

THE KEMP GROUP

■ ■ ■ EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONSULTANTS

Interview Guide

Interviewing: Mind your P's and Q's

So you've made it to the interview stage, now what?

Just like your Grandma used to say, you have to mind your P's and Q's. We'll break it down for you in this guide, but there are three basic things that you have to remember to have a successful interview.

Preparation:

Know the company. Research the company's history, financial condition, recent news, culture and values. At a minimum you should read the company's website and do a web search for other important information. If you can, talk to people who work for or know the company. Personal contacts are a great way to learn about corporate culture.

Know the position. Read the job description and find out who will be conducting the interview. Learn anything you can about those people and their interview techniques. Understand what skills are needed for the position and how your credentials match up. Know why you are a fit for the job.

Know yourself. You've heard it before, practice makes perfect. Practice interviewing with someone or in front of a mirror. Prepare to have an engaging, well informed conversation about the company, the position, your skills and your goals. Be able to control your emotion and manage your anxiety.

Presentation:

You only get one chance to make a first impression. Arrive 10 minutes early for the interview. Dress professionally in the appropriate attire. Convey confidence. Make eye contact, have a firm handshake, stand up straight, be polite and courteous to everyone that you meet. Pay attention to body language, both yours and theirs. Good communication skills (verbal and nonverbal) are critical for interview success. Be sure that you have extra copies of your resume and any other presentation materials required for the interview.

Questions:

Ask well-thought-out questions. Remember that an interview is a two way conversation. The employer wants to know if you are a fit for their position and you want to know if the company is a fit for you. Asking the right questions shows that you are prepared, organized, and interested.

Inside this guide you'll find more tips to help you prepare. We've included sample questions that you should be prepared to answer, as well as some that are good to ask. We'll go over dress and appearance, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, and the most common errors made in the interview process. Last, but certainly not least, is a section on how to handle questions about money. Your search consultant is also a valuable source of information during this process. If you have questions don't hesitate to call.

Before the Interview

The number one reason that candidates do poorly in interviews is failure to ask questions.

- **KNOW THE COMPANY**

It is critical to learn all you can about the company prior to the interview. Look at the company's history, their current financial condition, recent news, and stock reports. It is also important to find out what you can about their culture, values, and mission statement.

The internet is an excellent source of this information. Be sure to check out the company's web site if they have one. Web sites such as Hoover's Online and Yahoo are great for researching companies. You can also type their name in search engines like Google and see what information comes up. If you do not have access to the internet at home, the library has computers at each branch that have internet capability.

Personal contacts are another excellent source of information. Call anyone that you know who may have information on the company and industry. Try to discover any corporate goals that may not be public knowledge. Ask about corporate culture.

Talk to current or potential customers of the company. Passing on favorable customer comments can boost your rating!

- **KNOW THE POSITION**

List the requirements on the left side of a sheet of paper. Write your credentials and achievements on the right side. How do they match up? Why would they want to hire you? What important short-term contribution could you make? What about Long-term?

- **KNOW YOURSELF**

Prepare for your interview as if you already had the job and were meeting with your manager to establish and meet your goals. What would you need to know to do the job?

Plan to answer questions about your background and experience. Be able to give examples of your accomplishments as they pertain to the position and your background. Also, be able to talk about your goals for the future.

Practice interviewing with a friend or in front of a mirror. Watch your nonverbal communication. Make sure that you appear confident and together. Be able to control your anxiety and remain in control of your emotions. Some interviewers will try to provoke an "outburst" during the interview process.

The Telephone Interview

Interviewing is usually a multi-step process. Frequently the initial step will be a telephone interview. More than half of all telephone interviews lead to face-to-face interviews. A little preparation can weight the odds in your favor.

- Prepare an interview folder. Keep it near the phone you will use for the interview. If you have small children or "yappy" dogs, make sure that you have a quiet place to talk. In the folder, include your resume and career details, a notepad, any information on the company and the position, and a list of questions you would like to ask. Keep several pens or pencils with the folder or the phone.
- Ask for feedback. At the end of the conversation indicate that you are interested in the company and would like to move to the next step. Ask about timing. If they say this role does not appear to be a good fit, ask why? Then ask about other positions within the company.

Face-to-Face Interviews

Once through the door, your competition has been reduced from hundreds to a handful. There are probably at least two other contenders for the position at this point. Here are a few ways to improve your chances of getting an offer:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the interview is scheduled to begin. Drive the route to the interview location ahead of time if possible to insure that you know the way. If this is not possible get directions from someone who has, or from the internet.
- Make sure that you have extra copies of your resume for managers who do not have one.
- Greet all the people you meet with a firm handshake. Follow the interviewer's lead with formality.
- Be sure to SMILE!
- Be confident.
- Be polite and courteous to everyone you meet.
- Pay attention to body language. Both yours and theirs.
- LISTEN.
- Remember to ask for a business card from everyone with whom you interview.
- Answer questions briefly and honestly. Do not ramble.
- Do not answer questions with only a yes/no answer. Follow up with examples and explanations.
- Always look the interviewer in the eyes when speaking. Do not appear distracted.
- Do not speak ill of your prior/current employer! Big Rule!
- Be positive during the interview. Show enthusiasm about the company and the position.
- Do not talk salary/commission/benefits on the first interview.
- On the application form be neat and complete. Write negotiable in the salary range.
- Know the name of the person you are interviewing with before arriving. Also know the interview format, and the expected duration of the interview.
- Ask questions - but be direct.
- At the end of each meeting, ask if there appear to be any obstacles to your ability to do the job.
- Ask what the next step is, where you rank among other candidates, and how you might improve your standing.
- Ask for the job! Tell them that you are interested in the opportunity.
- Remember to thank each interviewer for their time at the conclusion of the meeting.
- After the interview send a Thank You note to the interviewers. If necessary ask your Kemp Group Recruiter for a format letter.

Dress and Appearance

It's not a beauty contest, but your overall appearance always gets noticed by the interviewer. You only get one chance to make a favorable first impression!

- Avoid wearing too much cologne or perfume.
- Your hair should be clean and well-groomed.
- Wear appropriate attire. When in doubt wear business attire. In some situations business casual is appropriate when confirmed. Make sure clothes are neat and not wrinkled.
- Shoes should be polished and coordinate with your suit or dress.
- Tattoos and body piercing are taboo at an interview.
- Have breath mints handy but, no gum or cough drops.
- Never smoke, even if offered.
- Wear minimal jewelry. Women should be conservative with makeup.
- Men should wear Dark suit (blue/gray), long sleeve white shirt, conservative tie, dark socks, dark shined shoes.
- Women should wear a dark business suit. Hemlines should be near the knee. A modest blouse, hose and moderate heels are acceptable.

The number two reason for interview failure is condemnation of a past employer.

Questions to Ask

Be prepared to ask Questions about the position during the interview. Here are some sample questions:

- What needs to be accomplished in the first six months? In the first year?
- Who does the position report to? Who does it supervise?
- What are the characteristics of people who have been successful in the position before?
- What has caused people to fail in the position before?
- What are the characteristics of your best employees?
- In the recent history of the company, what has been your biggest advance and greatest setback?
- Tell me about a typical day.
- Tell me about yourself and your background.
- What are three main qualities you are looking for in a candidate?
- Tell me about the history of your company.
- Is there anything about my background that would preclude me from being a fit for the position?
- What are the characteristics of your top people?
- In your opinion, what are some of the positives and negatives about XYZ company?
- Consider asking to meet a few current employees.

Before the Interview:

- Review what you know about the position
- Develop your own questions
- Practice Interviewing

Questions to Answer

Here are a few questions that you should be ready to answer.

- What are your five biggest accomplishments in your last or present job? Be ready to give examples.
- Give me an example of when you met a goal.
- What new goals/objectives have you established recently?
- Give me an example of when you failed to meet a goal.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- How are you best managed?
- What are your short/long term objectives?
- Why are you looking for other positions?
- Why did you select our company to interview with?
- Can you work under pressure? You need to give examples.
- How do you describe your personality?
- What mistakes have you made in your career? How did you fix them?

The Money Issue

Salary questions are some of the toughest that you may encounter during the interview process. Employers sometimes asked pointed questions in an effort to gain an advantage in the negotiating game. We all want to make as much money as possible, so choose your words carefully when discussing money during the interview. It is imperative to work closely with your search consultant during salary negotiation. We are privy to inside information about our client's dollar range, requirements, and about your competition for a position. This knowledge is often key to making the right moves in the salary game.

Speak frankly with your search consultant before your interview to determine if your salary requirements are in line with what the employer is willing to pay. When your consultant asks you for salary numbers, be honest and give us the information we need. It is in our best interest to get you the highest salary possible. We also don't want to lose a position for you by overreaching and demanding a salary that exceeds what the hiring company is able to pay if it is more than what you demand.

Know the Employers Range

Every employer has a salary range in mind when they begin the interview process. Know what this range is and whether it meets your expectations. Your search consultant should discuss this range with you very early in the interview process and help you to decide if the position is a fit. Companies are conscious about keeping cost at a reasonable level and a candidate's salary requirement always comes into play when deciding which individual to choose for a position. Your qualifications and credentials as well as your competition's will be considered closely during this process. If the employers range for a position is below what you expect, state a range closer to the number that you anticipated. The idea is to state a range that gets you to the dollar level you seek while not pricing yourself out of consideration.

Deciding on Your Dollar Range

When changing positions it is industry standard to look for a 10-15% increase in pay. Take this into account when you come up with your desired salary range. You also need to do your homework. It is important to understand what your peers are earning. There are several sites on the internet that you can use when researching this topic, but be sure to speak with your search consultant as well. We are very familiar with the salaries currently being offered to professionals in our specialty.

Understand that there is more to an offer than just the dollar amount. You need to take into consideration the benefits package (health insurance, vacation, 401K, etc.), as well as the bonus if one is offered. If you are relocating you need to look at the costs covered in the relocation package and a cost of living comparison. Let a potential employer know that you will make a decision based on the entire compensation package, not the salary alone.

When Asked Your Current Salary

Answer money questions carefully. When the ranges are in line, it is generally safe to state your current compensation including salary and bonus. Follow this up by stating that you hope to be offered a compensation package that is fair based on the demands of the position. This approach allows you to avoid appearing evasive while making it known that you expect to be paid a reasonable amount for your work. However, if you are currently underpaid giving a direct answer may not be in your favor. State that you hope to receive a fair compensation package based on the demands of the position. Be sure to talk with your recruiter about these situations prior to your interview.

Handling a Counter Offer

This is important. If you think that you could accept a counteroffer, exit the interview process immediately. Accepting counteroffers are a recipe for disaster. It would be better for you, us and the companies we represent to exit at this stage, rather than continue and face problems that WILL come up ahead. Ask you recruiter to discuss this issue and answer any questions.

The kemp group, inc.

408 North Main Street
Greer, SC 29650

Phone: 864-877-0000
Fax: 864-877-0001
Toll Free: 1-866-725-KEMP
Web: www.kempgrp.com

**TOP 10 REASONS A CANDIDATE
DOES NOT GET THE JOB**

1. Doesn't ask Questions
2. Condemnation of past employer
3. Inability to take criticism
4. Poor personal appearance
5. Indecisive, cynical, lazy
6. Overbearing, over aggressive, "know it all"
7. Late to Interview
8. Failure to look at interviewer while interviewing
9. Unable to express self clearly
10. Overemphasis on Money

THE KEMP GROUP
EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONSULTANTS

© The Kemp Group, Inc. 2007