

Key to Successful Interview? **Be Prepared!**

Know Facts About The Employers

There are many important areas of preparation to deal with prior to the interview. By thoroughly preparing, you increase your chances of making a positive first impression. One of the most important steps involves researching the company.

It is annoying for an employer to talk with the candidate who doesn't have any knowledge about the company. A favorite question asked is, "Why are you interested in our organization?" If you don't know anything about the employer, you won't be able to answer the question intelligently.

Researching the organization also helps determine whether your goals will fit the promotional structures defined by that employer. For example, there are some employers who have a reputation for being conservative and if you cannot fit in with this type of work environment, you know that talking to the recruiter would be a waste of time.

Organization Is the Key to Success

Research employers long before your interview. You may find reams of information and you must be able to sort out the pertinent information and retain the key facts. If it is difficult to find information on the employer, feel free to call and ask the employer if they have an annual report, fact sheets or brochure.

Keep a file on each employer. As you conduct your research, the file will help you keep facts organized making the preparation easier.

Employer files. Should include articles from periodicals or newspapers, and annual reports. When it is time to prepare for the interview, you can organize the information in a way that will impress the employer during the interview.

What Information to Look for

First ascertain what kind of information you're looking for. Then determine where to find that information. Take this research project one step at a time and allow yourself enough time.

It's a mistake to assume you know enough about the organization without doing any research. For example, you may know that Ralston Purina makes pet food, but are you aware the company also makes cereal for humans, owns a major tuna fish company, and owns and operates resorts and restaurants? You ***may be taking with a subsidiary of a much larger company and not realize it if you don't do your research.***

Facts to Know about the Organization

- Size of organization in industry
- Annual sales growth for past five years
- Complete product line or services
- Potential new products or services
- Age of top management and their backgrounds
- Location of corporate headquarters
- Number of plants, stores, and outlets
- Recent developments via news stories
- Name and correct spelling of recruiter
- Potential growth
- Competition
- Geographical locations
- Organizational structure
- Type of training program
- Promotional path
- Relocation policies
- History of organization
- Typical career path in your field

Some information will not be available and you should ask the employer to clarify any thing you do not fully understand.

Knowing the recruiter's name (including correct spelling), title, and address before leaving the room. This information will be invaluable when you begin your correspondence with the organization. If you are not comfortable asking the employer, consult the Career Management Center for the information or contact the company.

Information Sources Available

The primary source should be annual reports and employment brochures. While this information is prepared by the organization it is a good starting place. All publicly held companies are required to report to their stockholders via annual reports. If the library does not have the necessary information, you can contact the organization directly.

The library should also have different business periodicals and newspapers. Robert Q. Traxel, author of "Manager's Guide to Successful Job Hunting," suggests using the following publications. These are listed below and should be perused for articles, both about the company in question and also its competition.

1. The Wall Street Journal
2. Barron's
3. Dun's review
4. Business Week
5. Forbes
6. Fortune
7. Trade Publications
8. Finance and business section of local newspaper

Directories are an important resource. Check the library and if not available check with local stock brokerage firms. The important thing is not to give up if you can't find the information at the library.

Useful directories include:

1. Standard & Poor's corporate records
2. Dun & Bradstreet reference library
3. Moody's manuals
4. Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers

Is It Really Necessary?

This may seem like a lot of trouble to go through just to be prepared for the interview. Finding the right job is hard work and should be approached in such a manner as to stack the odds in your favor.

There is keen competition and you're trying to market a product – yourself – successfully! There is rarely a professional position open that does not draw at least five qualified applicants.

Remember, you're trying to create a positive impression by appearing informed and goal-directed. One way to demonstrate your goals is to indicate during the interview what interested you in that specific organization and how your goals, qualifications, and personality fit that employer's opportunities.

You only get one chance to leave the right impression; so take the time to do your homework and research the organization, and you will increase your chances of leaving a positive impression.