

The Interview: A Time To Shine

Congratulations! Your resume got you in the door—you and 10 other similarly qualified candidates—to interview for the job. Your task is to convince the interviewer that you are the best choice among those candidates.

Your interviewer will be looking for things that say you have expertise and competence, interpersonal and decision-making skills, and interest in the job. As you interview, you should gather more information about the job, the employer, and the organization while impressing the interviewer enough to be offered the job.

Chemistry is the Key!

Remember that the typical hiring decision is made within the first fifteen minutes of an interview. Employers hire people—not qualifications. Your credentials, experience, and professional background got you to the interview. The person that gets the job will be the person that the employer feels will work best with their team. During the interview, look for shared experience and common backgrounds. Remember studies have shown that education and experience are 35% of a hire, while chemistry is 65%.

Remember the Objective

Everything you do when you are looking for a new job should be directed toward one central goal: getting the job offer. You may decide not to accept the offer, but you have to receive the offer before you can make that decision. Once you feel that an offer is being considered, your second objective is to raise your perceived value to the employer to increase the compensation package that may be forthcoming. Leave your ego at the door when you go to be interviewed—first and foremost, get the job offer.

Ready, Research, Practice

A key to success is to go well prepared to every interview. That way, you'll know how to present your strengths and downplay your weaknesses, and you'll be able to ask the interviewer intelligent questions. Be prepared to give further descriptions or additional examples beyond the points made in your resume.

Just as there are different types of resumes, there are a variety of types of interviews and settings for interviews.

You may face your first interview one-on-one in the hospital or at a job fair. Or your first interview may be an informal screening over the phone. A first or second interview could be conducted by a series of managers or a panel of employees in the office or in a restaurant.

Wherever or with whomever your interview occurs, most of your preparation is the same.

Your first step is to research the practice or organization. Your best information may come from current or previous employees. Hopefully, you'll have spoken to some during your informal interviews. If possible you should also research the individual or individuals that will interview you.

Take your research and use it to review your strengths, skills, goals, and weaknesses. Remember when you get to the interview, the interviewer is interested in what you bring to the workplace—not in what you want to get out of the job. Practicing talking about your skills, strengths, and experiences in terms of how you can use them on the job.

Practice well thought-out answers to anticipated questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you like about your present position?
- What do you dislike about the positions you previously held?
- If you were starting your career over, what would you do differently?
- What four critical things do you want in your next job?
- What do others see as your best qualities?
- Why do you want to join this practice/organization?
- Why would you hire yourself for this position?
- Tell me about a time when a supervising physician disagreed with the way you handled something. How was the issue resolved?

Tips for a Positive Interview

1. Use your interviewer's name—title and last name—from time to time when you speak. Never use your interviewer's first name unless you have been requested to do so.
2. Phrase your questions so that you sound sure of yourself. Ask, "What would be my duties?" rather than "What are the duties of the job?"
3. Use good grammar. If you are unsure of the grammar, practice before your interview.
4. Use good diction. Say "yes" instead of "yeah".
5. Don't fill pauses in the conversation with "ahs" and "uhms".
6. Don't punctuate sentences with such vocal habits as "you know", "like", and "okay".
7. Use active verbs when you talk about your skills and experience. Say "I organized", "I supervised", "I analyzed", to emphasize your strengths.
8. Don't "think", "guess", or "feel" about anything. These indecisive words make you appear less than assertive.
9. Avoid such negative terms as "pretty good" or "fairly well." When you speak about your experience use positive, strong words, "The conference I organized ran well."
10. Offer examples of accomplishments. Support your claim to skills with illustrations, descriptions, and testimonials.
11. Don't talk about compensation, benefits, or salary. If you state a salary requirement that is too low, you could cost yourself thousands of dollars. If you quote a salary that is too high, you may have priced yourself out of the market. Why not say that you are open to a competitive offer based on your qualifications and what you can do for the practice. Do not give the impression that money is your motivation.

Showtime!

- **Start the morning** of the interview in an interview frame of mind.
- **Dress the part**—Both men and women should wear conservative business clothing and accessories. Hair should be trimmed and shoes polished. Never wear perfume, cologne, or shaving lotion. Don't smoke or put gasoline in your car before the interview.
- **Arrive on time**—preferably 10-15 minutes ahead so you have time to compose yourself, check your appearance, and fill out any paperwork.
- **Introduce yourself** in a courteous manner to the receptionist. Treat everyone you meet with respect as they may have influence in the hiring decision.
- **Read company materials** or professional journal while you wait.
- **When you are called**, stand to your full height before taking a step. Smile. Look alert and energetic. Shake your interviewer's hand firmly. Studies show the first two minutes of your interview can be crucial. If you make a bad first impression, you have a 90 percent chance of losing the job. A good impression gives you a good chance to show your skills and knowledge and win the job.
- **Use body language to show your interest to the interviewer.** Keep your shoulders back and your head erect. Don't fold your arms across your chest when you stand or sit. Keep your knees together when you sit.
- **If invited to lunch**—use discretion when ordering. Never choose hard to eat items. Do not smoke or drink alcoholic beverages.
- **Listen!** Good listening skills show your interest. Focus on what your interviewer is saying: Don't let your mind wander; listen objectively. Listen for information. Save evaluations of the information for later.
- **Concentrate on identifying the practice's needs and problems.** Your experiences, results, and ability to overcome problems, are indicators of your worth.
- **Give non-verbal feedback.** Smile or nod as the interviewer talks. Sit, leaning slightly toward the interviewer. This body language shows you are interested. Make eye contact frequently. This shows you are trustworthy and interested.
- **Ask about the next step** or listen for the interviewer to tell you how to proceed.
- **Thank the interviewer** for the time spent. Shake hands and leave.
- **Write a thank-you letter** to the interviewer and anyone else you've spoken to.

Some of the above information is from Planning Job Choices: 1994. Adapted from Interview for Success, by Carl Rae Krannich and Ronald L. Krannich, Impact Publications, 1993.