



# CORPORATE RESOURCES

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PROFESSIONAL SEARCH & RECRUITING

## - INTERVIEW INFORMATION -

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## **CORPORATE RESOURCES**

### **INTERVIEW INFORMATION**

The purpose of this packet is to familiarize you with some general, but critical, tips regarding interviewing.

**The SIX AREAS covered are:**

- **GENERAL INTERVIEWING INFORMATION**
- **ASKING QUESTIONS**
- **ANSWERING QUESTIONS**
- **CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**
- **PHONE INTERVIEWS**
- **RESIGNATION AND COUNTEROFFERS**

Please contact your Corporate Resources recruiter if you have any questions regarding this packet.



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## GENERAL INTERVIEWING INFORMATION

- I. The purpose of an interview is to exchange information between yourself and the company. There are two important aspects to the interview. The first is to ensure that the company fully understands your technical and personal attributes. The second is to make sure you get the information you need to make a logical decision as to whether or not this is a position and company you are interested in.
- II. One of the most common mistakes made is not showing enough ENTHUSIASM. IE: going into the interview looking for the company to “show you what they've got”. Your goal throughout the interview process is to obtain an offer. At that point, you can start negotiating and asking questions.
- III. Dress in conservative business attire. You want them focused on you, not your clothes.
- IV. Remember, you are being interviewed as soon as you arrive.
- V. Always fully complete any application forms, even if the information is also on your resume. Ask your recruiter if you will be asked to fill out an application. If so, be prepared with names, addresses, phone numbers of prior companies, references, etc. If salary requirements are requested, write, “open”. When asked your reason for leaving your current and previous positions, write, “will discuss in interview”, unless you feel they are relatively straightforward.

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## ASKING QUESTIONS

- I. Prepare a list of questions to ask.
- II. These questions serve two purposes. The first is to obtain information with which you can make a logical decision. Questions also tell the interviewer about you; how prepared are you, have you thought about the positions and the company, what is important to you. Questions can also give you information about what the interviewer is looking for so you can effectively present your background.
- III. Questions should be open ended and pertain to the company and position. Keep your questions positive. NEVER ask questions about benefits, vacation, money or other "me" questions, even if you are on your second or third interview. These questions should be addressed during the offer process only. Normally, it is best to have your recruiter handle these questions.
- IV. Following are examples of some good questions to ask.
  1. *I understand your sales volume was x million last year and x million this year – to what do you attribute this growth?*
  2. *Describe your plans for the specific department over the next couple years. What projects are up coming? What would I be involved in?*
  3. *What type of work/projects would I be responsible for in the first six months? The first year? After that?*
  4. *If I started Monday, where would I get involved initially?*
  5. *What are the priorities of this position?*
  6. *Describe the structure of the department and where I would fit in.*
  7. *To whom does this position report?*
  8. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of working here and with this particular position?*
  9. *How long have you been with XYZ Company? What do you like the most about this company? What do you like the least?*

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10. Define for me the specific problems/hurdles that need to be overcome by the candidate who accepts this position?
11. What are the company's plans to improve its position in the market? New product lines?
12. How will my progress be evaluated?
13. What are the three most important things you would need me to accomplish in the first six months to one year?
14. After I prove my capability and potential here, what are my opportunities for growth?
15. Why did you join this organization?
16. How has your career progressed?
17. What is your style and philosophy of management? What style and philosophy is prevalent in management?
18. What would a typical day involve? A typical week?
19. What kind of individual are you looking for? Personality? Work experience?
20. What type of background did the last person have who held this job?
21. Why is this position open?
22. How do my background and qualifications compare to other candidates that you have considered for this position?
23. Based on my background and skills, what might my biggest difficulty be?

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## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- I. Answer questions in complete answers with examples, not “yes” or “no”. Be specific and organized with your answers; remember they are looking for communication skills. Do not worry about pausing if you need time to collect your thoughts before answering. Pausing is actually a good tool to use to emphasize your answers and show you are listening to the question.
- II. Never answer technical questions with a judgment call such as “I can do that with my eyes closed” or “I am light in that area.” This tells them nothing but your opinion of yourself. Let them decide if your experience is right for the job. Answer by saying “Yes, I have done that, here are some examples...” If this is an area that is new to you, let them know you are interested in the area and are a quick learner.
- III. If you are not sure about the question, feed it back in your own words, for example: “So, what you are asking is...” You can also ask for feedback, for example: “Did that answer your question?” or “Do you need more information?” Remember, these people are, for the most part, not professional interviewers. You need to take some responsibility to ensure they get the information they need.
- IV. Anytime you get the chance, relate what you have done to the position. Do not take for granted that they know anything about you or have even read your resume. Sell yourself.
- V. Attached are some examples of common questions asked in interviews and suggestions on how to answer them.
  1. **Why are you looking to leave your present position?**

Be as positive as possible. Avoid negative comments about your present or former company, boss or coworkers. Stress the things you have learned or what has been good, but let them know it is time to move on. Be brief.
  2. **What are your short-range goals?**

Your short-range goal is to find an opportunity to take the skills you have learned and build upon them in a new situation.
  3. **What are your long-range goals?**

Stress staying with the company, learning their business, having the opportunity to apply your skills and be an asset to the company. As a result of having proven yourself, you are sure you will be given additional responsibilities, not only in your technical area but also in the supervisory/management area as well.

4. **Where do you see yourself in five years?**

You don't know their company well enough to say exactly where you would see yourself in five years, but you do know that given the opportunity to work with them, you will work very hard to prove yourself and as a result, be given additional responsibilities.

5. **What are your monetary requirements?**

"Money is important and like anyone else, I would like as much as possible. However, at this time, I am really looking for the opportunity to (short-range goals) and would be interested in discussing salary later, once we have determined this is a good fit for myself as well as for the company." If they do pinpoint you for some idea of salary, give them a range as opposed to a number. Make it a generic range (low to mid 30s); again stressing opportunity is most important.

6. **Why do you want to work for us?**

I feel that with my experience, I could be an asset to you almost immediately. From what I have heard about your company, you seem to be able to offer me the type of opportunities I am looking for (short and long range goals).

7. **What do you know about our company?**

Hopefully, you have done your homework and know quite a bit about the company. They want to see that you are prepared to talk about what you learned. Research at the library or on the Internet is always helpful when interviewing with a company.

8. **What types of positions/companies are you considering?**

They are looking for consistency. In other words, this is not the time to bring up your interviews for positions that would represent a change in your career path.

9. **What have been the three biggest accomplishments in your career so far?**

Make sure they are really accomplishments (not job responsibilities). What they are really saying is "Give me three reasons why I should hire you over anyone else I am interviewing." Try to relate as closely to the job as possible. Maybe this accomplishment would be something no one else could or would do. Maybe something you finished prior to the deadline. Maybe something no one in the company has ever tried or wanted to do before.

10. **Name three weaknesses.**

Name weaknesses they already know by looking at your resume. For example, "I don't have a degree" or "I don't have experience in this industry." Then, let them know what you are going to do to correct it or what other experience you have that compensates.

**11. Name three strengths.**

You should name strengths that relate to the job. Be prepared to give examples.

**12. Tell me about yourself.**

- A. Education (30 – 60 seconds) – give school, graduation date, degree, GPA – if high. If you financed most of your education, mention this. If you have any certifications, mention them here.
- B. Work experience (approximately three minutes) – give company names, titles, dates, duties and reasons for leaving. If possible, relate anything you have done in any of these jobs to the job you are interviewing for. Your reason for leaving your most recent job should flow into your short-range goals.
- C. Strengths and accomplishments (three minutes) – refer to question #9.
- D. Personal (15 – 30 seconds) – just to satisfy those who say “I asked them to tell me about themselves and all they did was recite their resume”. That is what 99% want. Make it brief. If you feel they have any type of concern, it may be appropriate to discuss it here. This is a chance to give of yourself – what do you enjoy doing in your spare time? How many kids do you have? Do you coach soccer? Are you a runner?
- E. Is there anything else about me you would like to know?

These are **additional questions** that are more situational in nature that you may want to be prepared for:

- *How did you get where you are today?*
- *What are you looking for?*
- *What do you like about your current company/position?*
- *Why do you want to leave your present company/position?*
- *What do you like to do in your spare time?*
- *What is your favorite book and why?*
- *How comfortable are you supervising people?*
- *What do you know about our company/position?*
- *Give me an example of a situation where you had to be decisive.*
- *What duties on your current job do you enjoy the most?*
- *What is your vision of your short-term future? (Not personal)*
- *What are the three most important aspects of a job? (Growth and opportunity and what growth and opportunity are to you – not personal)*
- *Give me an example of where you did more than was required. (Should be something special you did, not something you always do or is part of your job duties.)*

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## CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

**A.** Close the interview with the following six steps:

1. Thank them for their time.
2. Ask if they have any other questions or if there is any additional information they need.
3. Reiterate that you are interested in the company and the position.
4. Briefly reemphasize why you are qualified for the position.
5. Ask one of the following "closing questions":
  - *Do you see any reason why I couldn't do this job?*
  - *How do you see my fitting into this position?*
  - *Am I the type of person you are looking for?*
6. After talking with me, is there anything you have a question about, or any areas I need to expand upon?

**B.** You should definitely send a follow-up letter or follow-up email. Make sure to get a business card from each person you interview with so you have the correct spelling of their name and their title. If you are sending a letter, it should be typed in letter format on professional paper. If possible, send the letter the same day or the next day. The following are general guidelines:

*First paragraph:* Thank you

*Second paragraph:* Briefly reemphasize why you are qualified for the job.

*Third paragraph:* Ask for the job or that you are looking forward to the next step.

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## PHONE INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Phone interviews are frequently a first step in the interview process. In these times of corporate frugality and ever changing plane fares, companies often opt for an initial phone interview for screening of potential candidates. These phone conversations are in most cases your first contact with the company. Do not disregard the importance of this first impression.

Here are a few useful hints to help you through the process:

- Work with your recruiter to set up either a specific time or "window of time" for the call. This will allow you to be fully prepared and avoid situations where you are unable to conduct an effective interview.
- Make sure your phone (especially if you are on an extension) is audible or in good working order. Avoid portable and cellular phones.
- If you own an answering machine, make sure your recording is both courteous and professional.
- Make sure family members know how to answer the phone and take messages in your absence; reinforce how important their cooperation is to your search success.
- Rid your surroundings of any potential distractions: i.e.: radio, television, computer, background conversations, children, etc.
- If you have the "call-waiting" feature on your phone, do not, under any circumstances, interrupt your conversation to answer a call. Should a call come through and there is a distinctive break in the conversation, either ignore it or make light of the situation.
- Stand up while speaking. Your voice projects better and you will be more alert.
- Talk directly into the mouthpiece. If you have a bad connection and/or have difficulty hearing the other party, either have the person call back, adjust the phone or ask them to speak louder.
- Be fully prepared with your notes with regard to 1) the company, 2) the position and 3) yourself (your resume). You then are able to come across as an organized and articulate interviewee. Have questions prepared to ask and take notes about the content of your conversation.

Again, do not take this step in the interview process lightly. This is a great opportunity to sell yourself and to find out more about the position.

Last, but certainly not least, the phone interview is the opportune time to set up your face-to-face meeting. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR THE APPOINTMENT!!** Have your calendar at hand so you may suggest dates that would be convenient to interview.

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## RESIGNATION AND COUNTEROFFERS

Once you have formally accepted an offer of employment, the next step is **resignation**. Serving notice can be a difficult thing to do, especially if you have formed strong bonds with your fellow workers. However, remember you have made a business decision and your posture should reflect this. Be prepared for a variety of emotional responses from your manager and/or a brief meeting. A manager stunned by this type of information will usually buy time to regroup and formulate a strategy.

**It is important not to burn any bridges at this stage.** Be brief. You have no commitment to tell your manager where you are going or what your offer is. Always present your letter of resignation when you are serving notice. Counteroffers generally lead to heartache for everyone involved. **It is best to preclude any chance of a counteroffer up front as this situation can quickly become stressful and awkward.** Let them know that your resignation is the logical conclusion of an orderly thought process and you are not serving notice in order to bargain.

**Standard notice** by common practice in the United States dictates that all professional employees provide two weeks notice to their current employer. Remember, your current employer has nothing to lose by extending your notice. It allows them time to search for your replacement or induce you. Your loyalty needs to be with your new employer.

**Exit interviews** are standard practice in many companies. Stay professional and be brief. In short, do not say anything you would not want in your personnel file or to be considered when someone is giving you a reference in the future.

**Counteroffers** have become much more prevalent in recent years. Counteroffers are defined as any inducement, implied or concrete, from a current employer aimed at convincing you to stay. It is important to note that counteroffers take many forms and often do not involve money. Following are some common forms of counteroffers:

- Promises of change in the future. "If you could just wait six more months, there are going to be a lot of changes made."
- Promises of promotions in the works or modified reporting structure.
- Promoting feelings of guilt. It is not uncommon for the company to have the VP of your department take you to lunch to let you know how important you are to them.
- Making disparaging remarks about the new company or job.

The key reason counteroffers work is because people believe they are countered because they are exceptional employees and they now feel more secure with the company ("If they will do this to get me to stay, they obviously will never lay me off or pass me over for promotion."). This, however, is not reality. Regardless of how exceptional an employee you are, counteroffers are made because management uses them as a tool in these situations. It

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enables the manager to replace you or make the transition on his or her own timetable. Remember what is going on in the manager's mind when you are resigning ("This is one of my best people." "This will wreak havoc on the department." "I don't need another person's job to do." "My review is coming up." "This will look bad."). Anyone who resigns and then is retained by a counteroffer is always considered a security risk. In other words, it may sound good in the president's office, but working for the same people in this situation is, at the very least, never as comfortable as it was before.

It is important at this point to remind yourself of your original reasons for leaving. Chances are they still exist and will not disappear regardless of your employer's promises. Statistics show that the majority of people who accept counteroffers leave within the next six months anyway. Managers know counteroffers are risky at best, yet some are still willing to give in.

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