best to the place you are coming from, worried that you may consider them downmarket.

This anxiety could well be there even though you have done nothing to inspire it. You must go out of your way to assuage such anxiety, even if it is not expressed, by putting their virtues high on the list of exactly what you are looking for, providing credible reason for wanting these qualities.

If you do not express genuine enthusiasm for the firm, its culture, location, industry, etc., you may fail to answer the complex objection. One good answer I received was, “The great company I work for is so well established. I am looking for a challenge to make another promising company like yours a market leader.” Another example you can give is, “I am more interested in job content and what I can contribute to the company. I feel that I will get that opportunity in your company.”

Q85. ARE YOU WILLING TO GO WHERE THE ORGANISATION SENDS YOU?

Senior management of companies with multi-geographic locations want to have the benefit to deploy their good workers according to their business needs. In recent times the question of mobility has become critical. I find that people are reluctant to move out of a chosen location on three counts:

1. Inflation has necessitated the wife to work in order to supplement the family income. Some wives are career minded and have responsible jobs as well. Very often the wife has a good income. This freezes mobility as it means splitting the family.
2. Housing has become an acute problem due to high rentals. Many opt to stay in a location because they own a house and prefer staying in it for various reasons. They are unwilling to uproot themselves.
3. Education of children is an acute problem since getting admission in schools is very difficult.
4. People are familiar with a city and have family and friend networks in the city. They are unwilling to move to unfamiliar surroundings.

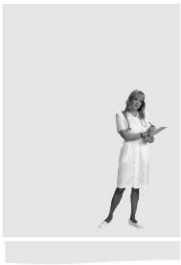
If these criteria influence you then it is best to state your choice of location at the interview. It is possible that your growth may be slower than those who take risks of mobility. But that is the choice you will have to make. I have found many candidates blindly saying “Yes” to the question to secure the job, only to find themselves in a quandary when asked to move later. It is unfair to the organisation.

Q86. WHAT DO YOU WISH TO GAIN FROM OUR COMPANY?

This is an excellent question to ask. The answer lies in your research of the organisation. Just remember that your answer to this question can land you the job since it is the final interview. Determine some of the key elements in the corporate structure, product base, employees/management team, or recent history. What appeals to you about working at this company? Go with what you know.

Here is an example of a good answer: “In the past, I have had opportunities to work on new products being launched. I am very excited about your plans to start an entire new line of products. With my prior experience I know I can provide insights and make contributions immediately and I will also learn so much from the excellent team you have in place. Having done single products, I would love to be involved in the initial planning, production launch, and sales. There is much I can offer and there is also much in this job for me to learn.”

Find something specific that hooks you; for example, the opportunity to use a new technology, a new skill, to work with experts in their team, new market, cut-throat competition that makes your adrenaline rush, the element of risk, etc.

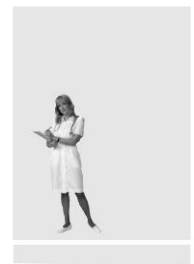


Q87. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COMPANY?

As an employee you have several responsibilities towards your employer. They are as follows:

- To perform a good day's work
- To be loyal and honest
- To be a valued team member
- To value the relationship
- To earn the employer's trust
- To have a passion for the company's products/services
- To add value to the organisation
- To help the organisation grow
- To add to the prosperity of the company
- To promote the company in the marketplace
- To solve problems
- To help in achieving the objectives of the organisation
- To exceed the expectations of the organisation
- To help fulfil the organisation's commitments
- To bring in innovation

Senior management wants to be assured that you will be a responsible and reliable employee of the company.



Q88. GIVE ME SOME CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION OF YOUR COMPANY.

The interviewer may not ask such a blatant question but may do so subtly through other means. He/She may press you for this information for two reasons:

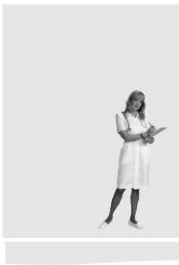
1. Many companies use interviews to research the competition. It's a perfect set-up. Here, in their own lair, is an insider from the enemy camp who can reveal prized information on the competition's plans, research, financial condition, etc.
2. The company may be testing your integrity to see if you can be cajoled or bullied into revealing confidential data.

Be alert. Never reveal anything truly confidential about a present or former employer. By all means, explain your reticence diplomatically. For example, "I certainly want to be as open as I can about that. But I also wish to respect the rights of those who have trusted me with their most sensitive information, just as you would hope to be able to trust any of your key people when talking with a competitor."

You can allude to your finest achievements in specific ways that don't reveal the secrets of the company. For example, you can talk of the increase in sales targets you achieved in percentage terms and not to the actual figures.

Be guided by the golden rule. If you were the owner of your present company, would you feel it ethically wrong for the information to be given to your competitors? If so, steadfastly refuse to reveal it. Remember that this question pits your desire to be cooperative against your integrity. Faced with any such choice, always choose integrity. It is a far more valuable commodity than whatever information the company may pry from you. Moreover, once you surrender the information, your stock goes down. They will surely lose respect for you.

Some interviewers unmercifully press candidates for confidential information. If they don't get it, they grow visibly annoyed, relentlessly inquisitive. It's all an act. They couldn't care less about the information. This is his way of testing the candidate's moral fiber. Only those who hold fast are hired.



Q89. WOULD YOU LIE FOR THE COMPANY?

Try to avoid choosing between two values by giving a positive statement. You may say, "I would never do anything to hurt the company." Also add, "Lies have a habit of catching up later. It may damage our image with our stakeholders."

If aggressively pressed to choose between two competing values, always choose personal integrity. It is the most prized of all values.

Q90. HAVE YOU CONSIDERED STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

This is a question that has several possibilities. It tells whether you will learn from the company and start your own business becoming a direct competition to your company, or it shows whether you have an entrepreneurial spirit desired by most modern organisations.

The answer to the question really lies in the corporate culture. You must know it in your preparation and adapt your answer to it.

If the corporate culture is that of a large, formal, military-style structure, minimise any indication that you would love to have your own business. You might say, "Oh, I may have given it a thought once or twice, but my whole career has been in larger organisations. That's where I have excelled and where I want to be."

If the corporate culture encourages Intrapreneurship (which is an entrepreneurial attitude as a professional working for the company) emphasise that you can experience the best of both worlds, where you have the excitement of seeing your own ideas and plans take shape combined with the resources and stability of a well-established organisation. Sounds like the perfect environment to you.

In any case, no matter what will be the corporate culture, be sure to indicate that any desires about running your own show are part of your past, not your present or future.

The last thing you want to project is an image of either a dreamer who failed and is now settling for the corporate cocoon or the restless maverick that will fly out the door with key accounts, contacts, and trade secrets under his arms.

Always remember. Match what you want with what the position offers. The more information you have uncovered about the position, the more believable you can make your case.

Q91. WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

To be a professional means setting goals. Interviewers like to see evidence of that. The interviewers would be the strong believers in goal-setting. (It's one of the reasons they have achieved so much.) They like to hire in kind.

If you are vague about your career and personal goals, it could be a big turnoff to many people you will encounter in your job search.

Be ready to discuss your goals for each major area of your life: career, personal development and learning, family, physical (health), community service and (if your interviewer is clearly a religious person), you could briefly and generally allude to your spiritual goals (showing you are a well-rounded individual with your values in the right order).

Be prepared to describe each goal in terms of specific milestones which you wish to accomplish along the way, time periods you are allotting for accomplishment, why the goal is important to you, and the specific steps you are taking to bring it about.

This question requires preparation and practice. It will have to be concise. Remember, they are your goals and cannot be judged as right or wrong.

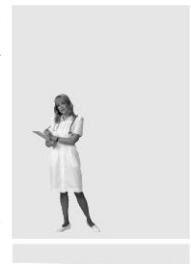
Q92. TELL ME SOMETHING NEGATIVE YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT OUR COMPANY.

Just remember one golden rule—*never be negative*—and you will handle this one just fine. Reconfirm all the good things about the company that attracted you.

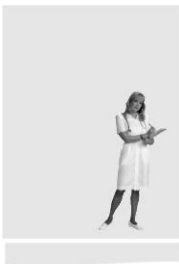
Q93. WHAT ARE YOUR CRITERIA FOR SELECTING AN ORGANISATION?

The purpose of this question is to evaluate whether your goals can be fulfilled by the organisation or not. Senior management can expect you to leave, if they cannot satisfy your needs. Some acceptable criteria by most organisations are:

1. Organisation growth which will foster personal growth and advancement. While growth relates to any new experience that gives you more skills and knowledge, advancement is the progression in responsibilities and titles. Most organisations plan to grow, otherwise they will die. Some grow slowly while others grow quickly. The slow bureaucratic organisations like public sector undertakings are concerned about the timeframes you set for advancement whereas mid-cap companies on a growth trail will offer this as their uniqueness even with a lesser salary.



2. Opportunity to be innovative. All organisations these days value innovation because of the fast pace at which new ideas are introduced. They will value your need to showcase your creativity which will benefit the organisation.
3. Recognition of work well done. Everybody likes to be rewarded financially and otherwise for a job well done. This is something an organisation understands and will accept.
4. Work culture of the organisation that is professional and progressive. The ability to communicate freely with superiors is important to bring about better understanding at the work place. The boss who reflects the work culture of the organisation is a crucial player to release your talents and make work fun.



Q94. HOW DO YOU EVALUATE SUCCESS?

The organisation's success is your success and vice versa. Senior management that interviews you is anxious to know whether you factor in the success of the organisation with your success. There has to be an alignment. One good answer I received was, "To me success is when my contributions lead to the organisation's success. My key result areas must lead to the organisation's progress and prosperity. I will consider myself successful when I fulfil my key result areas to the organisation's satisfaction."

Q95. WHAT KIND OF REWARDS DO YOU VALUE MOST?

This question is very similar to the earlier one. Your reward is when the organisation succeeds. The organisation's success will naturally lead to individual rewards. One good answer I received was, "I value making the organisation succeed first. Its success will automatically generate rewards for me in kind and recognition."

Q96. WHAT ARE THE THREE FACTORS WHICH ARE MOST VALUABLE TO YOU IN YOUR JOB?

This question is asked to see whether your value leads to the organisation's success. The three factors that will be acceptable to them are—*teamwork*, *completion of job with quality*, and *customer orientation*. Other noteworthy factors can be profitability through cost control, productivity, loyalty to the organisation and profession, continuous improvement, new knowledge and skills, and exceeding customer service.

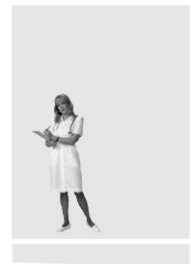
Q97. WHICH WORK ENVIRONMENT ARE YOU MOST COMFORTABLE WORKING IN?

Senior panellists are anxious whether their work organisation is conducive to bring the best out of you. You would have already found out about the

organisation's work culture in your preparation for the interview. You can then use the exact factors that the organisation offers to give your candidature a perfect fit. However, if you have been unable to get the desired information of the organisation then you can use a generalised statement like, "My best environment is one that gives expression to my talents and skills."

Q98. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO IMPROVE YOURSELF?

This is a question to ascertain whether you are engaged in continuous education. There are many candidates who wait for the organisation to train and develop them. They are happy to wait till it happens. Such candidates are often left obsolete. There are others who are proactive and believe that their worth is based on how they improve themselves investing in training programmes, relevant periodicals, and web enquiry. Organisations these days fear that they develop their employees only to find that with the new qualification the employees have found another job. Organisations prefer those who develop themselves constantly and have the hunger for new knowledge. Make sure that you have made an inventory of new books you read, websites you have visited and training programmes you have attended. *Those who do not update themselves continuously become obsolete and will not get jobs.*



Q99. WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 10 YEARS?

Make sure that you emphasise that you see yourself with the company in ten years. This will show your commitment to the organisation. Also choose a position that is achievable by you—maybe in middle or senior management. It shows your ambition and the confidence to reach there. Nobody is going to take stock after ten years whether you reached where you wanted to be. So shoot for the sky. One flattering answer I received was, "Sir I would hope to be sitting on the other side of this interview table like you one day."

THE COMPENSATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q100. WHAT WERE THE STARTING AND ENDING LEVELS OF YOUR COMPENSATION?

Interviewers ask this question to evaluate how you progressed in your performance, adding value to your compensation packet. They can make the difference between marginal increments that compensate for the extra year you put in with the company and those superlative jumps in salary showing your outstanding performance. They will also understand a jump in salary when changing jobs. This explains adequately your motive to change jobs.



Interviewers expect you to be able to provide the details of their compensation history. Be prepared for this. Don't exaggerate or inflate your earnings. Many employers will check references and confirm your salary history prior to making a job offer. A discrepancy between what you reported and what the employer says could knock you out of contention for the job.

Q.101. WHAT ARE YOUR SALARY EXPECTATIONS?

This embarrassing question can be met with preparation. Some jobs advertise the salary scale and if you have applied means that you are comfortable with that scale and that it fits in with your monetary aspirations. Other jobs state 'salary negotiable' which then requires you to be adept at salary negotiation. The first step is to ask yourself the following question:

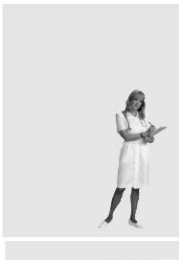
HOW MUCH AM I WORTH?

Your value is based on the market for such positions. You can get this information by several methods:

- (a) Scanning the job advertisements in the daily newspaper or other published job sites. There will be ample evidence of salaries for your job position;
- (b) Consult recruitment agents who know the value of various jobs in different industries. There are some agents who are industry-specific and would have even done some compensation study of the industry;
- (c) Check some public compensation surveys that you can find in the town library;
- (d) Ask past and present employees in the organisation you are applying to and find out what they are paying for such positions.

Based on your skills and experience you can decide whether you want to be the leader in the salary scale; mid-point on the scale or at the entry level. Be realistic to yourself and pitch yourself accordingly. Those who pitch themselves at the highest point obviously are extremely talented and have a proven track record of achievement. They have confidence to fulfill the higher expectations of the organisation. Remember that any compensation brings corresponding levels of expectations. Organisations are willing to pay well to a good candidate because they expect a higher rate of return from their investment in the candidate. Do not be greedy because you will have to be able to give an A-one performance. I have found that those given high salaries are watched carefully by the management. They are always evaluating whether that cost is paying back in performance or not.

Changing a job for the sake of compensation means that it has to be a worthwhile jump. A 30–40 per cent hike is reasonable. Some candidates move a job for various reasons other than compensation such as bigger organisation, more professional organisation, better job fit, better growth prospects, growth-oriented company, better work culture, etc. Evaluate what your motivations are for the change. You may want to take a lower salary for better leaps in compensation within the organisation in the future.



Salaries may also change with location. The salary of a job position in a small town may differ substantially from the same position in a large city. It is just that the cost of living differs. Similarly, international assignments have different ballparks to domestic jobs. They are benchmarked with prevalent dollar salaries.

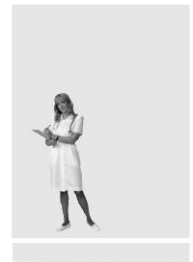
NEGOTIATING YOUR SALARY

Once you know what you *should* be earning, how do you go about getting it? Start by being very patient. When interviewing for a new position, do your best not to bring up compensation until the employer makes you an offer. Never bring up salary. Let the interviewer do it first. Good salespeople sell their products thoroughly before talking price. So should you. Make the interviewer want you first, then your bargaining position will be much stronger. If you are asked what your salary requirements are, say that they are open, based upon the position and the overall compensation package. Or tell the employer you would like to know more about the responsibilities and the challenges of the job prior to discussing salary. If your interviewer raises the salary question too early, before you have had a chance to create desire for your qualifications, postpone the question, saying something like, “Money is important to me, but is not my main concern. Opportunity and growth are far more important. What I would rather do if you don’t mind, is explore if I’m right for the position, and then talk about money. Would that be okay with you?”

Rule number one of any negotiation is *the side with more information wins*. After you have done a thorough job of selling the interviewer and it is time to talk salary, the secret is to get the employer talking about what he is willing to pay before you reveal what you are willing to accept. So, when asked about salary, respond by asking, “I am sure the company has already established a salary range for this position. Could you tell me what that is?” Or, “I want an income commensurate with my ability and qualifications. I trust you’ll be fair with me. What does the position pay?” Or, more simply, “What does this position pay? It will help me make a decision.”

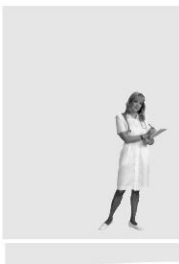
Be aware of the salary restrictions of the new organisation. They may not want to give you more than others in similar positions. If they are rigid then there is nothing you can do but refuse the job. If they are flexible, then here are a few strategies to overcome this problem:

- Suggest a new title to get you out of the rut of comparisons. A ‘sales agent’ for example can be called a ‘sales officer’ or ‘sales executive’.
- Negotiate for other benefits instead of direct salary. It could be an entertainment allowance, use of company car, furnishing allowance, etc.
- Alter the job description marginally to make a difference in role content to warrant higher compensation.
- Receive parts of your salary from another trust fund.



- Do some work for other companies of the same group getting them to compensate you partially from their books of accounts.
- Ask for a lump sum payment for you to break for your tax planning.
- Work on a commission basis to earn extra for better performance.

Sometimes refusing an offer gets you a counter offer. You can only take this gamble if (1) you are currently employed and (2) if you know that you have done well in the interview and the organisation would like to really have you in their company. It comes to the issue of your self worth. Simply refuse if it does not meet your benchmark. Always give a window for them to come back by saying, "I shall wait for a week on my decision should you wish to come back to me."



Another approach is to state your last or present salary and say that you expect a substantially higher jump to motivate you. This is used very often by candidates who have stated their benchmark. Most executives look for a 25–30 per cent pay boost when they switch jobs. If you are grossly underpaid, you may want more. Never lie about what you currently make, but feel free to include the estimated cost of all your fringes, which could well tack on 25–50 per cent more to your present "cash-only" salary.

If this question is asked, do not feel bashful but state your expectations boldly as it is your right to do so. It is important for you to prepare rationally and logically what you are expecting. A move of job is not only related to salary. There are many other things that must be weighed which are non-monetary, such as:

- Organisation culture
- Head of the organisation and his vision
- Growth of the organisation
- Financial performance of the organisation
- Leadership style
- Location of the office (that translates into transportation costs)

When weighing the financial terms of salary, see the benefits offered by the organisation. They translate into indirect money. Such benefits are:

- Medical benefits (Whether for self or family)
- Transportation
- Housing or allowance
- Canteen and subsidised meals (hotels give free duty meals)
- Group insurance
- Superannuation benefits
- Entertainment allowance or reimbursement
- Class of travel and accommodation on tour
- Annual leave, annual leave fares, leave pay
- Other leaves: casual, medical and emergency
- Relocation expenses

Your base salary and performance-based raises are probably the most negotiable parts of your compensation package. However, many companies

do have a cafeteria approach to benefits where you select from a number of benefit options based on a total monetary cost. It is called 'Cost to Company' or CTC. In other words, the company will spend a certain amount of money on each of their employee for benefits, and employees have some flexibility on which benefit options they select. For example, employees with children might select child care reimbursement benefits, while employees interested in going back to school might choose tuition reimbursement. When negotiating your compensation package, it is important to keep in mind the total package.

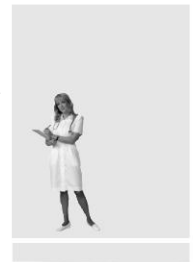
Make sure you consider all benefits the company has to offer, not just salary. Before you begin negotiating your compensation, decide which benefits are most important to you, so you are ready to talk to the employer.

Once you have a good feeling for the type of salary and benefits you are willing to accept, it is time to negotiate with the company. Don't sell yourself short during these negotiations. Usually, when a company is ready to make you an offer they have invested a lot of time and money in their search for a qualified employee. You don't want to be overly aggressive with the employer, but you do want to receive a fair compensation package. If the employer makes you an offer that does not seem equitable, discuss your concerns with the employer. Present your concerns about the benefits package in a constructive, non-threatening manner. Focus on the reasons why you have concerns, as opposed to making general statements about what you think you deserve.

For example, it won't be productive to simply state, "I must have more money." It would be more productive to explain that the company's offer is less than you were making previously and you would like them to match your previous salary. In most situations employers do have some flexibility in what they can offer an applicant. They might be able to offer you more money or compensate you with additional benefits (e.g., more vacation leave). Some companies can offer a performance bonus to compensate for other weaknesses in their compensation package.

When you are considering the offer, make sure you are taking the entire benefits package into account. Sometimes excellent benefits can compensate for a lower salary. If you really want the job, but the offer still seems low after negotiations, see if the employer will consider a salary review three to six months from your joining date. Usually, you don't have to make a decision about the offer immediately. Ask the employer for a couple of days so you can carefully consider the position and the offer.

If you do come to an agreement with the employer, find out when you can expect to receive the offer in writing. It is very important to get the official offer documented before you resign from your present company. An official letter usually means that the management is committed to appointing you. If they say that they will give you the appointment letter only when you join, then insist on an offer letter. Say that it gives you the comfort to resign from your current organisation. They will understand this.



Chapter

10

Post Interview Processes

INTRODUCTION

These days, the thank you letter is a major part of the job search strategy that you need to perfect when you are looking for that perfect job. In the past, people used to write a short note to thank their interviewer for his/her time and to let him/her know that they were very interested in the job. In today's job market, the thank you letter is much more than just a small note to your interviewer. In fact, the thank you letter is crucial if you want to be seriously considered for the job.

THANK YOU LETTER

Thank you letter is used as a way to address the key points of the job interview. Discuss the key areas that were brought up by your interviewer to indicate that you were attentive throughout the interview. You should also show them that you have a good understanding of the goals of the company and the direction they are taking. The main purpose of the thank you letter is to stay in contact with the company.

After your interview, be sure to write a thank you letter to the employer or interviewer. This is very important because a thank you letter gives you one more chance to remind the employer about the special skills that you can bring to the company.

As mentioned before, it is a good idea to request the interviewer's business card before leaving the interview. This will come handy while writing the thank you letter to correctly spell the interviewer's name and job title.

Some tips for thank you letter are mentioned below:

1. Write a thank you letter with neat hand-writing or type the letter. E-mail is also acceptable these days.

2. Address the letter to the interviewer or the lead interviewer.
3. Keep it short. (No longer than one page.)
4. *First paragraph*—Thank the employer for the interview. Also, mention that you are interested in the position.
5. *Second paragraph*—Briefly state a few of your skills without repeating the information on your résumé word for word. Include any important information not mentioned at the interview.
6. *Third paragraph*—Provide your contact information, telephone number with the area code, and an e-mail address, if available.
7. Sign the note with your first and last name.
8. Proofread the note to check for spelling or grammatical errors. Ask another person to proofread the note.

Mail the letter within two to three days after your interview. A typical thank you letter would read as below:

Sabina Kapoor
B-67 Amrita Shergill Marg
New Delhi-10006
(011) 555-62109
e-mail: sabink@xxxxxxx.net
July 20, 2007
Mr. Jaslok Mann, District Manager
Smith Advertising
M-21 Connaught Place
New Delhi-110001

Dear Mr. Mann:

Thank you for the opportunity of an interview with your company on July 19, 2007. I am very interested in the position of a receptionist as discussed in the interview.

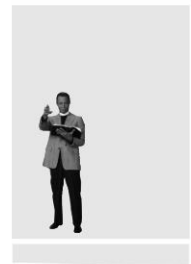
My recent experience as a receptionist where I developed the current computer software skills has prepared me well for position of receptionist. I enjoy the challenge of keeping customers happy in a busy office. I am especially interested in the new computerised message tracking system discussed in the interview. I would enjoy the opportunity to contribute to the message tracking project.

I am looking forward to hear from you soon. If you need any additional information, feel free to contact me at (011) 555-62109 or e-mail: sabinak@xxxxxxx.net.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Sabina Kapoor

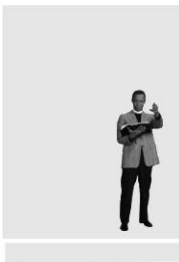


REVIEW OF THE INTERVIEW

Each interview is valuable as it prepares you for the future ones. Here is what you will do to evaluate your performance:

1. List three things which made the interview a success.
2. List three things about the interview that you want to change.
3. Were some of the interviewer's questions difficult to answer? What were they? How would you respond to them if asked again?
4. What were the skills/qualities, the employer was looking for? How can you present these skills in a better way the next time?
5. What further information do you need in order to determine if you would accept an offer?
6. What do you like/dislike about this company?
7. What information did you miss out while preparing for the interview?

For each of these three items, explain what you are going to do in order to improve yourself in the next interview.



WHAT TO ASK AFTER THE OFFER

All job hunters are waiting for that call—the one that says they've landed the job. But as eager as you may be to escape either your current job or the unemployment ranks, don't abdicate your power position once the offer comes in. Now it is your turn to sit in the interviewer's seat and ask the company and yourself some tough questions—the answers to which could mean the difference between a career bliss and disaster.

WILL THE ACTUAL WORK AND JOB RESPONSIBILITIES PROVIDE GRATIFICATION, FULFILLMENT, AND CHALLENGE?

This question is often overlooked, because applicants get hung-up on job titles, salary, and benefits. Try to get a clear sense of what an actual day would be like. What will you spend the majority of your time doing? Is the work in line with your values? Are you likely to learn this job quickly and so become bored and unchallenged?

WHAT ARE THE BOSS'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

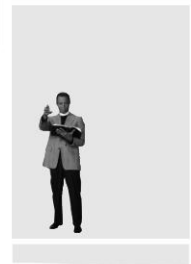
This question can be tough to answer, and it is best saved for the time when the job offer has been extended. You would like to get a good idea for the management style of your potential boss. Speak to your potential boss as much as possible, to get a feel of his personality and determine what you can live with. Does he micromanage? Will you get consistent feedback and reviews? Does he make small talk or talks strictly about business?

HOW MUCH CHANGE DOES THE WORK AT YOUR PROSPECTIVE COMPANY INVOLVE? WHAT KIND OF CHANGE IS IT?

Constant change at work can mean constant stress. Find out if there are any big changes coming, such as new processing systems or management, impending retirements or adoption of new procedures that still need to be ironed out. At the same time, remember that some of these transitions will have less effect on your position than others.

HOW MANY OF MY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES WILL I BE ABLE TO USE AND LEARN?

Make sure that your unique skills and talents will be used and the scope for training and promotion are open in the future. When you decide to move on, you'll want to have a new set of experiences to sell to your next employer. Your goal is to perform well at work while constantly growing and learning.



HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE HELD THE POSITION IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS?

Knowledge of how many people were in your job and why they left, can offer you great insights about the job position. You would like to know if they were promoted or they quit. A steady stream of resignations may forebode that you could be reentering the job market soon.

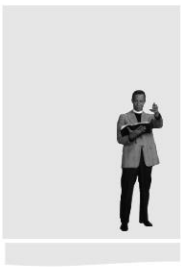
While many of the reasons due to which positions eventually become unfulfilling are unavoidable—such as hitting a plateau after repeatedly performing the same duties—job seekers should consider the ways in which a new position will advance them.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE HR

Few questions that you can ask to the HR are mentioned below:

1. What kinds of assignments I might expect in the first six months on the job?
2. How often are performance reviews given?
3. Please describe the duties of the job for me.
4. What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
5. Do you have plans for expansion?
6. What are your growth projections for next year?
7. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
8. Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
9. Does your company encourage further education?
10. How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
11. Do you offer flextime?
12. What is the usual promotional time frame?
13. Does your company offer either single or dual career-track programs?

14. What do you like best about your job/company?
15. Once the probation period is completed, how much authority will I have over decisions?
16. Has there been much turnover in this job area?
17. Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
18. Is your company environmentally conscious?
19. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
20. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
21. What is the largest single problem faced by your staff (department) now?
22. May I talk with the last person who held this position?
23. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
24. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
25. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
26. Who was the last person that filled this position and what made them successful at it? Where are they today and how may I contact them?
27. Is there a lot of team/project work?
28. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
29. Where does this position fit into the organisational structure?
30. How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
31. What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you, or should I contact you?



BACKGROUND CHECKS

It isn't just your job interview that is going to get you that job you want. Background checks are now becoming more and more popular among employers who are trying to find the perfect employee for their company. Background checking is the process of authenticating the information supplied to a potential employer by a job applicant in his or her résumé, application, and interview.

There are many companies around the world and each one of them right from Fortune 500 to a small enterprise relies on background checks to take the final hiring decision.

Now there are many outsourced companies that specialise in background checks. They offer great service, a very fast turnaround time of result, and available legal advice when tests come back with a doubt. Background checking companies also provide accurate reports and records that you can rely on if you are an employer trying to determine if you should hire someone based on the research of such companies.

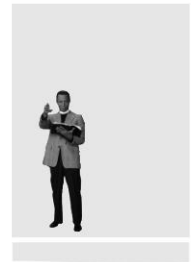
Make sure that the information you provide is authentic. Your résumé should have your signature to confirm that all the information provided in the résumé is true. If it is determined at a later date through a background check, that you lied about your credentials, qualifications, experience, education and so forth,

the employer may fire you. This would show that you deliberately tried to misguide the organisation. This is dishonesty.

Common background checks include the following:

- Verification of academic credentials
- Verification of prior employment including position, longevity, salary, and job performance, sometimes tracing back ten years or more, to the three prior positions
- Discussions with business, professional, personal references, and verification of letters of recommendation
- Physical examinations and psychological tests
- Testing to confirm skills and knowledge
- An Internet search, on the candidate's name, especially at Google.com to confirm an individual's claims about their jobs, performance, awards, and more
- Criminal background checks
- Credit checks especially for accounting and finance professionals.

Background checks are usually conducted by Human Resources professionals of the organisation, but occasionally, the supervisor of the position being filled assists, especially with reference background checking.



EMPLOYEE SCREENING

Many organisations employ other means to support their interview decisions. They could be the tests mentioned in Chapter 7, as well as medical examinations and psychological tests. You must be prepared for a multiple screening processes, especially if employed by large professional organisations.

THE OFFER LETTER

Offer letters show the interest of an organisation for providing employment to you in writing. The following are the basic issues that offer letters must mention. Additional information may be added, based on the policy of the establishment.

THE JOB TITLE

This is important to confirm the job position being offered. There is a distinction between a job title and designation. The job title is the term used for a position best accepted and understood by the public. Considerable effort is being made to create innovative titles to give employees self-respect in society. A designation is the root role against which salaries and benefits are given.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

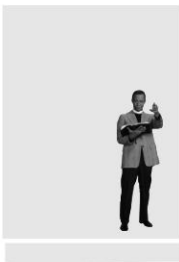
These are the immediate boss and the boss's superior. This establishes from whom the job-holder has to get decisions and directions and in his absence, who would be the next senior person on whom the responsibility would pass.

DATE OF JOINING

This defines when the hired person is expected to commence work. The date of joining establishes when salaries and benefits are applicable and when the incumbent can be scheduled into the workforce.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

This is a key information on which the candidate makes a decision whether to join the organisation or not. Salaries are basic components of pay to cover the basic needs of an individual. These may be in the form of basic pay, house rent allowance, transportation allowance, and position allowance. Benefits are those additional facilities provided to an individual to attract the best in the job market. Benefits are sometimes statutory like gratuity, leave and leave pay, pension deductions, medical benefits, etc. while other benefits may be company-specific offerings such as leave fares, free duty meals, company accommodation, education allowance, domestic help allowance, etc. Organisations have moved away from a break-up of remuneration and prefer to give lump-sum remunerations (called CTC—Cost to Company) to permit the individual the freedom to use the money as he or she pleases.



PROBATIONARY PERIOD

It is necessary to give all new recruits a trial period during which the organisation and the individual can decide whether to make the employment permanent or not. Probationary periods can range from three months for junior positions to one year for senior management positions.

SOME POST INTERVIEW FAQs ASKED BY THE CANDIDATES

1. IS IT REALLY IMPORTANT TO GET A JOB OFFER IN WRITING?

It is absolutely essential to have a written agreement from the organisation. Written agreements protect both you and the employer.

2. DO I NEED TO HAVE AN ANSWERING MACHINE?

An answering machine with a professional sounding message is desirable, if you are not reachable otherwise. Western nations use this extensively. Employers may call back to arrange interviews or any other important information. Nowadays, the mobile is a handy tool of communication. Ensure that you keep it switched on, after you post your application for an interview, to receive the call. In places like a movie hall keep the ring on low or off but be alert to a call being made. If you do miss the call, then call back immediately, once you are able to.

3. HOW SHOULD I INFORM MY CURRENT EMPLOYER THAT I AM LEAVING?

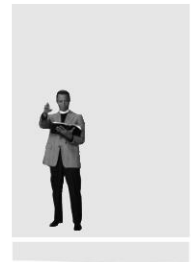
Do it in person followed by a letter. Write a letter of resignation thanking the employer for the opportunities that you were given to:

- contribute to the growth and success of the company (be specific),
- learn and grow, and
- develop your skills and experience.

Be honest but do not be critical. Do not burn any bridges. Honour the agreed upon notice period. Some employers will not want you to serve the notice period but may give you salary in lieu of notice. Do not take it personally. Just move on.

4. IS IT OKAY TO ADJUST ANNUAL LEAVES WHICH ARE DUE TO ME, AGAINST MY NOTICE PERIOD?

Most definitely, only if you have to join the new job immediately. Otherwise, serve your notice period giving the organisation the chance for a replacement, and encash your leave.



THE DAY OF JOINING

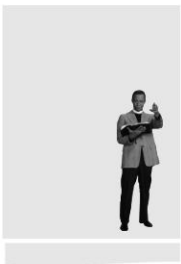
Congratulations! The day you were looking towards has arrived. It is the first day of your new job. Dress professionally as you did when attending the interview. Be on time and report to the designated person. In most cases it will be the HR department. The department will be responsible for the completion of some joining formalities given below:



- **The Appointment Letter** is the final contract between an organisation and the candidate. This is issued at the time of joining. The issues mentioned in an appointment letter are:
 - (i) *Job Title*
 - (ii) *Reporting Relationship*
 - (iii) *Joining Date*
 - (iv) *Salary and Benefits*
- **Probationary Period** The above are the same issues as mentioned in the offer letter also. However, there are more clauses added in an appointment letter.
- **Notice Periods** These establish the time period required for the severance of service between the organisation and the individual. During the probationary period, the notice is normally twenty-four hours while during confirmed service the notice period can be from one month to three months, based on the criticality of the position.

- **Legal Provisions** are those that are required by the law like not indulging in criminal activities, being intoxicated at work, involving in malpractices, etc.
- **Confidentiality Clauses** are added by the organisations to prevent company information and secrets being leaked to competitors.
- **Job Description** of the candidate's position is enclosed to have a common perception of what the company expects from the candidate.

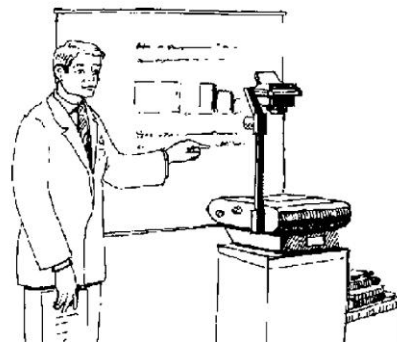
There are processes to formally register the candidate into the organisation. Some of the formalities are dictated by law, such as salary and employment contracts, while others are dictated by the organisation's policies.



JOINING FORMALITIES

Joining formalities also include the following points:

- **Submission of Original Certificates:** Organisations insist on this to confirm that a candidate is qualified for the post. Certificates often asked for are the birth certificate, school leaving certificate, college certificates, employment certificates, and training certificates.
- **A Medical Check:** This is mandatory by many organisations to ensure that a candidate is physically fit to do the job. It also establishes whether the candidate has any communicable diseases like aids, tuberculosis, open sores, etc. This becomes critical especially when dealing with guests or working in team.
- **Formal Application Form:** Most establishments prescribe their own application form for the candidate to fill, though they may have received the candidate's curriculum vitae/résumé. This is to ensure that the information that the establishment values is consistent for all employees. For example, an application form may insist on an emergency telephone number in the event of a crisis to the candidate at work. Establishments may want to know the blood group of the candidate in case of an accident at work that requires immediate hospitalisation.
- **Copies of References:** We had seen earlier the importance of reference letters. These references are kept in file, as a record of authenticity of the reference.
- **Induction/Orientation:** Progressive organisations will have an orientation program to familiarise a new candidate to the organisation, in order to make the candidate productive in the shortest period of time. The orientation includes the information about the organisations products and services,



history, who's who, organisation structure, dos and don'ts, company policies, etc.

- **Issue of an Identity Card:** Most organisations would like their employees to carry an identity card to confirm their employment with the organisation. This identity card is useful in case of accidents on the road or as identification for entry into the premises. Organisations also prescribe staff numbers for accounting purposes and the payment of salaries and wages.
- **Information to Accounts for the Payment of Salary:** This is a joining formality to inform the accounts department so that they can open a salary account for the new candidate. The accounts department may want bank account details to deposit salaries directly into the candidate's account.

TIPS WHILE IN EMPLOYMENT

Finding a job is tough. Finding a good job is even tougher. When you've found that perfect job, it's important to then find opportunities to move up in the workplace ladder. Here's how.

AN HONEST DAY'S WORK FOR AN HONEST DAY'S PAY

Give the organisation what they're paying you for. It may sound obvious but employers look for workers who are at work, at their work stations, and working. If you're away from your desk, talking to a co-worker about your upcoming weekend, it won't impress your supervisor, director, or foreperson.

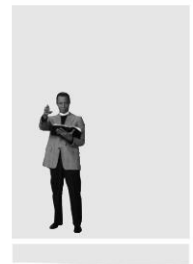
Show up on time in the office and be ready to dig in. Sure, you take your valid breaks. They rejuvenate the mind and refresh the spirit. But if you work hard, you'll get noticed.

VOLUNTEER FOR WORK

If your employer asks for volunteers to work over the weekend, raise your hand. Of course, you don't want an employer to take advantage of you, every now and then, it's good to go the extra mile. It shows you're dedicated to the employer's goals. Volunteer to organise the company picnic or to attend that conference no one wants to go to. Employers like volunteers because of their value to the company. Volunteering helps you to market yourself.

TREAT YOUR COLLEAGUES

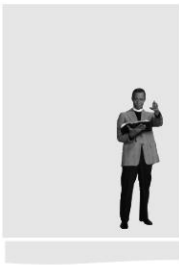
In other words, be nice to the people with whom you work. The workplace is a great place to make friends and remember friends work better together. Let the friends at work know how you feel. Don't forget to thank them when they help



you out. Treat them once in a while. Request, don't demand. Use words like 'please' and 'thank you'. Manners count. They really do.

BE A TEAM PLAYER

Part of workplace success has to do with your ability to cooperate with co-workers. Cooperation amongst employees on the job increases the company's productivity. If part A is done, but you're still waiting for part B from another department, the project is stalled until part B finally makes it to your desk. Work together and cooperate to make the business successful.



BE DIPLOMATIC

During the course of a busy work day, there are bound to be disagreements between people sharing the same space and tasks. If such a problem arises with a co-worker, calm yourself before discussing the problem. Give your praise generously and publicly. Criticise if you do not agree but privately and quietly.

LEARN ON THE JOB

If you've got your eye on a middle-management job, learn all you can about the job and its responsibilities. Learn the procedures, the resources, the deadlines, and delivery dates. But don't stop there.

Learn about each and every job in your workplace to get a 'big picture' view. Learn by watching. When you discover how all of the pieces fit together, you will be able to do your job better today and transit into that middle-management job when it opens up.

ADD QUALIFICATIONS

The more you learn, the more you earn. Talk to your supervisor, or the people in human resources, about what courses would most benefit the company. Many companies will even contribute money to defray some of those education and training costs.

REVIEW YOUR PERFORMANCE REPORTS

It is hard not to take feedback personally, but remember critique at work can be used to your advantage. An annual performance review by company management provides a much clearer picture of your professional strengths and weaknesses. It also provides a veritable checklist of employer's expectations. Think of reviews as your guidebook to success but never take it personally.

LET THEM KNOW YOUR ASPIRATIONS

There is nothing wrong with talking to your supervisor or the people in HR about your goals and aspirations. Let them know that you want to stay with the company for a long time, that you want to contribute more and that you want to move up. Ask them to inform you about the new job postings. It shows initiative and drive.

MAKE YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

If you are the only one who can fill out a Form 1072/DAS rev.11/05, the department needs you. If you're the 'go-to' source in the company, management wants to keep you around.

Learn everything—from how to make the coffee in the morning to how to open the one-file drawer. It won't be long before you're the recognised expert—the one the business just can't do without.

