

# INTERVIEWING BASICS

**O**ne of the most intimidating parts of the job search process is the interview. There are two things to remember to calm your nerves — practice, practice, practice and remember the interviewer is also under a lot of pressure to make the right hire. So, they too are usually a bit nervous.

## LET'S TALK PREPARATION

You probably have already done your research on the company, but it is always good to go back and review the company's Web site or search for news about the organization just before your interview so you are up-to-speed.

Anticipate the questions you may be asked. Again, the Internet is a great resource to find lists of interview questions. Take time practicing your responses to these questions, maybe in front of a mirror so that you can see your facial expressions. A point of caution though — make sure that you are not memorizing responses. When you respond to a question in an interview, you don't want it to seem scripted.

Be aware that there are many ways an interview can be conducted. Many organizations will begin with a phone interview and then if that goes well bring you in for a face-to-face interview. Take advantage of the phone interview and the fact that you can have some notes jotted down to anticipated questions. Remember to be in a quiet place with no distractions. For face-to-face interviews, you may be with one person or a group. Be sure that you make eye contact and engage all of the people in the room, even if it appears that one person is leading the majority of the conversation.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Set the stage — many interviews begin with "Tell me a little about yourself?" This can be a difficult question if you are not prepared. Have a short (2 minute maximum) prepared response. Share your educational background, previous work experience (specifically sharing

responsibilities that relate to the job you are interviewing for), why you feel you are a good fit for the position, and any other key items/activities that are interesting.

Many organizations are currently using a system called behavioral based interviewing. This type of questioning allows interviewers to ask you about a specific past situation, what happened and how you handled it. The thought process is that most often, past behavior predicts future behavior. The key to responding to a behavioral based interview question is to address all three parts — give the situation, what you did and most importantly what the outcome was.

### Example questions include:

- Describe a time when you had to communicate some unpleasant feelings to another person. What happened?
- Tell us about a time when you had to work in a group to achieve a specific result. What did you learn that you would do "more of" and "less of" from your experience, and why?

Employers will usually also mix in a few more direct questions that link to the specific job or try to help them get a feel if you'd fit in the work environment or culture.

### Example questions include:

- In what kind of work environment do you do your best work?
- It is important to spend time sourcing new clients in this role,



where would you find these clients, and what would you do to "connect" with them?

- If you have had reporting staff, how would those staff members describe your relationship with them?

Find the balance between giving a direct response, but not too short of an answer. A good trigger to know if you can expand on your answers a bit more is if the interviewer asks you a lot of follow-up questions after each question. Make sure not to ramble!

Generally the interviewer will ask you if there is anything else that you'd like to share or ask. This is very important — be confident at this point and ask for the job, if it seems like something you are interested in and the company fits your style.

For more interviewing advice, contact AgCareers.com by e-mail at [agcareers@agcareers.com](mailto:agcareers@agcareers.com).



## INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

by Steve German, University Relations and Member Employment Manager, Growmark Inc.

- ✓ Do your homework on the company.
- ✓ Dress neatly, conservatively, professionally.
- ✓ Arrive early.
- ✓ Shake hands firmly.
- ✓ Smile and speak with enthusiasm.
- ✓ Answer questions clearly, concisely, and honestly.
- ✓ Avoid asking about salary, benefits, and hours.
- ✓ If you are interested, ASK FOR THE JOB!