

the modern interview

navigating the different types of interviews

by Kristine Penning, AgCareers.com Creative Marketing Specialist

IN YOUR PARENTS' or your grandparents' day, when they received notice that an employer wanted to interview them, they could probably expect a simple sit-down face-to-face interview with two company representatives at most. Today, however, that traditional interview has evolved far and beyond into numerous types and approaches. To ace a non-traditional interview you may have coming up, take into consideration these specific tips, including some advice from key industry employers.

THE PHONE INTERVIEW

Phone interviews are typically utilized to prescreen a candidate to interview face-to-face at a later point in time. Essentially, your interviewer is just getting a feel for you as a potential candidate and wants to be sure you're worth their time. Therefore, it's important to treat the phone interview the way you would treat any other interview.

Timothy Mote, Director of Talent Acquisition and University Relations at Kraft Heinz Company, emphasizes the utmost importance of being able to hear your interviewer and for them to hear you.

"Make sure to listen to the question, and it is okay to ask a follow-up question," Mote said. "Make sure you are in a quiet place where you can limit noise and distractions."

Be sure to speak clearly and give the interviewer time to jot notes down. Erin Wagoner, Associate Director of Human Resources for The Maschhoffs, typically types responses as they are given during a phone interview.

"On a phone prescreen, I'm taking notes while they're talking," said Wagoner. "The savvy candidates will pause and wait for you to finish typing, but there are those that can't stand the awkward silence and will keep talking. Just be respectful and know that an interviewer is trying to keep up with what you say."

To advance to the next interview, you'll need to impress your interviewer, so be sure to emphasize your strengths, your brand, to express genuine interest in the company and job by asking questions, and to assert why you would be best for the open position. Also remember to take cues from your interviewer's voice, since you won't be able to see their facial expressions. If they sound confused, ask if you can clarify anything for them.

THE VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

With the onset of new technologies like Skype, virtual interviews are becoming more and more common for employers to reach interviewees who may reside far away from the desired interview location.

Most of the guidelines for a phone interview apply to a virtual interview as well, but the visual element of a

virtual interview adds some noteworthy recommendations. Professional dress and background is mandatory for virtual interviews. While the interviewer may not know that you aren't wearing shoes, it would still be best to put them on in order to get into a professional, polished mindset. Also tidy up your background, making it as clean and simple as possible. You want your interviewer to focus on you, not your posters or messy room.

Another thing to be aware of is your technology, including your Internet.

"Candidates should plan to test all technology, multiple times as a best practice, to ensure minimal distractions," said Angela Scott, Candidate Branding Manager for Tyson Foods. "Taking a dry run with a family member or friend can ease anxieties regarding simple distractions such as where to look on the screen, ensuring a professional background, and testing sound."

THE MEAL INTERVIEW

Generally, interviews over a meal are laid-back and a chance for a potential employer to get to know candidates more informally. But if you're taken out for a meal on interview day, don't think that this is your break. You're still in interview mode and need to impress. "You are always being evaluated," Mote said. "Whether you are at a lunch interview or talking to someone at a booth, always be prepared and treat it like someone is interviewing you."

A meal interview can be tricky in that your potential employer will likely loosen up and speak to you more informally. It's certainly okay to talk about your favorite football team or your family, but be sure to still speak professionally. Don't go off on a rant or delve too deeply into personal issues. Also, as a courtesy, be sure to ask questions in turn of your interviewer.

The best way, however, to go about a meal interview is to focus your discussion on the company you're interviewing for. Take this opportunity to learn more details that you can utilize for your next interview. Go deep into the features of a new product that's being released, the company's culture, and the different aspects about the position that you could potentially fill. In a way, the meal interview is like a cheat sheet for you to go about your next interview(s).

Aside from discussion, be sure to display your best table manners. Be polite to your wait staff, use your silverware and napkin, don't order the most expensive thing on the menu, don't eat until each person at your table has their food, and let your interviewer get the check if they offer to do so.

THE PANEL INTERVIEW

The panel interview, where a candidate interviews for three or more company executives and HR staff members, is a common but terrifying interview form.

To feel more comfortable, try to find out as much about your interviewers as you can. Ask your hiring manager if they can provide you with names. If this is not possible, do research on your own or ask them about their roles within the organization when you arrive. This is key, because each interviewer will likely view you through different lenses. You'll want to sculpt your answers to appeal to each but still engage the entire group.

You may go into a panel interview treating it as though it were a one-on-one, which is all right, as it will put you at ease, but be sure to give each person the same attention you would give a single interviewer. Introduce yourself to each interviewer when you arrive and thank each interviewer when you leave. However, when it comes to eye contact, slightly different rules apply.

"Make sure that you are making eye contact with everyone, but whoever asks the question, make sure you are focusing on that person," Scott suggested.

While panel interviews may seem intimidating, take heart in knowing that your panelists understand.

"There's always that one person that will smile at you and let you know that it's okay," Wagoner said.

THE SERIES INTERVIEW

The arguably most difficult thing about series interviews is how grueling they can be. While many candidates only

experience a single hour-long interview, series interviews can last all day and exhaust a candidate. Though you will likely be speaking with several different people, an important thing to remember is to not repeat the same answers throughout every interview. Scott suggests preparing enough content and background so that you are able to portray an in-depth, well-rounded presentation of yourself.

"We focus on our core competencies, but if you've only given one example of leadership, you've missed out on four different examples of leadership you could have shared," Scott said. "Make sure you're coming to the table with many examples and stories."

The advantage to series interviews is that, while they may be tiring, there is room to redeem yourself if one doesn't go so well.

"Sometimes that first interview is not your best interview," Scott said. "Candidates usually get better as the day goes on and their confidence increases. Build on your first and second interview and come up with different answers. The biggest thing is attitude."

No matter what types of interviews you may encounter during your professional career, the key to success is indeed attitude. Go into your interviews as professionally and polished as you can with your best foot forward, and you will know that you have done your best.



Timothy Mote
Kraft Heinz Company

"Candidates should always be honest but I wouldn't tell the company you are interviewing with that they are your 'second choice.' Meaning, 'if company XYZ makes me an offer, I am going with them. If not, I would be happy to work for your company.' I have heard this a couple of times and it always surprises me."



Erin Wagoner
The Maschhoffs

"Tell me what you know about us. It makes me question how bad you want this job if you didn't do your homework. Research the company and prepare good questions. Plus, it will help you feel more informed, so you won't be so nervous."



Angela Scott
Tyson Foods

"At the end of the interview, I give candidates the opportunity to ask questions. I'm always impressed when a candidate asks, 'Is there anything I can go back to, to show you that I'm a good candidate for this job?' Make a point to recap your strengths. It shows how passionate you are about the opportunity."