

GENERAL PLACEMENT SERVICE

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EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING

We have all, at some time in our lives, been subjected to an interview conducted for the purpose of getting a new job. An interview is a conversation between two people who are seeking a common interest. But they can be stressful and intimidating because so much is riding on the outcome. Since **General Placement Service** has been instrumental in arranging and coordinating these interviews for 30 years, we have gained some knowledge about the process, and why some employment candidates are more successful than others. Please review our notes.

PRE-INTERVIEW RESEARCH

The more one knows about the company and its operation, the easier it will be to plan an interview strategy. You will be able to learn a great deal about a company by listening in detail to the job and company description by our Account Executive. Further, utilize the internet for industry newsletters, articles and industry performance publications to learn the statistics and accounting for a given company. And finally, talk to your friends and acquaintances in the business, confidentially or otherwise to learn what is known by others about the company. **DO NOT LISTEN TO NEGATIVE COMMENTS OR RUMORS.** Here is what we want to know:

- Who are the key employees and titles
- What are the products and services offered by this company
- Number of employees
- Who are their key customers
- What are the principle locations and sub-offices
- How do they rank in the industry
- What is their sales trend and future business plan
- Who are their competitors

INTERVIEW STRATEGY

During the pre interview preparation, you should develop an outline of the points of interest that you want to establish. Obviously, the tone of the interview will be set by the interviewer, and you will need to be flexible. But having a strategy is important because you will always be given an opportunity to express yourself and your interests, and to sell your abilities. You can even write the outline on a pad. Feel free to bring it and refer to it during the interview. Develop the outline after reading this report, and discussing the job with your Account Executive at General Placement Service.

Interviews can be structured or unstructured. Structured interviews have a set of prepared questions asked in order, where the interviewer is seeking short answers and little conversation. An unstructured interview is a conversational series of open-ended questions designed to elicit longer detailed answers. Determine which type is being used and answer accordingly. Watch for reaction to determine if answers should be shorter or longer. Look for ways to incorporate your planned answers into the conversation, and be sure to keep the conversation flowing both ways.

Listen carefully for clues about skills needed for this job and without exaggerating, fit yourself into the position. Be honest. Be cheerful. Do not be negative. Do not appear to be a “know it all”. Be confident but humble. If you do not know the answer to a certain question, say so.

OVERCOMING NERVOUSNESS

First, be aware that all candidates for employment have some degree of nervousness, especially in the beginning. Preparation for the interview, and having an interview strategy, as discussed above, are the best ways to reduce the initial nervous feelings. When planning your interview, practice positive thinking, believe that you are the best qualified person for this position, and be confident of your abilities. Deliver your prepared answers the way in which you practiced them.

YOUR QUESTIONS

Develop three to six of your own questions, write them down and carry them with you. All interviewers, at some time, will say “Do you have any questions?”. Having intelligent well thought-out questions, even if read, are very impressive. Some examples:

- What skills are considered most useful in this position
- What part of my background do you consider to be most useful
- What strategy is your company using to attract new customers
- Why do you expect your company to grow in the next five years
- What position does this job lead to
- Why is this position open
- What is the next step in this interviewing process

Do not ask about vacation, benefits or salary until the end of the interview, if at all. Our Account Executive can discuss in more detail, how this subject is to be handled.

HAVE ON HAND

Your briefcase or billfold should include:

- Two or more copies of your resume, unfolded
- Two or more copies of your list of references, unfolded
- Samples of your work if appropriate
- A pen or pencil
- Business cards if you have them
- Wear a watch

BODY LANGUAGE

- Dress well, and be neatly groomed
- Look and act relaxed and feel confident
- Smile a lot, especially upon introduction
- Maintain good, continuous eye contact
- Shake hands firmly, but not overbearing
- Try to remember names, and use them during conversation especially early on
- Make small talk enthusiastically
- Move around during the interview, so as to not to appear stiff; but do not fidget

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Answer questions in a conversational way. Try not to memorize answers. Structure your answers to show that you are a team player, will last a long time on the job, are likable and capable of performing well in this job. Responses should be specific. Avoid generalities like “I am a people person”, or “I enjoy working with people”. Constantly reaffirm interest, especially after the job is described. Look out for “zingers” – questions designed to throw you off guard. Sometimes it is better to answer quickly rather than stumbling for the right answer when none exists.

The following pages contain twelve themes that are usually touched upon in some manner of questioning by hiring authorities. We have included a few questions commonly asked for each theme. We advise that you review these questions and formulate the basis for an answer to each. Practicing your response is always an excellent way to prepare for your upcoming interview.

1. Passion for the business

- Why are you interested in this industry
- How do you stay current in this business
- Where do you want to be in five years (do not be specific)
- Describe your ideal career (do not be specific)
- What do you like most about your current or last position
- What do you like least about your current or last position

2. Motivation and Purpose

- Why do you want to work for this company
- Tell me something about yourself that I do not know from the resume
- What do you think of our new products, services, or advertisements
- What would you do differently if you ran the company
- Why are you interested in leaving your position (offer 2-3 rehearsed answers)
- What salary do you expect (Offer why you fit into the high end of this position, then turn the question around and ask for the salary parameters)
- What other firms are you interviewing with (Wants to hear that you are interviewing for similar type positions, not much better opportunities)

3. Skills and Interest

- What skills do you bring to this position
- What is your major weakness
- Why are you interested in interviewing here
- What special skills or interests do you possess that others who might be interviewing for this position would not have
- Describe 2 skills that you have which are assets for this job
- How is your experience relevant to this job
- What new skills would you like to develop
- Compared to others in the industry, how do your skills rate

4. Diligence and Professionalism

- Give an example of an obstacle and how you overcame it
- Describe a time that you had to deal with a very difficult situation
- How would your current boss describe you (Be ready to offer proof of a good reference)
- Tell me about a time when you did not perform up to your expectation (Give an example of an early failure and give examples of how that was overcome)
- How do you manage stress in your current or past job
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer

5. Creativity and Leadership

- What color is your brain (example of a question where the answer doesn't matter. Any response other than "I don't know" will be important)
- Give me proof of your persuasiveness
- Do you believe that your job appraisals are correct and accurate (Careful, they might be asked for)

6. Compatibility with the job

- What are the most rewarding aspect of your job
- What are the limitations in your current job
- Why are you ready to leave your current job
- What do you want to achieve in a new job
- Describe your ideal job

7. Personality and Cultural Compatibility

- What would your friends say about you (Offer an answer that shows how you fit in)
- Tell me about your relationship with your previous bosses
- What situations excite and motivate you
- How would our customers react to you

8. Management style and interpersonal skills

- Tell me about an effective manager (Give an example of an industry leader)
- What type of people do you work well with
- How do you manage your time on any given day
- Give me an example of a public figure who you admire

9. Problem solving ability

- Describe a situation where you used your technical ability to solve a problem (Focus on practical, real issues. Be prepared to offer proof)
- What was the greatest problem in your last job and how did you solve it
- Have you ever been responsible for solving a long-standing company problem (be prepared to offer proof)

10. Accomplishments

- Tell me about a major accomplishment (Short description of actions taken and the positive results gained)
- If hired, what can you contribute to our organization
- What accomplishment is your greatest source of pride
- What accomplishment was the most difficult for you to achieve

11. Career Aspirations

- What are your long-term goals (tailor this to the job and its career path)
- Why is this job right for you now
- What new challenges do you want
- What position do you want to have 5 years from today
- What position do you want to have 10 years from today
- Why should I hire you (Avoid cliches, and cute answers. Be specific on how you can benefit the company)

12. Personal interests and hobbies

- What outside interests compliment your work interests (You want to describe a balanced lifestyle)
- What is your community involvement or where have you volunteered
- What are your outside interests or hobbies
- What is the last movie you saw, or the last book you read
- Describe a movie or book which you were inspired by and why
- What outside interests could interfere with your new job
- What books do you keep on your desk