Interview Tips

You have just landed an interview for a seemingly wonderful job, now what? Successful interviewing is an essential step in the hiring process. An interview gives you the opportunity to showcase your qualifications to an employer, so it pays to be well prepared.

The Logistics

1. Dress professionally.
2. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early.
3. Know where you are going, directions and where to park.
4. Have a phone number you can call *just in case* you may be late.

The Interview Prep

1. Study the company's website and understand what they do.
2. Review the job description and think of examples in your career where you have the specific experience, skills or knowledge the employer is looking for.
3. Prepare a couple of good questions you can ask the interviewer concerning the job duties, company culture, growth prospects for the company, etc. (DO NOT ask questions about compensation or benefits on the first interview.)

The Interview

1. The interview may start with a member of Human Resources. This part of the process may include paperwork to complete, an overview of the company, culture, benefits, etc. Some opportunities are lost at this stage, particularly if the candidate does not seem interested in what Human Resources is saying or impatient and wanting to get on to the interview with the hiring authority.

2. When you meet with the hiring authority, give a strong first impression (firm handshake, look them in the eye and speak confidently). The first impression can set the tone for the whole interview. Be sure to ask for their business card. Sometimes we hear from a client after the interview the following: "She's very qualified but she really didn't seem all that interested in the position." A comment like that reinforces the importance of perception and first impression. Showing enthusiasm and energy at an interview is very important.

3. Here is an example of a great way for you to start your interview. *"Thank you for taking time to meet with me today. I am somewhat familiar with ABC Company and your great reputation. I've reviewed your website and am impressed with the new xxxx you plan to introduce later this year. Can you tell me a little more about the company and the skills, experience and knowledge*

you are looking for in someone to do the job I am interviewing for?" This will give you some relevant points to discuss concerning your background.

4. When answering questions, be as specific as possible and give examples from your past experience. Be careful not to give one word answers or ramble on and on. Maintain good eye contact during the interview. Be yourself and relax!

5. At the end of the interview be sure to tell the client you are very interested in the opportunity. Here is an example of how you might convey your interest: *"Mr. Jones, I want to thank you for taking time to meet with me today. I want you to know that I am very interested and excited about this opportunity. In your opinion do my skills and experience meet the requirements that you are looking for?"* If Mr. Jones answers "Yes", ask what the next step is in the process. When exiting, leave with a strong last impression (firm handshake, look them in the eye and speak confidently).

6. Some Do's and Don'ts for the interview:
    - Do be yourself.
    - Do have a positive attitude.
    - Don't mention a "bad" boss or a "bad" previous employer.
    - Don't over explain a layoff. If you were laid off from your last job, think of a succinct way to explain why you left your last job. For example: *"Unfortunately business slowed significantly and my employer was forced to make some layoffs. I made it through two rounds of layoffs. I have an excellent reference from my Manager at XYZ Company."*
    - Do know your resume. Know each and every bullet point and be prepared to give specific detailed examples. You do not want to refer to your resume to talk about what you do every day — be comfortable with everything you've written on your resume. Be able to explain why you are leaving your current position.
    - Do not act desperate for the job. Even if you have been on the job market for some time, most hiring managers don't want someone who is too eager or desperate.
    - Don't get too comfortable. Remain professional and on guard.
    - Do email or drop off a thank you note within 24 hours of the interview.

7. Typical general interview questions include:
    - Why did you choose this particular role? What do you really hope to gain or learn in your next career move?
    - Why would you like to work for our organization?
    - What interests you about our products or services?
    - What would your previous employer say about you? Do you think they would recommend you for this position? Why?
    - What do you want to be doing in you career five years from now? Why?
    - What style of management do you work best with?

- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held? Which did you enjoy most? Why?
- What have you done that shows initiative in your career?
- What is your major weakness? What have you done about it?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company? What does "teamwork" mean to you?

8. Typical situational interview questions include:
    - Tell me about a time where you had a confrontation with a boss or co-worker.
    - Tell me about a time when you were working under a serious time deadline.
    - Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something that you didn't know how to do.
    - Tell me about a recent project you worked on that was an independent project where you had to handle it on your own.
    - Tell me about something you had to work on recently that you found difficult.
    - Tell me about a recent event that you planned (work/social).

    For each situational question, answer with the STAR format:
    S: Describe a specific **situation** that applies to the question – do not generalize.

    T: Describe the **task** at hand, again, do not generalize – be specific.

    A: Describe the **actions** you took to resolve the situation and/or complete the task.

    R: Describe the final **result** of the situation – and MAKE SURE it is a POSITIVE result!

Post Interview

1. Call your Recruiter with feedback A.S.A.P. When clients follow up with Strategic Talent, they will typically ask what the candidate thought. If we have not heard from the candidate, the client may take that as lack of interest on the candidate's part.

2. Send an email or drop off a hand written note to all the individuals you interviewed with. Make each note or email personal as interviewers sometimes share notes and it diminishes the value of the thank you if everyone gets the same note.

Interviewing can be a stressful situation, but we challenge you to relax, be yourself and have fun. Most people do not think that interviewing is fun, but think of it this way… an interview is one of the few times where you get to talk about yourself when the other person *actually wants* to listen.