



Just-in-Time Career Tips

A weekly Newsletter by
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Mastering the Employment Interview: Part 1 of 3

One of the areas that strikes fear in even the most seasoned executive is the employment interview. It's a completely different situation when you're the one sitting on the other side of the desk. If you are nervous or even a little fearful, that's good. It means you understand the importance of being prepared and of making a good first impression. As an interviewer (in a previous life) and now an interview coach, the red flag goes up when a client tells me he's not at all worried about the interview. A typical line, "All I need is for you to get me in the door with a great résumé and I'll take it from there." That usually means he's overconfident and is going to blow a couple of interviews before getting wise. Also, don't wait until you have an interview to prepare. Start early.

Preparation is Key

Be ready to spend a lot of time on research – 10 to 20 hours per company is average. Know as much as possible about your target companies. Of course you will want to comb the website for info about the revenues, the products/services, the markets, etc. Remember, this is the info that other candidates will know as well as you. However, to differentiate yourself you must dig deeper. Interview your target company's customers, suppliers, and/or competitors as part of your research to understand the market, analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, uncover gaps, and (possibly) develop solutions. Google the key players to find out about management style, personal accomplishments, and other interests. Read employee blogs to understand the corporate culture.

Get Your Elevator Pitch Ready

Remember the elevator pitch from a few issues back? Your elevator pitch is, in large part, your value proposition. It will be interwoven throughout your interview. For example, it will outline your answer to the icebreaker question, "So, tell me about yourself." It will also be the conclusion for many of the other questions, no matter what they are. If you haven't prepared your elevator pitch and rehearsed it so it flows naturally, now is the time.

If You're Working *without* a Headhunter, Know Your Market Value

Within the career services industry there are basically two camps: one that advocates hedging about salary as long as possible, and one that prefers to get it on the table early. I am in the middle, but if pushed would lean toward hedging. When HR is involved, salary and perquisites often come up early in the conversation, usually before the first interview. Know the market averages for your position, and be prepared to answer the questions "loosely," providing a range if pushed. For example, you might say, "I understand that your

compensation packages fall in line with the industry average. I'm not overly concerned, and will be happy to provide a firm figure when we have a clear understanding of the accountabilities and challenges. I am currently compensated in the mid-hundreds and also receive a generous year-end bonus."

Next week Part 2: The Telephone Screen

Until next time...here's to advancing your career success!

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