

Three Keys to Successful Interviewing

By Kelli Robinson

Fall recruiting season means job interview time. And you can't get a job offer without an interview. Your success comes down to answering this question: Do you have the right tools, resources, and attitude?

Tools

- **Interviewing attire:** Invest in a suit, matching shoes, and appropriate accessories. If you can afford it, purchase two suits so that you're prepared for multiple rounds of interviewing.
- **Resume:** If your resume takes more than 30 seconds to review, doesn't showcase accomplishments, or is riddled with typos, interviews won't follow. Ask a counselor in the campus career center to review your resume before you start the application process.
- **Reference list:** The candidate who can present a list of references at the interview has the edge in receiving an offer than the candidate who faxes the information a few days later.
- **Interviewing skills:** Do you know the questions employers expect you to answer? Just as important, do you know the questions they want you to ask? Assessing yourself (skills, attributes, strengths, areas of improvement) and researching the company (culture, size, products and services) are critical assignments.

Resources

- **On-campus recruiting program:** Register with your career center's on-campus recruiting program, which coordinates company interviews with graduating students during the fall and spring semesters. Interviews may not start until October, but registration often begins within the first few weeks of school. Don't procrastinate or you could miss out. More companies interview during the fall than the spring.
- **Job fairs:** Many companies use campus job fairs for screening candidates, because they allow recruiters to meet with hundreds of potential interviewees in one day. Navigating a job fair involves strategy. For tips on succeeding at a job fair, check out the job fair articles on JobWeb.
- **Networking and informational interviewing contacts:** Meeting people in your profession is critical in the job search, especially for creative and nonprofit fields. Networking and informational meetings lead to job interviews later. To build your contact list, start with your inner circle (family and friends) and work your way outward (professors, supervisors, alumni).
- **Career events (on and off campus):** What opportunities exist for meeting company representatives? Does the career center and alumni office co-sponsor a networking event? Does the English department sponsor a career day for writing majors? Is your college partnering with other local colleges to showcase the region's graduating students? Use all resources to get face time with company representatives. If job openings are available, and you present yourself positively, interviews will follow.

Attitude

- **Communication style:** Are you presenting yourself as a college student just hoping to get a job or an adult eager to enter to world of work? A solid versus a shaky handshake; appropriate eye contact versus none at all; speaking clearly versus talking low. If your cues are keeping you from receiving offers, a career counselor can offer suggestions.
- **Expectations:** Students sometimes expect job offers to come simply because they have earned a college degree. Today's job market is more competitive than ever, and other attributes such as poise and professionalism can make or break the interview. After your on-campus interview, the recruiter will meet with 10 more candidates who are earning the same degree as you. What separates you from the rest?
- **Diligence:** Do you send thank-you notes and follow-up correspondence? Are you approaching your job search as you would a final class project? The amount of work you put into a job search impacts the interviews (both quality and quantity) you can expect.
- **Confidence:** Your resume may make you the most qualified candidate on paper. But that's why companies conduct interviews. You'll have a shot at being the most qualified candidate in the room only when you believe it for yourself and demonstrate this fact to the company representative.

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