

Essential Interview Tips for Candidates

Everyone thinks they know how to interview. We've all done it a million times. In 20+ years as a recruiter, I've found out, sometimes the hard way, that the people who think they know the most are usually wrong. Here's some straight talk about interviewing as a candidate:

- Undeniable truth – The job goes to the person who interviews the best, especially when candidates have similar qualifications.
- The interview starts when the participants first lay eyes on each other – even from across a crowded room. First impressions last.
- Contrary to accepted opinion, an interview is a meeting of equals. The company has a need and wants to find out if you're the right person to satisfy it. You want to find out if your skills & knowledge are a good fit for them and if their culture & opportunity are a good fit for you. The conventional wisdom is that the company has the upper hand because they have the job & you want it. Part of your job is to show them why you're the right solution to their problem and that they should want you.
- You're being evaluated on two levels. One is as a person. Do they like you, respect you and see you as a member of their team? Second is as a professional. Do you have the skills they need to get the job done? They will recognize that the way you deal with them in an interview is the way you'll deal with their customers & other employees.
- IMNSHO (In my not so humble opinion) an interview is just another form of a sales call. In a sales call you need to Qualify, Sell & Close.
 - **Qualify.** This is a very important part of the interview. It's here that you learn, in the company's own words what they want and what they want to accomplish. Until you understand those basics, you can't decide which of your skills is most applicable to their problem, nor can you decide on your level of interest in the position. Remember, job descriptions & internet postings don't tell the whole story and what a recruiter told you may turn out to be wrong. Get the information for yourself. Remember that different interviewers can have different perceptions of what the job entails. Qualify each interviewer as an individual. Don't assume that one is speaking for all.
 - **Sell.** Once you thoroughly understand the position and what the company wants to accomplish you can match your skills & experiences to their needs. Whenever possible, use the **SAR** (Situation, Action, Result) to describe your experiences.
 - **Close.** This is where sooooo many candidates blow the interview. This is especially true with sales candidates. They fail to close effectively. They quite often make a statement - "I'm very interested in the opportunity" without ever asking for their next step in the process. Remember the axiom – If you can't close, you can't sell. You need to ask for the next step or some other question to see if they're buying what you're selling.
- When should you talk about money? Certainly not in the first interview. If they ask you what you want, demur. Describe your current compensation and tell them you'd expect a fair offer.
- Send an email to each interviewer thanking them for their time and restating your interest in the position.

– Mark Bielecki