



# **INTERVIEW** **handbook**

 **MRI NETWORK**  
MANAGEMENT RECRUITERS  
OF TALLAHASSEE  
> EXPERTS IN GLOBAL SEARCH



This MRI handbook credits contributions from the following sources:

The Interview: A Guide to Obtaining a Job Offer

by Chuck Russell & Associates, Management Consultants, Houston Texas

Courier Journal & Times article: "Careers"

by Joyce Lain Kennedy

Win the Interview - Win the Job

by Theodore Pettus

Thank You Letter from:

How to Turn an Interview into a Job

by Jeffrey G. Allen

Telephone Interviewing Tip

by Calvin E. Bruce & Paula W. Moore

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## **OBJECTIVE** of the interview

**An Interviewer**

**has just one**

**objective:**

**to decide**

**whether or not**

**to make you a**

**job offer.**

An interviewer has just one objective: to decide whether or not to make you a job offer. While the interviewer will examine your work history and educational background, your strengths and accomplishments will also be important criterion. He or she is also interested in evaluating your level of motivation, values, attitude and personality. In other words, to find out if you're the right person for the job, what your potential is for promotion and whether or not you will fit into the company environment.

While it's true that an interview is an important screening tool for companies, it also allows you to learn those things you need to know about the position and the company so that you can make an intelligent decision about the job. Always approach an interview focused on your objective: getting a job offer.

As with many situations, preparation is the key to success. The job market is very competitive and you probably will not be the only qualified candidate a position. The deciding factor may simply be the way you present your skills for and qualifications relevant to the position and how well you conduct yourself during the interview.

This booklet has been made available for your use by your executive recruiter. It will help you prepare for and succeed at the interview. Take the time to review the material in this booklet. The tips and techniques outlined herein have been tested, and they work! They will improve your chances of receiving a job offer. Should you have any questions about your upcoming interview, the company, the opportunity, or the suggestions printed in this booklet, consult your MRI Executive Recruiter.

# overview

## PREPARATION

### Know Yourself

- Can you honestly visualize resigning from your current position? (See "Dealing With Counteroffers")
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What are your short and long-term goals?
- Evaluate yourself in terms of the position you seek?
- Formulate responses by asking the question: "Why should they hire me?"
- Remember that you're there to sell yourself and secure a job offer.

### Research the Company

- Utilize the library to review annual reports, trade magazines and newspaper articles.
- The Internet offers a wealth of company information and industry statistics.
- Know the company's products and services.
- Be prepared to tell the interviewer why their company is attractive to you.
- Talk with company employees.
- Talk to customers of the company.

### Items to Bring to the Interview

#### References

- Use three former supervisors who are familiar with your work.
- Include their name and company as well as home and work phone numbers.
- Always consult with references for their approval and to ensure that their remarks are positive.

#### Resume

- Review your resume thoroughly and be prepared to discuss all points.
- Always bring a resume copy identical to the one supplied to the interviewer.
- Bring along samples of your work, if possible. Never discuss or show proprietary information.

#### Other Items

- Bring a folder and pen to the interview to jot down notes.
- Prepare and review your questions as well as specific responses.
- Bring directions to the interview location as well as the interviewer's phone number in case you're running late.
- Bring along your recruiter's phone number to give immediate feedback after the interview.

### Arrival at the Interview

- Arrive no earlier than fifteen minutes before the interview (but no later than five minutes prior to the interview).
- Allow adequate time for traffic, parking and a last minute appearance check. If possible, scout out the location the day before the interview to avoid last minute problems.
- Review your notes and go in with confidence.
- If asked, complete an application. Complete the application in full and leave no blanks. Do not write "see resume" as a response any application question. Respond to "expected salary" questions as "open" and "current salary" questions truthfully. List references if requested. Your recruiter's name should be your response to any "referred by" questions.



# APPEARANCE

## Male Candidates

- Fingernails should be short and clean; manicured if possible.
- Hair should be clean, well groomed and freshly trimmed. Use a dandruff shampoo, if necessary, and always comb hair with your jacket off.
- A navy blue or dark gray suit is appropriate for most positions. Be sure it's cleaned and pressed. Men with stout builds should avoid three-piece suits.
- Shirts should be white, freshly laundered and well pressed.
- A quiet tie with a subtle design and a hint of red is suitable for a first interview. Avoid loud colors and busy designs.
- Jewelry should be kept minimal. A watch and wedding or class ring is acceptable. Don't wear jewelry or pins that indicate membership in religious or service organizations. Use deodorant and avoid colognes or fragrances completely.
- Shoes that are black and freshly polished (including the heels) are a safe choice for an interview. Socks should be black or blue and worn over the calf.
- For good posture cross legs at the ankles, not at the knees.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Do not take portable phones or beepers into an interview.



## Female Candidates

- Fingernails should be clean; manicured if possible. Choose subtle low-key colors over bright fashion colors for nail polishes.
- Wear a suit or tailored dress in basic navy or gray. Blouses should also be tailored and color coordinated. Don't wear big bows or ties.
- Avoid exotic hairstyles and excessive makeup. Hair should be neat, clean and brushed with your jacket off. Makeup should be light and natural looking.
- Use deodorant and avoid colognes or fragrances.
- Jewelry should be limited and subtle. Don't wear jewelry or pins that indicate membership in religious or service organizations.
- A closed toe pump that is color coordinated with your outfit is appropriate for an interview. Avoid open-toed shoes or sling-backs.
- For good posture cross legs at the ankles, not at the knees.
- Maintain good eye contact





# The interview **ITSELF**

## **A typical sequence of events is:**

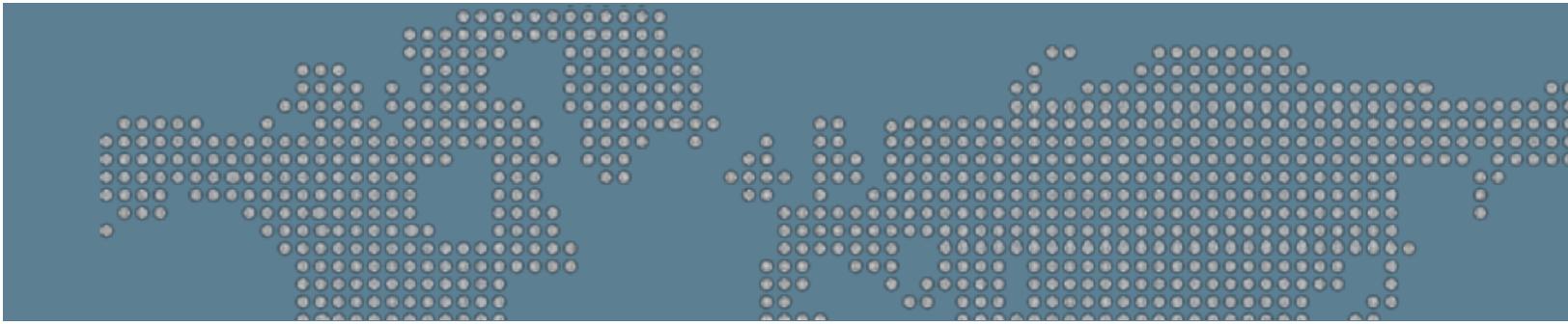
- Interview with personnel (general questions, review of the company and their benefits.)
- Interview with the immediate supervisor and peers.
- Interview with the hiring authority (manager, etc.).
- Shake hands firmly and maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Maintain a high energy level. Sit up with back straight. No coffee (to spill), and no smoking.
- It is to your advantage if subjects of mutual interest arises, but do not fake knowledge. Be yourself. Poise, confidence, and self-respect are of great importance.
- Plant Tour. Be an active participant: Ask questions, show interest, and interact!
- **REMEMBER:** Everyone gives feedback. So, be polite to secretaries, receptionists and all administrative staff.

## **If there is interest on both parties:**

- Testing (physical drug test, written test, and proof of employment eligibility).
- Offer.

Personnel will usually provide company information and available benefits. Thorough review and questions concerning benefits should be addressed after the interview. Remember, the interviewers are trying to see how you can contribute to the company.

Conduct yourself with confidence and determination to get the job. You have other options, of course, and your interviewer knows this, but wants to think that you want a job with this company. Don't play coy. Sell yourself. This is your first meeting and the position, as well as future promotions, may depend on your presentation. Are you going to sell them on the idea of hiring you, or will they sell you on the idea that this job is not for you? You must present a positive attitude to the prospective employer. You must NOT seem disinterested or appear to be job shopping.



The interview should be a two-way conversation. Ask questions of the interviewers. This shows your interest in the company and the position, and enables you to gather the right information to make an intelligent decision afterwards. The questions you have prepared can be asked to the different people you see.

Remember, the objective of the interview is to obtain an offer. During the interview, you must gather enough information concerning the position to make a decision.

**It is to your advantage if a subject of mutual interest arises, but do not fake knowledge.**

## Questions & Responses

### Typical Interview

You should give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way.

- Describe jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions.
- Include short stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved (see FAB worksheet on pages 22-24).

Preparation is the key for a successful interview. Conversation is smoother because you have an idea of what you're going to say and as a result you'll appear more at ease with the interviewer and that's always a plus. Take a few minutes to formulate a response for each question. Remember to keep your answers brief and focused while exploiting opportunities to convey all relevant qualifications. One to three sentences will usually suffice. A volley of long-winded replies will only bore the interviewer. Note your answers on the page provided in the back of this handbook. And, closely review the **Powerhouse Questions for Interviewers article on the following page.**

# EXPLORING YOUR

## BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

### Tell me about yourself.

- Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position.
- Keep responses concise and brief and avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs and bosses.
- "Tell-me-about-yourself" means, "Tell me about your qualifications." Prepare a one to two minute discussion of your qualifications. Start with education and discuss your experiences. Describe your performance (in raises, promotions, innovative designs, sales volume, increased profits, etc.)

### What are your greatest strengths?

- Interviewers like to hear abstract qualities. Loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, fast-learner, technical skills, politeness, and promptness, expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid the simple generalization "I like people". It's not a good answer.

### What are your greatest weaknesses?

- Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all of your imperfections. (Do not state "not being able to go to work on Mondays", or "coming in late", etc.). Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, (i.e., and "Sometimes work too hard to make sure things are done accurately").



## PERSONALITY QUESTIONS

### What do you do in your spare time?

- Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.



# MOTIVE QUESTIONS

Answer motive questions enthusiastically. Show the interviewer that you are interested in the position and that you really want the job. Remember to maintain eye contact and be sincere.

## **How can you contribute to this company?**

- Be positive and sell! Bringing strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.

## **Why should I hire you for this position?**

- Explain your qualifications and how they "fit" the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why it's work that you enjoy. Emphasize your ability to successfully perform the duties required.

## **Why do you want to work for our firm?**

- Make a compliment about what the company does, its location, or its people. Other positive remarks might be about the company's product or service, content of the position or possibilities for growth or advancement. Research about the company is important here.

## **Where do you hope to be in five years?**

- Use conservative growth positions that clearly show you plan to be there in five years, and that their investment in you will pay. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in the position. Never tell the interviewer that you feel you'll be more successful than they are. But do show a strong desire for promotions.

## **What interests you most about this position?**

- Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two-word answer such as, "the challenge" or "the opportunity", will force them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.



### **How long do you plan to be with this company?**

- As with marriage, most employers expect a till-death-do-us-part attitude, but they can be equally attracted to the candidate with ambition and candor. "As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field", is a reasonable response.

### **What are your career goals?**

*Your answer should depend on a specific time frame:*

- Short term - "I want to be the best in my current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This, in itself, will assure my commitment to the firm and raise me to the next level of responsibility and promotion. I see myself wanting to stay technical but learn the necessary skills to lead people and projects."
- Long term - "After proving my abilities, I see myself in a firm with the possibility of moving into a level of management that allows me to keep my skills sharp."

### **What are you doing to achieve your goals?**

- "I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you see from my resume, by asking company educational courses, when offered, and college courses. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep me informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations in my field."

## **JOB SATISFACTION QUESTIONS**

### **Why did you leave your previous employer?**

- NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition.

### **What did you like least about your previous job?**

- An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position.



### **Why are you looking for another job?**

- Again, be positive. I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at \_\_\_\_\_ Corporation. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth, and recognition. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career.

### **What do you think your employer's obligations are to you?**

- Interviewers listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic, company atmosphere, with the opportunity to advance. Such a person, they surmise, has motivation and staying power.

### **Are you applying for any other jobs?**

- In your answer, show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a well-defined, focused objective. Make it known that your talents are applicable to other businesses and that you have explored ways to maximize your potential and are serious about finding the perfect opportunity. Don't give an indication that you are just shopping.

## **PAST PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS**

(To determine behavior based on past examples)

### **What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?**

- Again, be truthful and admit that not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice as you can to make the best decision possible.

### **What causes you to lose your temper?**

- Everybody has a low boiling point on some particular issue. Pick one of yours; something safe and reasonable. People who are late to meetings, blame shifting, broken appointments and office "back-tapping" are suitable responses. Don't say that you never fly off the handle. You won't be believed.



### **What are your greatest accomplishments?**

- Be ready to recant one or two stories that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A special project that you pioneered at your previous job, cutting department expenses, increasing productivity or receiving frequent promotions are a few examples.

### **How do you feel about a younger male / female boss?**

- A question like this usually means that your boss will either be younger or of the opposite sex or both. Be certain that if you register any concern, you will probably not be hired. Explain that their age or sex is of no importance to you. You are only interested in their capability and what you can learn from them.

### **What kind of worker are you?**

- Again, no one is perfect. Showing that you tackle every assignment with all of your energy and talents is admirable but mention that you also learn from your mistakes.

## **SALARY QUESTIONS**

**Salary discussions should be avoided, if possible.**

### **What type of salary do you have in mind?**

- Do not state a starting figure. A suitable reply: "I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me the best candidate for this position, you will extend me your best and most air offer."

### **What is your current salary?**

- Answer truthfully. Remember that "salary" includes base, bonuses, commissions, benefits, and vacations as well as sick days and personal days. Also, if you are due a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect



## OTHER QUESTIONS

### YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ANSWER TRUTHFULLY:

- **Are you willing to relocate?**
- **May we check your references?**
- **May we verify your income?**

Answer a question to the best of your ability and then relax. If there is a period of silence before the interviewer asks the next question, stay calm. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and maintain poise

## Questions for You to Ask

Your interviews, however, should be a two-way conversation. You must ask questions and take an active role in the interview. This demonstrates the importance you place on your work and career. Asking questions gives you a chance to demonstrate your depth of knowledge in the field as well as to establish an easy flow of conversation and relaxed atmosphere between you and the interviewer. Building this kind of rapport is always a plus in an interview.

Remember, you are not just there for the interviewer to determine if you are right for the position but your questions can help you determine if this job is right for you. Some of your questions should evolve from research you've done on the company in preparing for the interview. Following are some guidelines for your questions as well as some examples.

- Don't cross-examine the employer.
- Ask questions requiring an explanation. Questions, which can be answered with a "yes" or "no", are conversation stoppers.
- Don't interrupt when the employer is answering YOUR question.
- Ask job-relevant questions. Focus on the job-- the company, products, services, and people.
- Prior to the interview, write your list of Interest Questions and take them with you.
- Ask about your potential peers, subordinates, and superiors. Take notes.
- Ask the employer how he/she got where they are today.



## **INTEREST** Questions

### **Why do you want someone for this job?**

- Force the interviewer to explain why this job can't be done by one of his current employees. The answer may give you a valuable job description.

## **JOB SATISFACTION** Questions

Ask questions that relate to the responsibilities, importance and authority of the position as well as those investigating the rewards for a job well done and the long-range career opportunities.

## **PAST PERFORMANCE** Questions

### **Why isn't this position being filled from within the company?**

- You may discover that nobody in this organization would accept it or that your future fellow employees are a weak lot.

### **How many people have held this job in the last five years?**

#### **Were they promoted or did they leave the company?**

- If the turnover has been high, you have a right to suspect that the job may leave something to be desired. Or it could mean that you could expect to be promoted quickly.

### **How did you get started in the company?**

- A good way to get to know the interviewer better and gain insight into the promotional path the company follows.

### **What are examples of the best results produced by people in this job?**

- Here you may discover you are overqualified or in a position to ask for considerably more money.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- What would my responsibilities and duties be? I describe a typical day on the job?
- What are the most difficult aspects of the position?
- Describe the department's/company 's growth in the next 2 years?
- What is the philosophy on training and development here?
- Has there been downsizing within the company? How is it handled?
- How do you think I'd fit into the job and into your organization?
- What projects would I be involved in now? In the future?
- Who would I be working for and with?
- What is the person doing whom used to hold this position?
- When would you need me to start?





# Telephone Interviewing Tips

## **How to pass a screening interview when it's conducted over the phone.**

By Calvin E. Bruce & Paula W Moore

Perhaps you're a pro at selling yourself face-to-face. How comfortable, though, are you at interviewing over the phone?

Telephone screening interviews are becoming more commonplace as companies seek to cut hiring costs and streamline the selection process. A hiring manager can spend an hour and half screening three candidates over the phone, then invite the most impressive one to the company for a lengthier interview.

John Young, president of First American Rehab, a health care company based in Athens, Georgia, personally interviews as many as 50 candidates a week over the phone. "Telephone pre-screening is extremely cost effective," he says, "because 75% to 80% of the people you talk to can be easily eliminated." Mr. Young believes that more companies will make use of phone interviewing for this reason.

Given this trend, your job search may involve more telephone interviewing. Whether you are talking to headhunters or company recruiters, the more convincingly you make your case over the phone will determine further interest in you as a job candidate.

Phone interviewing is unique. You can't count on visual stimuli such as good looks or power suits eye contact or body language, to aid your presentation. Neither can you rely on visual signals to interpret the interviewer's response. In this context, faceless conversation takes on an added dimension of importance. Both strengths and weaknesses, as conveyed by voice, are magnified through the phone. Your voice personifies everything about you.

Headhunters, in particular, listen for a relaxed style that communicates confidence, enthusiasm and intelligence. This is reflected in a smooth conversation flow devoid of clichés or verbal catchalls to stall for time as well as other negatives.

# Preparation is

# Key

The success of a telephone interview begins with mental preparation and setting the stage with the interviewer. The first order of business is to establish a clear time frame for the conversation. By mutual agreement, this should be at least thirty minutes when both parties can be free of interruptions and distractions.

If you're currently employed, arrange for a phone interview in the evening rather than during the workday. Confidentiality and discretion may be at risk if you interview during working hours; you never know who might barge into your office unannounced or overhear something by accident. In the privacy of your home, you can be more at ease and in control of your surroundings.

Being clear on the interview format gives you an edge in preparation. Before the actual interview, it will help to know the topics to be covered, objectives to attain and the basic information regarding the position to be discussed. It also helps to rehearse. Try to think as the employer, what key information is the interviewer looking for? What is he likely to ask? What things do you hope he doesn't ask?

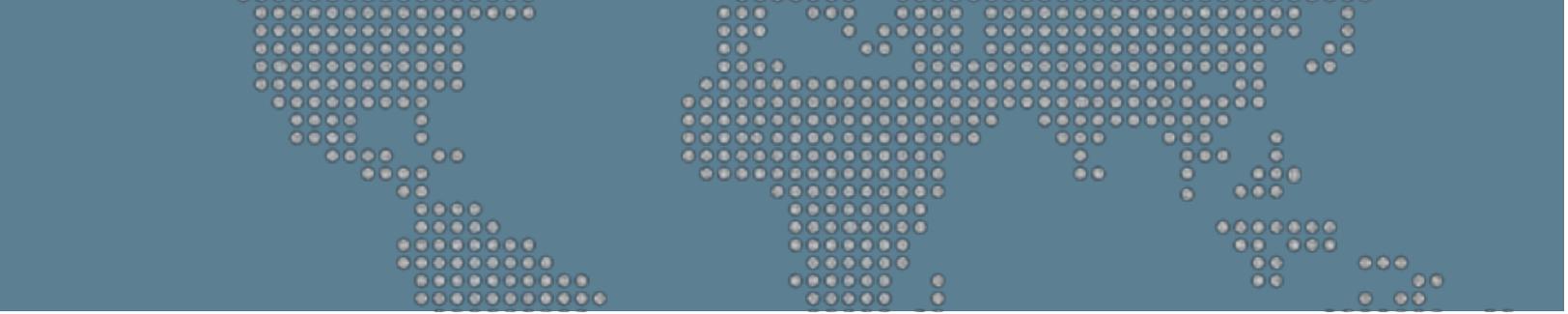
George Walther, president of TelExcel in Seattle, Washington, is a consultant and speaker on the subject of improving telephone-interviewing effectiveness. "From my experience, I would say that 98% of business executives can assess the candidate's personality after thirteen seconds, with no visual information," he says. "Furthermore, initial voice impression tends to be reinforced by the content of continued conversation." In other words, you need to sound like a winner quickly to sustain the listener's interest in you.

It's also advisable to prepare for possible scenarios that might unfold. Hypothesize a bit; suppose the interviewer asks questions that make you feel uncomfortable. How do you handle that? Suppose he rambles or is easily sidetracked and doesn't allow you to sell yourself. How do you subtly take control of the conversation and target pertinent issues? As a worst-case scenario; suppose the interviewer doesn't call at the agreed time. If it's an evening interview, and you have other engagements, how long should you wait by the phone? If it's a daytime interview, should you assume the interviewer "forgot" and call him directly? Or do you await his call at some other, unspecified time? Solution: don't panic. The employer will call to set up a new time if he had some crisis. If you are working with a recruiter, he will handle the problem and schedule an alternate time. Finally, clear a work area near the phone and keep the following tools handy to aid your fact gathering and information sharing:

- A copy of the version of the resume sent to the interviewer.
- A note pad and pen.
- Five or six carefully worded questions you'll want to ask.
- Company literature with pertinent sections highlighted.
- A calendar.
- A watch or clock.



Preparation will increase your confidence level and ability to focus on the conversation during the interview as well as enabling you to make a favorable impression.



# Phone Personality

The need to make a good impression on the phone cannot be overemphasized. The telephone screening interview is a make-or-break proposition, your one chance to convince the interviewer that you are worth serious consideration. The interviewer will be listening carefully to determine three factors: your sincere interest in the job, how you verbalize your qualifications and how aggressively you pursue the position.

Voice reflects personality. A well-modulated, controlled voice communicates authority and heightens the verbal impact you want to make. The quality, pitch and tempo of your speech convey a certain attitude, energy level and enthusiasm. "Enthusiasm and excitement are the biggest selling points of candidates talking on the phone," says Mr. Young of First American Rehab. "This translates directly over to their performance and work ethic." Here are some practical tips to enhance your phone "personality" and overall presentation:

Talk directly into the mouthpiece. Hold the receiver approximately three inches from the mouth, not below your chin or above your nose. Speak in a relaxed, conversational style as though the other person was in the same room, not on the other side of the planet.

Avoid sitting in a hunched position, grasping the phone in a vise-like grip. This will add a note of stress, and your voice will communicate that uneasiness. Try standing, it opens your diaphragm to a smoother airflow and imparts a feeling of liveliness. Getting up and moving around introduces an element of action, which instills a relaxed, conversational manner and reduces fatigue. A longer cord or cordless phone will allow maximum mobility.

Pay attention to the interviewer (s) voice patterns; does he speak slowly or rapidly? Try to match the cadence so that the conversation flows smoothly. According to Mr. Walther, at TelExcel, the average person speaks at a rate of 160 words per minute. Adjust your speaking rate, voice volume and phrasing to be more in rhythm with the interviewer.

Sound upbeat. If you had a lousy day and came home to find your spouse and kids arguing, put it out of your mind. Genuine enthusiasm is contagious. Smile to show a sense of humor. After all, the interviewer may have had a bad day too.

Be a conversationalist. Listen carefully to get the big picture and to avoid saying something that indicates any momentary mental distraction. Allow the interviewer to complete questions without you finishing his train of thought or blurting out answers prematurely.

Handle any trick questions in stride. The interviewer may throw in several to test your alertness or mental keenness. Showing verbal adeptness is a sign of how quickly you can "think on your feet." Be cautious: the interviewer may say something that puzzles you or that you firmly disagree with. Show enough respect to voice your thoughts in a professional manner. A defensive posture or argumentative tone is the surest way to alienate the interviewer and eliminate your candidacy.



## The Telephone Interview

Establishing rapport at the beginning of the phone conversation sets a favorable tone. During the first few minutes mention something that shows commonality of interest or similarity in background. This helps both parties feel more comfortable as the conversation progresses.

Get to know the person behind the voice. Does he show a sense of humor? Is she direct and forthright in supplying information? Does his speech sound "canned", or does it exhibit freshness of thought and expression? Just as importantly, does she actively listen to you, or merely wait for the chance to ask her next question? The interviewer may be a personnel official or a hiring manager. If the individual is someone with whom you will be working, pay even more attention to her explanation of the job and what potential it offers.

Your prepared list of questions will indicate that you have given careful thought to the prospect of joining the firm. Although you don't know everything about the position at this point, convey the impression that it's something you are interested in and competent at handling.

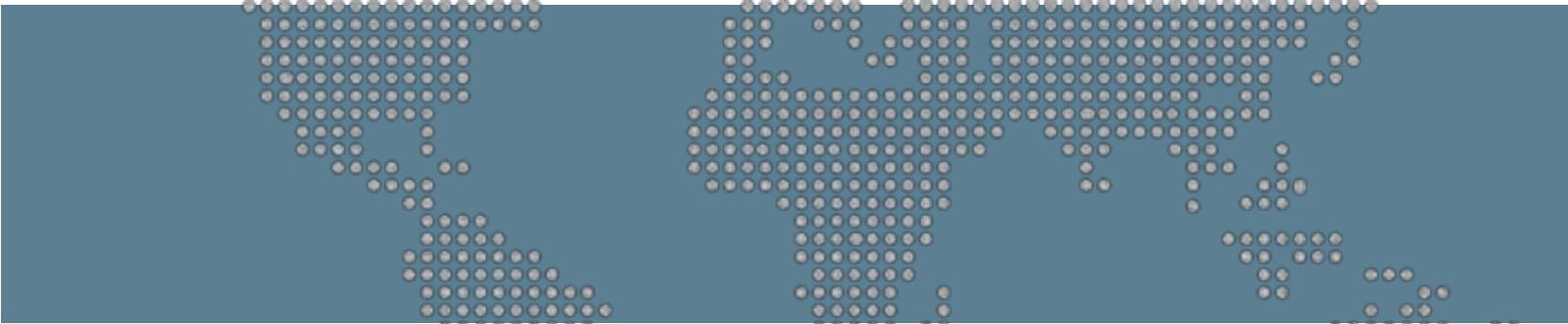
Only in a face-to-face interview can you totally sell yourself. The purpose of the phone interview is to identify areas of mutual interest that warrant further investigation. In other words, whet their curiosity and give them good reasons for wanting to invite you to the company location.

Basically, what the interviewer needs to hear and conclude is that you can get the job done. Mentally, he is making the connection between the company's problems and you as a problem solver. Don't overwhelm him with facts and figures; he's only going to remember so much.

You can best make your point by reciting memorable stories that document your ability to analyze a dilemma, weigh alternative responses and choose the appropriate action. By selectively highlighting turnaround situations you spearheaded, you are communicating a willingness to tackle similar problems for his company.

As you glance over your notes and keep an eye on the clock, there may be additional important points to cover in the pre-allotted time frame. Tactfully take control and introduce the subject matter that needs to be discussed or further elaborated. Example: "That's a good point. Can we come back to it a little later? I have some additional thoughts on the subject we were discussing a moment ago."

As the conversation winds down, become less talkative and give more thought to what you say. Your final words will generally have greater impact and be remembered longer. Careful word choice and voice inflections will under-score the significance of your remarks. By contrast, a machine-gun volley of words will likely put the listener on the defensive or turn him off altogether.



## The Home Stretch

After 30 minutes, both parties should know how much of a "fit" there is. Provided the job interests you, express your desire to proceed to the next step: a company visit.

The interviewer may extend an invitation at that point. With calendar nearby, suggest several available days and times that agree with your agenda. Should the phone interview go well but end without a specific invitation to visit the company, state your desire to investigate the opportunity further. Example: "I'd be very interested in such a challenging position. I would be available to come in for a personal interview and discuss my abilities in greater detail on (day)."

He may then mention the likelihood of an onsite interview once he confers with other officials. Your assertiveness will be remembered. If you hear nothing within 48 hours, follow up with a call.

A final concern: the interviewer may ask a salary range that you're expecting (don't introduce the issue yourself). It's best to mention that at this point you are not altogether certain what the job is really worth. Example: "I would feel more comfortable discussing a salary figure after meeting the key people I would be working with and knowing more about the position." If the interviewer continues to pressure you for a figure, specifically ask, "What salary range are you working within?" Chances are 50/50 that he will tell you.

Respond by indicating that your desired salary is in that range (if that is correct). If the dollars are a little low, don't despair or defend what you feel you are worth. For an absolutely sterling candidate, most companies can flex the purse strings and make a very attractive offer.

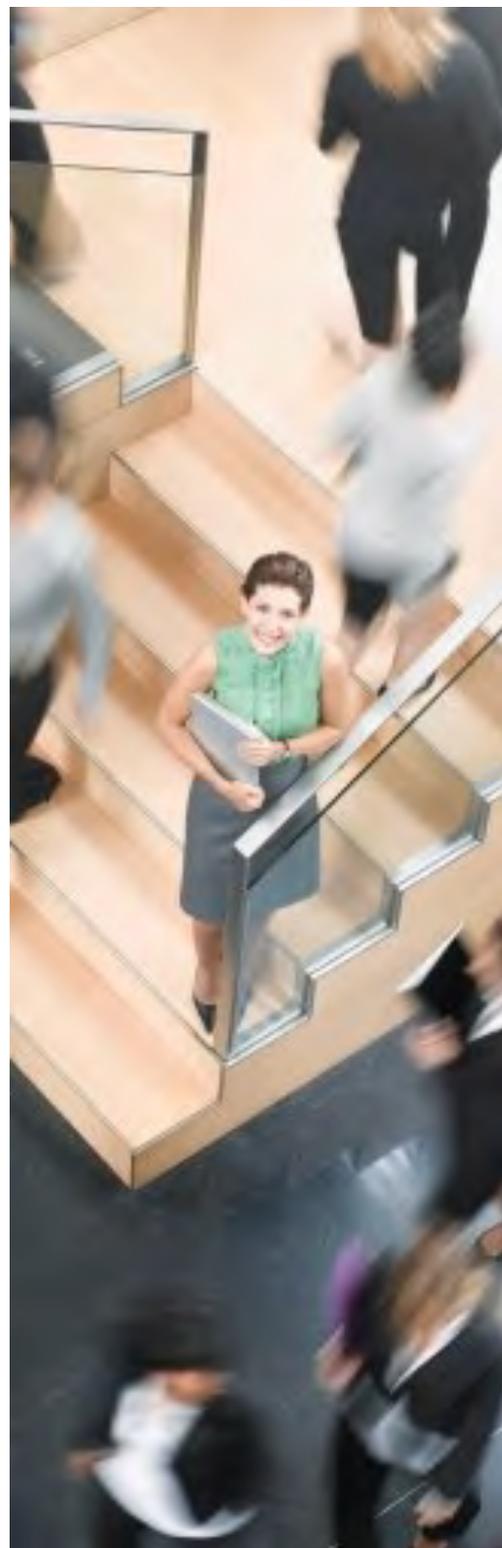
On the phone, your job is to entice a buyer, not to close a sale. Salary negotiation will fall into place at the right time. End the conversation on a positive note. Thank the interviewer for the information shared, let her know again that you look forward to visiting the company. After all, if the position discussed is not the ideal job for you, something else there might be.

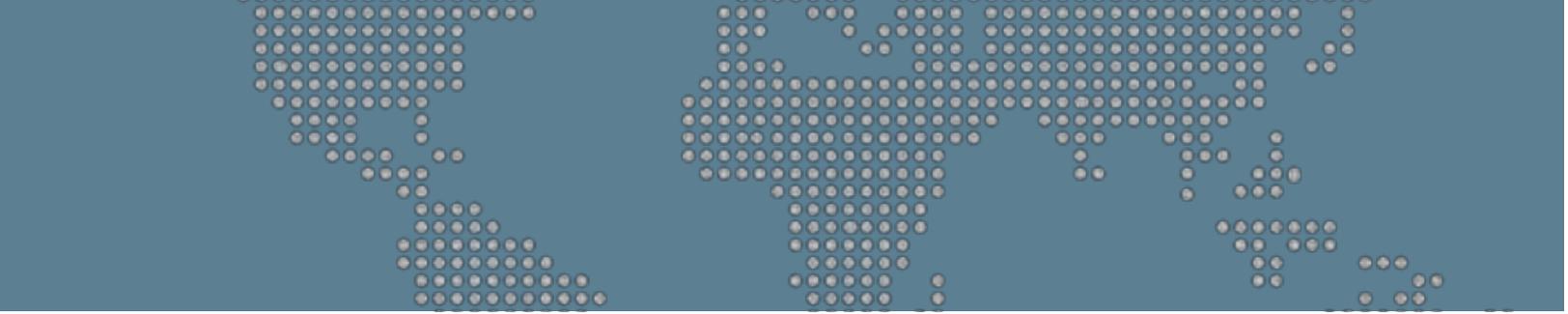
## Interview Conclusion

If you are sincerely interested in the position and are satisfied with the answers given, you should ask the interviewer if he/she feels that you are qualified for the position. This gives you another chance to review points that may need clarification. Illustrate confidence in your abilities and convince the interviewer that you are capable of handling the position successfully.

**Ask for the job.** Make a positive statement about the position. Emphasize that this is exactly the type of opportunity you've been looking for and would like to be offered the position. Ask when you should expect an answer. A typical conclusion might be:

"Thank you for this meeting, \_\_\_\_\_. I like what I've heard today and I'd like to join your team. I know I'd be an asset to you/your department because you need someone who can \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. As you know, I have (match your qualifications with the employer's "hot buttons"). Before I leave, do you have any more questions about my background or qualifications or can I supply you with any more information? On a scale of 1 to 5, how do I compare to the other candidates you've interviewed? I can start as soon as you need me." The farewell should also include a smile, direct eye contact, a firm but gentle handshake.





## Follow-up and Thank You Letter

Immediately following the interview, call your employment recruiter. It is very important to convey your impressions of the position and the company. Let the recruiter know whether you are interested in the position or not and if there were questions you forgot to ask at the interview, express them at this time. Only after we get your feedback about the interview and the company do we contact the employer for theirs. And finally, we follow-up with you regarding the employer's thoughts.

It is always a good idea to send a short note of appreciation to thank the employer or interviewer for their time. Reiterate your interest in the position and the company as well as your ability to do the job. Be sure to mail your correspondence the following day. This is a good way to keep your name current in the interviewer's mind. Following is a sample thank-you letter that you can adapt to fit your specifics:

### 1. ADDRESS LINE

The full companies name and address (no abbreviations) as well as the full name of the interviewer and his/her complete title.

### 2. SUBJECT LINE

"Re: Interview for the Position of (title) on (date)." This illustrates the content of the letter.

### 3. GREETING

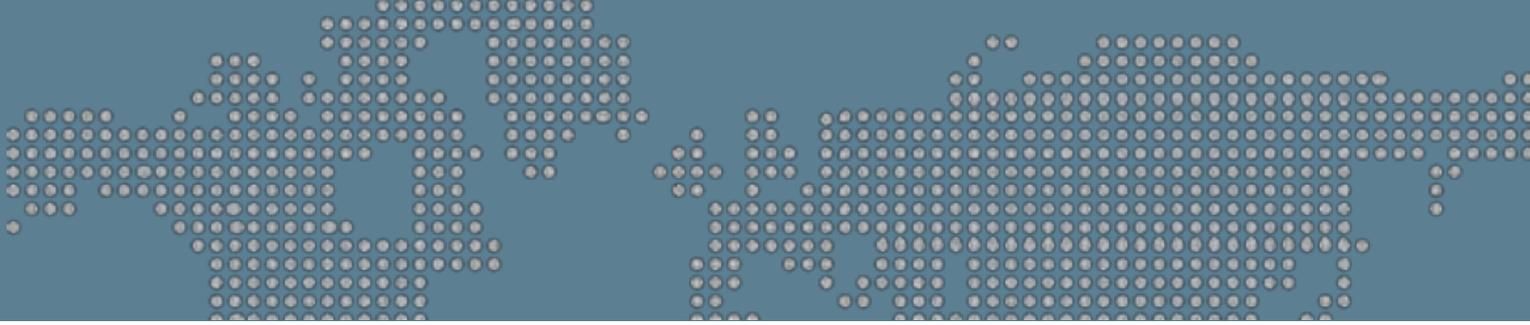
"Dear Mr./Ms. (last name):"

"Miss" or "Mrs." should not be used unless you are sure that person does so. Do not use a first name in the greeting unless you have established a strong rapport.

### 4. OPENING

- a. "It was a pleasure meeting with you (day) to discuss the opening in (department) with (company).
- b. "I appreciated meeting with (name) and yourself in your office on (day) to discuss the (title) position with (company)."
- c. "Thanks for taking the time to see me regarding the opening in (department)."

Again, comment or add something discussed during the interview that will allow you to restate your qualifications and confidence in performing the job.



## 5. BODY

a. "From our discussion, and the fine reputation of your organization, it appears that the (title) position would enable me to fully use my background in \_\_\_\_\_"

b. "I was particularly impressed with the professionalism evident throughout my visit. (Company) appears to have the kind of environment I have been seeking."

c. "The atmosphere at (company) seems to strongly favor individual involvement, and I would undoubtedly be able to contribute significantly to its goals."

## 6. CLOSING

f. "While I have been considering other opportunities, I have deferred a decision until I hear from you. Therefore, your prompt reply would be greatly appreciated."

g. "It's an exciting opportunity, and I look forward to hearing your decision very soon."

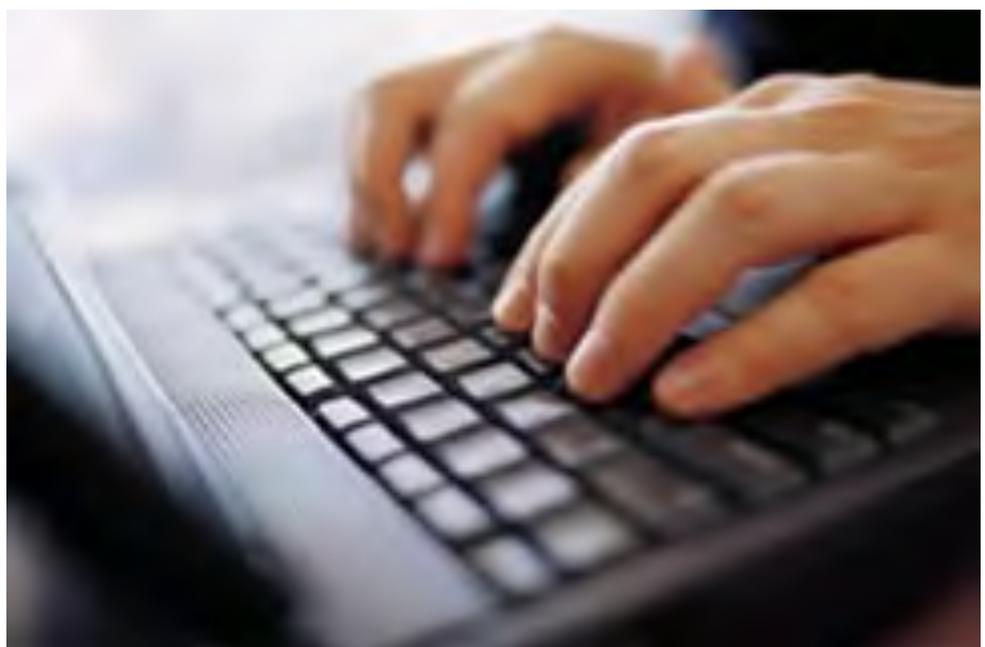
h. "The (title) position and (company) are exactly what I have been seeking, and I hope to hear from you within the next week."

## 7. SALUTATION

a. "Sincerely,"

b. "Very truly yours,"

c. "Best regards,"





# Resignation Letter

Informing your current employer of your resignation takes tact and discretion. If they inquire as to whom your new job is with, it is best to tell them that you cannot disclose that information until your new employer announces it within his/her own organization. The following sample letter is suitable correspondence to announce your resignation.

(Date)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation as (Title) for (Company) to become effective, as of (Date) I have accepted a position in (Location).

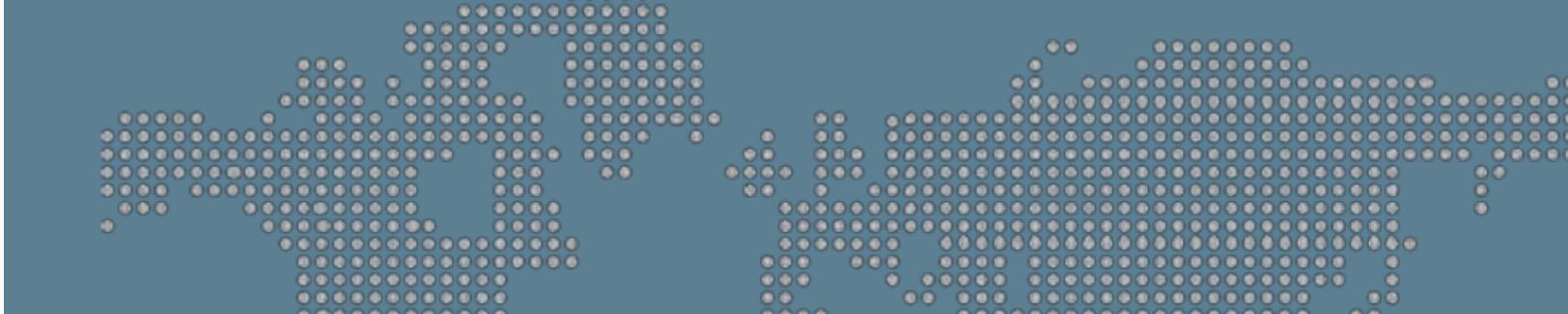
I believe this position will offer me more challenge and opportunity for advancement as well as allow me to broaden my own experience and knowledge.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and efforts in my training and advancement during the past (Time). The support and concern shown by you and the rest of the management team has been deeply appreciated.

I leave (Company) with no animosity or ill will and wish you and your company continued success. My decision is irrevocable and any counter offers extended by you and/or (Company) will be rejected.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)



## If You Really Want The Job, Ask for it!

*A show of enthusiasm and a direct approach will distinguish you from the horde of other candidates.*

*By Robert Halt*

Every good salesperson knows that one of the keys to success is to ask for the order. We've all dealt with salespeople who are engaging, know the produce they're selling, present it with enthusiasm and point out why we can't live without it, are likable, gain our confidence and do everything right...except they don't ask us to buy. So we don't.

The same situation holds true for the job seeker. The credentials you bring to a position might be perfect for it. You make a good appearance, answer all the questions smoothly and with substance, yet don't get the job because, like the salesperson above, you haven't asked for it.

There are many ways to ask for a job without sounding overly aggressive. Actually, asking for a job you want is a continuous process. The thank-you letter you send after the first interview should also include a statement of your continuing interest in the job for which you're being considered – a line such as, "I have even more interest in the position now that we've had a chance to meet and talk about it," or "I would like very much to further pursue the possibility of my working for you and the company, and look forward to a chance to discuss that in the near future."

If, after your final interview, you're convinced that you want to work for the company, say so. I remember years ago when a man came to our offices an applicant for a controller's job with our organization. I decided that he wasn't right for it, and suggested that we might find him a good position with another company. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Mr. Half, I want to work for *you*, and will consider any position you might be able to offer me."

No one had ever said that to me before, and no one has since. The

end result was that we did find a spot for this person, and he turned out to be loyal and productive employee for many years.

### **Mere Human Beings**

Because employers and interviewers are simply human beings, they deal from the same base of insecurities that you, the job seeker, do. Some are reluctant to offer a job because they don't want to be turned down. Some employers operate on the assumption that a candidate must make it plain that he or she wants the job before it will be offered. If you don't say that you want the job, you'll never get an offer from this type of employer.

Avoid high pressure. You can gracefully ask for the job by saying, "I understand that you have a number of good candidates to consider, Mr. Smith, but I do want you to know that I would like very much to work for you here at the XYZ Company. I know I'll be able to contribute something positive, and I assure you that if you do hire me, I won't let you down."

I guarantee you one thing: If you take this type of approach with a job you really want, you'll stand out, because unless all the candidates you're competing with also read and *followed* the advice of this article, very few will be that direct in asking for the job.

Asking for what you want should not be confined to getting a job, however. People fail to achieve many things, personally and professionally, throughout their lives because they simply don't make clear what it is that they want.

People fail to achieve many things, personally and professionally, throughout their lives because they simply don't make clear what it is that they want.

People mumble an order to a clerk in the deli and then complain that they got mustard instead of mayonnaise. When people in a relationship fail to let each other know what it is that they need and want they seldom get it and therefore, the relationship suffers because of it.

In business, an employer can't be expected to be a mind reader. If you feel that you deserve a raise or a promotion, and you have the tangible evidence of performance to back you up, you must ask for it. The worst that can happen is that your request is denied, but it will stay in your boss's mind and perhaps trigger a future raise quicker than you would have gotten otherwise. If a new position opens up within the company that you would like to be considered for, you must make your desire known to those that can help you achieve your goal.

In line with asking for what you want is being sure that you communicate your needs and wishes properly. Again, the need to sharpen our communication skills comes into play. Most people make their wishes known in an indirect, circumspect manner and then don't understand why their request isn't acted upon. How many letters do we receive in a lifetime that are filled with vague, unnecessary phrases and go on at length, the actual reason of the letter buried somewhere in all the verbiage? An effective letter begins with a simple statement of the purpose. Then it goes on to provide additional information to substantiate the request.

The same holds true in speech. It's so frustrating to sit with someone who wants something that could be stated in six to eight words, yet wastes minutes getting to the point that doesn't mean you have to be blunt or rude. But do be direct and let the other person know what you

want. If it's a job, say that you want it. Your chances of getting it will be greatly enhanced.

The exact language you use in asking for the job will vary from person to person and in each situation. Obviously, a direct statement will be handled nicely by some people. For other, it might signal desperation. Here are a few other ways to ask for a job that not only accomplish the goal but also indicate to the employer your level of confidence and enthusiasm:

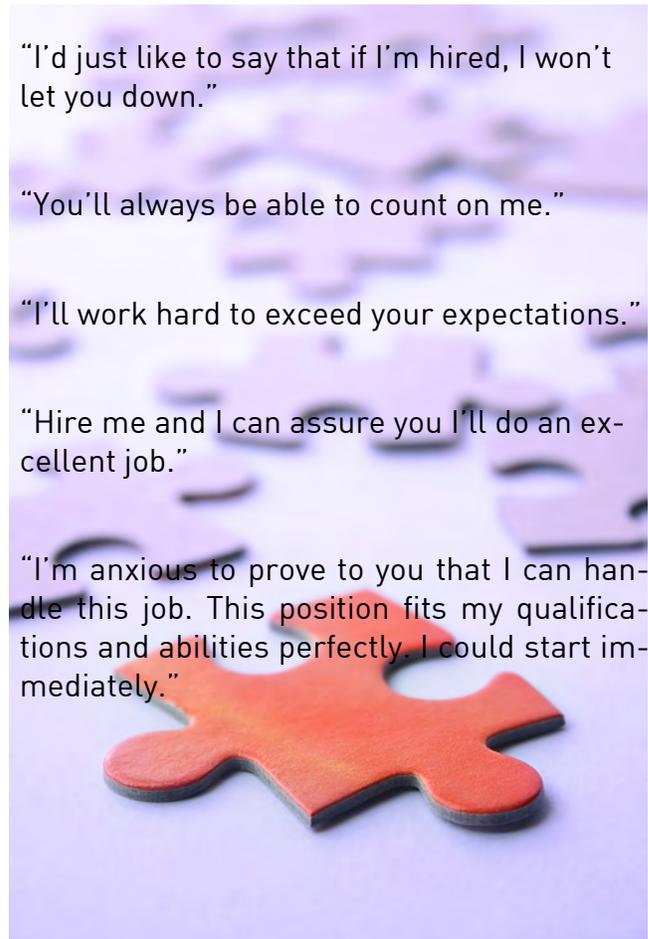
"I'd just like to say that if I'm hired, I won't let you down."

"You'll always be able to count on me."

"I'll work hard to exceed your expectations."

"Hire me and I can assure you I'll do an excellent job."

"I'm anxious to prove to you that I can handle this job. This position fits my qualifications and abilities perfectly. I could start immediately."





## Never Accept a Counteroffer

It's nice to be wooed back but don't expect to stay long.

Quitting a job is never easy. Career changes are tough enough and the anxieties of leaving a comfortable job, friends and environment for an unknown opportunity can easily cloud anyone's judgement. But what should you do when your current employer "muddies the waters" even more by asking you to stay?

A counteroffer is an inducement from your current employer to get you to stay after you've announced your intentions to accept another job elsewhere. And, in recent years, counteroffers have practically become the norm.

If you are considering a counteroffer, remain focused on your primary objectives. Why were you looking for another job to begin with? If an employee is happy with their current job, employer and/or salary, they're usually not paving the road with resumes. So, often times a counteroffer that promises more money never really remedies the real reasons for wanting to move on in the first place.

Apart from a short-term bandage on the problem, nothing will change within the company and when the dust settles you can find yourself back in the same old rut. Recruiters report that more than 80% of those who accept counteroffers leave, begin looking for another job, or are "let go" within six to twelve months after announcing their intentions.

Counteroffers are certainly flattering and make an employee question their initial decision to leave. But often times they are merely stall tactics used by bosses and companies to alleviate an upheaval a departing employee can cause.

High turnover also brings a boss's management skills into question. His reaction is to do what's necessary until he's better prepared to replace you. What kind of company do you work for if you have to threaten to resign before they pay you what you're worth?

The things they'll say:

"you can't leave, the department really needs you."

"we were just about to give you a raise."

"I didn't know you were unhappy. Why didn't you come to me sooner? What can we do to make things better?"

Again, stay focused on your decision and your opportunities. You need to ask yourself:

What kind of company do you work for if you have to threaten to resign before they pay you what you're worth?

Where did the money for the counteroffer come from? Is it your next raise or promotion just given early? Are future opportunities limited now? Will you have to threaten to leave again for another raise or promotion?

You've demonstrated your unhappiness and will be viewed as having committed blackmail in order to get a raise. Your loyalty will also be questioned come promotion time.

Well-managed companies rarely make counteroffers since they view their employment policies as fair and equitable.

If you do consider being "bought back", obtain the details of the offer in writing, as well as a one-year "no cut" contract from the employer. If they refuse, as two-thirds of counter-offering employers do, your decision to leave is made.

Look at your current job and the new position as if you were unemployed, then make your decision based on which holds the most *real* potential. It's probably the new job or you wouldn't have accepted it in the first place.

*\* Portions of this article are from the June 4, 1993 National Business Employment Weekly.*



## Pre-Employment

# Physical

The use of drug testing as part of a pre-employment physical examination is becoming more prevalent. It is predicted, that within five years, drug testing will become one more standard for getting a job. Some firms are testing for drug use as part of a pre-employment physical without telling the applicant that he/she is being tested for drugs, Personnel Journal reports.

Some over-the-counter products can produce positive drug-test results. Among them: Alka-Seltzer Plus, Allerest, Bronkaid, Contact, Donnagel, Nyquil, Primatene, Promlamine capsules, Sinutab, Sudafed and Triaminic. Poppy seeds in your food can also produce a positive drug-test result. You should not take any medication 48 hours before your pre-employment physicals, but if you must, be sure to list all drugs taken and advise the examiner.



*Reprinted from Courier Journal & Times, August 28, 1987 ←Careers→ by Joyce Lain Kennedy*

## Thirteen Reasons for Rejection

1. **Poor attitude.** Many candidates come across as arrogant. Show interest and sincerity the moment you walk through the front door. Be pleasant to secretaries and administrative staff. They give feedback too.
2. **Appearance.** Many candidates do not consider their appearance as much as they should. First impressions are quickly made in the first three to five minutes. Review the appearance checklist.
3. **Lack of research.** It's obvious when candidates haven't learned about the job, company or industry prior to the interview. Visit the library or use the Internet to research the company, then talk with friends, peers and other professionals about the opportunity before each meeting.
4. **Not having questions to ask.** Asking questions shows your interest in the company and the position. Prepare a list of intelligent questions in advance-but don't put the interviewer on the defensive by over interrogating.
5. **Not readily knowing the answers to interviewers questions.** Anticipate and rehearse answers to tough questions about your background, such as a recent termination or an employment gap. Practicing with your spouse or a friend before the interview will help you to frame intelligent responses.
6. **Relying too much on resumes.** Employers hire people, not paper. Although a resume can list qualifications and skills, it's the interview dialogue that will portray you as a committed, responsive team player.
7. **Too much humility.** Being conditioned not to brag, candidates are sometimes reluctant to describe their accomplishments. Explaining how you reach difficult or impressive goals helps employers understand what you can do for them.
8. **Not relating skills to employers needs.** A list of sterling accomplishments means little if you can't relate them to a company's needs. Restate your skills and convince the employer that you can "do the same for them".
9. **Handling salary issues ineptly.** Candidates often ask about salary and benefit packages too early. If they believe an employer is interested, they may demand inappropriate amounts and price themselves out of the jobs. Candidates who ask for too little undervalue themselves or appear desperate.
10. **Lack of career direction.** Job hunters who aren't clear about their career goals often can't spot or commit to appropriate opportunities. Not knowing what you want wastes everyone's time.
11. **Lack of interest and enthusiasm.** Don't play hard to get! If you like what you hear, say so and ask for the job!
12. **Apathetic plant/company tour.** Often candidates appear disinterested when touring facilities. Ask questions, show interest and interact. Don't appear unenthusiastic by walking around with your hands in your pockets.
13. **Job shopping.** Some applicants, particularly those in certain high-tech, sales and marketing fields, will admit they're just "shopping" for opportunities and have little intention of changing jobs. This wastes time and leaves a bad impression with employers they may need to contact in the future.

# Work On Those FAB's

Completing the FAB Sheet is an extremely effective way to highlight your skills and achievements. It will help you to recognize the benefits you have to offer to any potential employers. Listing them now will assist you in many future interviews

## WHAT DOES A FAB DO?

- Tells what you can do for the employer.
- Tells how you can benefit the potential employer.
- Details what you have accomplished in present and past jobs.
- Can highlight your unique accomplishments and experiences.

## Definition of F-A-B



### **Facts about yourself**

Example: Supervisor for 8 years. Staff engineering.  
BS in accounting.  
Experiences that are factual and objective.



### **Accomplishments**

Significant, specific results you have obtained for present or past employers.  
Quantitative and measurable.  
Example: Reduced scrap by 15% by doing...  
Increased sales by \$200K. Opened 38 new accounts.



### **Benefits**

Concrete example of what you can do for NEW employer because of past experience.  
Example: Won't need long training periods.

# Based upon your FAB's

## If you were an employer, would you want to interview this person?

### 14 Questions To Ask When Doing FABs

1. Did you help to increase sales, productivity, efficiency, etc.? What was the percentage or dollar contribution? How did you do this? Did you have a unique approach or different results from others?
2. Did you save money for the company? What were the circumstances? How much more (\$, %) than others? How were your results compared to others?
3. Did you institute any new systems or changes? What was the situation that led to the change? Who approved? Why was this system selected over others? Did it compete with others? What happened as a result?
4. Did you identify any problem that had been overlooked? What was the problem? What was the solution? Why was it overlooked?
5. Were you ever promoted? Why were you promoted? How long between promotions? Did you do something outstanding? How much more responsibility? Did you get to manage people? How many? Were you promoted by more than one party? Were you given significant salary increases or raises?
6. Did you train anyone? Did you develop training technique? Compare your results to others? Is your technique being used by others? Why is that?
7. Did you suggest any new programs? What were they about? What were the results? Did they increase efficiency or sales? Were they published or presented at any industry seminars?
8. Did you help to establish any new goals or objectives for your company? Did you convince management that they should adopt these goals or objectives? Why were they adopted?
9. Did you change the nature or scope of your job? Why or how did you redefine your position? Have others with similar positions had their positions redefined because of you? Were there responsibility changes because of this? What were they?
10. Did you ever undertake a project that was not part of your responsibility because you liked the problem? This is proof of job interest as well as the ability to take initiative.
11. Did you ever do anything to lighten your job or make it easier? (This could result in increased profits or productivity.)
12. What special problems were you hired for or brought in to solve? What did you do? How did you do it? What were the results?
13. Show any areas where you were creative (i.e., solutions, products, applications, markets, accounts, etc.)
14. What would you say would be the most important qualities for the position you seek? Put yourself in the shoes of your prospective boss. Describe six qualities and look for examples you have for each of them. How do you stack up?



## HOW TO DO A FAB

Make several copies of the blank FAB sheet on page 35.

2. Block out time; about 2 to 3 hours.
3. Analyze yourself and what you have done. Single out **FEATURES** that make up your education, years and types of experience, patents, licenses, awards won, special seminars and unique life experience.
4. Prepare a timesheet of your history. List all positions, no matter how small, including all promotions. List all significant **ACCOMPLISHMENTS** for each position. Try to quantify them with specific accomplishments. Numbers talk. Study them over. Identify what you can do and how you can **BENEFIT** the new employer because of past experience or training. Pick the most compelling reason someone should hire you over someone else.
5. Put the information together on the FAB form. List these **FEATURES** and the **ACCOMPLISHMENTS** for each feature. Next to it show **BENEFITS** as result of the Features and Accomplishments. Try to get as many as possible. There may only be one benefit for numerous accomplishments. Study them. Have you forgotten anything? Were there more accomplishments or benefits that you overlooked? Can you quantify anything else?

# F A B Sheet

Candidate's Name:

Position:

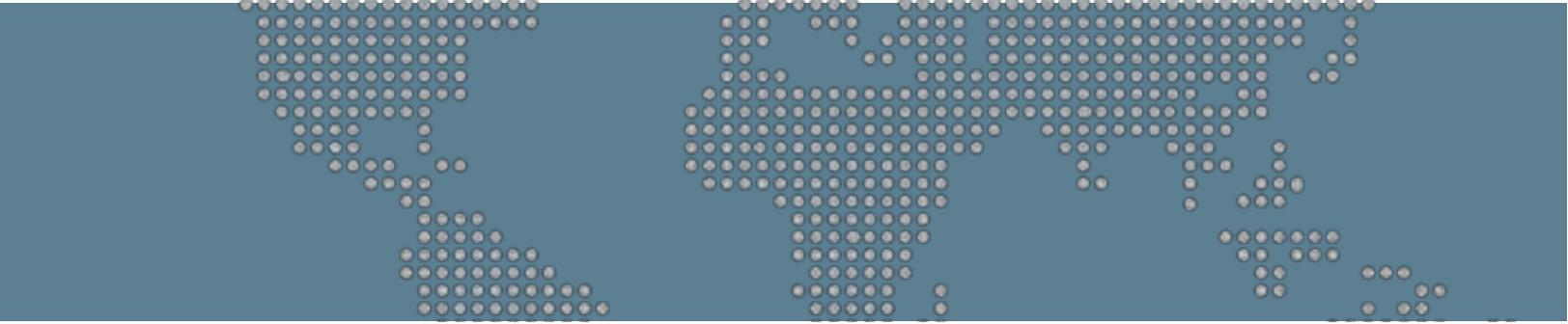
Compensation:

FEATURE	ACCOMPLISHMENTS	BENEFITS
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Facts such as education, job titles, etc.

How well you performed compared with someone in similar position.

Value to prospective employer



## 12 Traits of PEAK PERFORMERS

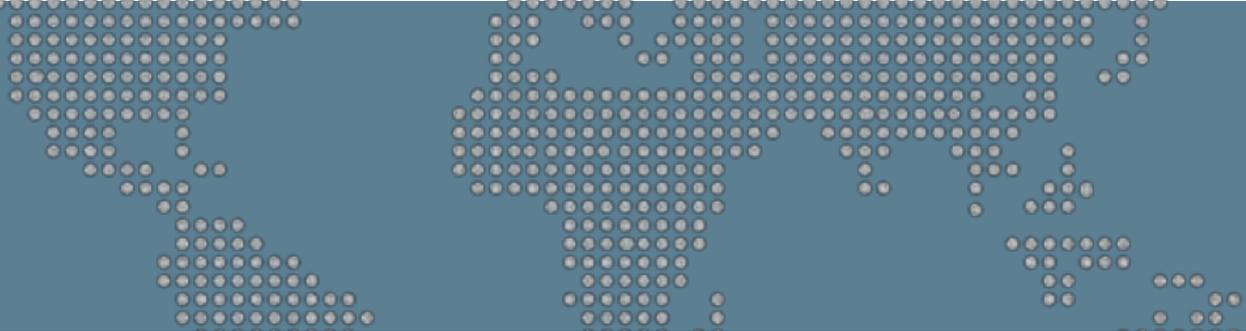
1. A sense of mission.
2. Ability to plan strategically, for both their own careers and for projects.
3. Courage to take risks in the pursuit of excellence.
4. High self-confidence and self-worth.
5. Ownership of their own good ideas.
6. Faith in their own creativity, even when others don't understand their contributions.
7. Ability to learn from past mistakes.
8. Positive work environment, even if they have to make it so themselves
9. Decisiveness in the face of opportunity.
10. Foresight to anticipate both difficulties and opportunities.
11. Frequently evaluate and monitor progress to stay on course.
12. A hunger for new knowledge and experiences.



## YOUR RESPONSES

Here's some space to note your responses to critical interview questions. Remember to be brief but sell yourself and your abilities with each answer. And don't forget to prepare a list of questions you might want to ask the interviewer.

Tell me about yourself?
What are your greatest strengths?
What are your greatest weaknesses?
Would you describe for me a typical day on the job?
What would you say is your single most noteworthy achievement or contribution in your present job?
What specific strengths do you think you can bring to this position?
What do you think it takes for a person to be successful in (fill in the specialty)?
Tell me, how would you install a standard cost-accounting system (or procedure that relates to job you are going for)?
If you ran into (a typical problem you might be expected to deal with as an employee), how would you handle it?



Tell me about the people you hired in your last job. How long did they stay with you, and how did they work out?

Can you tell me a little about how you go about making important decisions?

What are a few things your company could do to be more successful?

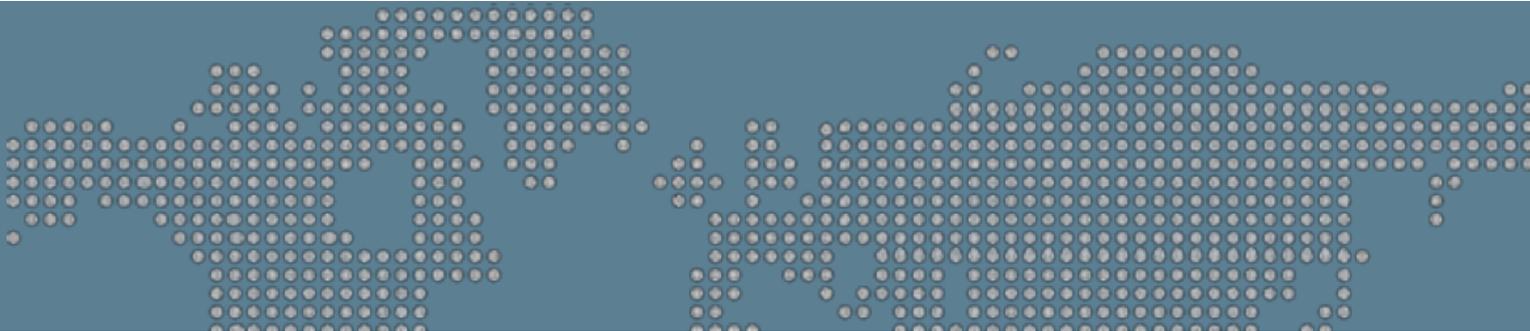
What do you know about our company?

Could you tell me why you are interested in this job?

Why have you decided to leave your present position? Why are you looking for another job?

What would you like to be earning two years from now?

What have been the biggest failures or frustrations in your business life?



What risks did you take in your last few jobs, and what were the results of those risks?
Think about something you consider a failure in your life, and tell me why you think it occurred?
What do you do in your spare time?
How can you contribute to this company?
Why should I hire you for this position?
Why do you want to work for our firm?
Where do you hope to be in five years?
What interests you most about this position?



How long do you plan to be with this company?

What are your career goals? What are you doing to achieve your goals?

What did you like most about your previous job?

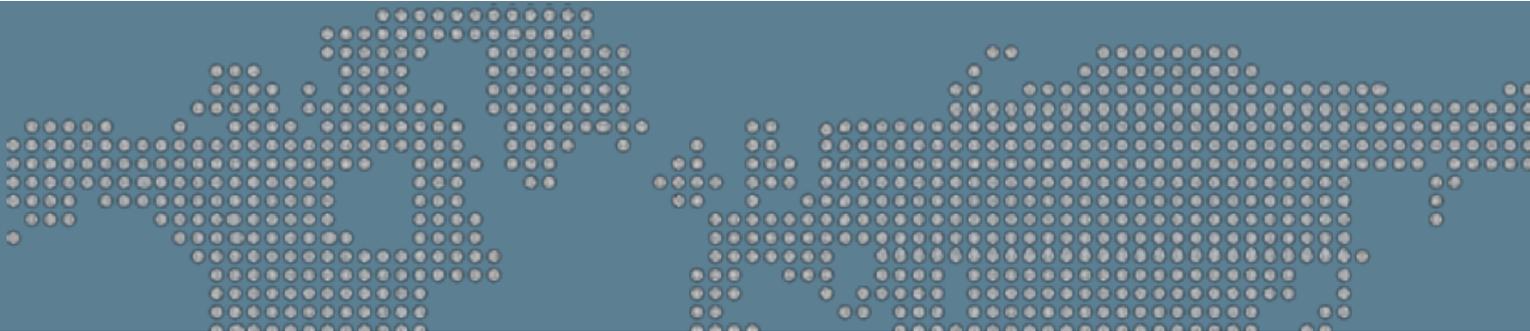
What did you like least about your previous job?

What do you think your employer's obligations are to you?

Are you applying for any other jobs?

What kind of decisions is most difficult for you?

What causes you to lose your temper?



How do you feel about a younger male/female boss?
What kind of worker are you?
What type of salary do you have in mind? What is your current salary?
Are you willing to relocate?
May we check your references?
May we verify your income?



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