



Northeastern University

GUIDELINES
FOR
SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

FALL 2009
SPRING 2010

PREPARING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

As soon as you send your resume:

- Change your voice mail greeting to something like:

“Hello. You have reached the voice mail of Sally Smith. Please leave a message and telephone number and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you.”

- Research the organization. Use the internet and other resources. Make a list of questions you may wish to ask about the organization at the interview.
- Prepare your list of professional references. Refer to the *Guidelines for Successful Resumes* for more information.

A few days before your interview:

- Research the individual who contacted you. It is surprising what you can find out just by Googling a name. In doing so, you may also find out more about the nature of the work related to the position for which you have applied.
- Find out where the company is located before the interview so you do not get lost. Use Mapquest, Google, or the employer’s website.
- Review the list of typical questions that interviewers may ask. Practice stating out loud your qualifications, your background, why you are the best candidate for the position, etc.

The Day before your interview:

- Reread the job description. Review your notes about the organization and the individual with whom you may be interviewing.
- Generate a list of three or four thoughtful questions that you can ask when prompted with “Do you have any questions?”
- Review your responses to some typical questions you may be asked. See Page 4 of these *Guidelines*.
- Assemble a folder/portfolio that contains a few extra copies of your resume, a written list of your professional references, a blank sheet for notes you may wish to jot down, directions to the employers, and the employer’s telephone number.
- Select your interview attire. Do not wait until the morning of your interview. Please see Page 5 of these *Guidelines* for more information.
- Get a good night’s sleep!

PREPARING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

The day of the interview:

- Take a shower – it will help relax you.
- Make sure your cell phone is fully charged. (You may need it if you are unavoidably detained.)
- Allow more than enough time to arrive “on time”. Arriving five to ten minutes early is acceptable. If you are earlier than that, wait in your car or in the lobby.
- If possible, leave briefcases/satchels in your car or at home.

THE INTERVIEW:

- Relax – Smile!
- As soon as you arrive, assume that you are being evaluated. Look and act professionally.
- Shut off your cell phone before you announce yourself.
- Be polite to everyone, especially the individual to whom you announce yourself. Aside from common courtesy, this individual will be asked for his/her opinion of you and what you were doing while you are in the waiting area. S/he may have more influence than you think.
- Shake the interviewer’s hand firmly and maintain eye contact throughout the interview. Try to keep your eyes from wandering around the interview area. [This is difficult to do, especially when thinking about your answers to questions.]
- Do not sit down until you are invited to do so. Decline offers of food and drink.
- Avoid nervous habits (e.g., nail biting, shuffling papers, fidgeting in your chair, cracking knuckles)
- Answer questions with more than YES or NO. The interviewer wants to get to know you. When you do answer, be articulate, be confident without being boastful, be enthusiastic but not “over the top”, be honest. Try to demonstrate, with your answers, what you may be able to contribute to the organization.
- Be sure to emphasize that you are interested in learning new skills.
- Ask questions about the job.
- Find out what the next steps are. Should you follow up or will the interview contact you?
- Thank the interviewer(s), ask for a business card, shake hands again.

After the Interview

- Send a Thank You Letter – See *Guidelines for Writing Successful Cover letters and Thank You Notes* for detailed information.

PREPARING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Below are some typical questions that may help you prepare for your interview.

- Why are you interested in this position?
- Can you describe a time on the job when something didn't go as planned?
- Can you describe one or two of your most important accomplishments?
- What things do you look for in an organization? Why is X your major?
- Can you think of a problem you have encountered when the old solutions didn't work and you came up with new ones?
- What has been a high pressure situation in which you have been in recent years? How did you cope with this?
- In your last review what did your supervisor suggest needed improvement?
- What would you say is the most important thing you learned from your college career? .
- What qualities do you look for in a supervisor? How do you handle stress?
- What has been your favorite extracurricular activity in school and why?
- Describe a situation in which you had to be creative. What did you find challenging and/or exciting about this?
- List three things former coworkers would say about you.
- What did you do in your last job that helped facilitate teamwork?
- How would you describe your leadership style? Provide examples.
- What was the most important idea or suggestion you received recently from another? What happened as a result?
- Please provide an example of a conflict that you have encountered and how you handled it?
- Please tell us a little about yourself.
- How would you describe your work style?
- If you had a dispute with a co-worker, how would you handle it?
- What are your career goals for the next three to five years?
- What factors most influence your willingness to take a risk?
- What examples can you provide that reflect your ability to apply good judgment in a challenging situation?
- Describe your experiences in working as a part of a team.
- Provide an example of something you had to learn that was difficult?
- On a scale from 1-5 (one being the lowest) how do you rate your communication skills?
- If you found out that one of your co-workers was doing something dishonest, what would you do?
- What is your personal definition of success?
- What is one thing about yourself that you would most like to change?
- Which of your personal characteristics do you feel enhances your effectiveness in communicating with others?
- Why do you think you are a good fit for this position?
- What strengths would you bring to this job? What weaknesses?
- Of what accomplishments in your life are you most proud?

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS!

Men and Women:

- Clean, polished shoes - dark COIOf. Well-groomed hair style (Do you need a haircut?)
- Clean, trimmed fingernails; minimal perfume or aftershave
Empty pockets - no bulges or tinkling coins
- No gum, cigarettes, or candy (Do not smell of cigarettes or breath mints)
Light briefcase or portfolio binder (Women - no purses, if possible)
- No more than one ring on each hand
- No visible body piercing except for ear-rings

Women

- Suit or Skirt with long-sleeve blouse Stockings - beige/taupe - No runs!
- No dresses, unless you can wear a jacket accessory
- Low heels or nice flats
- Minimal make-up
- Only one set of earrings (No dangling hoops)

Men

- Conservative suit and tie
- Dark socks
- Preferably No Beards
- No "2-day" beards
- Well-trimmed moustaches/beards
- No earrings