

# VANDERHOEWEN & ASSOCIATES, INC.

*Matching People and Talent to Technology*

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

Interviewing is a skill. So is being interviewed. You may meet interviewers who have developed their skills to perfection and others who are fumbling. Either way, you will benefit most if you are prepared.

Preparation is the key. Know your skills, areas of expertise and qualities, and be prepared to sell them. The responsibility for making each interview successful is largely yours.

### Before the Interview

- Do your research. Visit the website and review the company's products, services, press releases and management team.
- Make a list of questions to take with you to the interview.
- Request that the company provide a list of the interviewers' names and titles prior to the interview.
- Dress professionally. You only have one chance to make a first impression. Make it a good one! Your safest bet is to dress conservatively.
- Review your presentation and rehearse. Consider yourself a sales person. Your product is you, your skills, personality and experience.
- Go prepared. Get accurate directions to the interview site. Get the name, title and phone number of the person that will do the interview and make sure you know who to ask for when you arrive. Take two copies of your resume, a pen and a notepad with you.
- Be on time! Allow extra time to reach your destination and arrive ten minutes early. Use the extra time to relax and review your best skills and examples of accomplishments you want to talk about.
- Groom yourself in private before the interview.
- Relax and smile. When you leave your car, put yourself in a positive state of mind. Be friendly to everyone. Oftentimes the interviewer will ask the receptionist about your attitude and behavior.

### The Interview

- Greet the employer with your name and a firm handshake.
- If the interviewer looks busy, ask them if they need extra time before the interview starts.
- You may be interviewed by more than one person. Go with the flow. Things change, don't let surprises upset you.
- What you say will be successful in direct proportion to how well it matches what the interviewer wants to hear. Listening is your best way of determining the company's interests and needs.
- Ask the interviewer if you have answered their questions.
- If you do not understand a question or if a question is vague, ask a clarifying question.

Example:

*Interviewer: "What type of environment do you work best in?"*

*Interviewee: "Are you referring to technical environment or cultural environment?"*

Often, the interviewer is trying to gauge your level of assertiveness.

- At the closing of the interview, ask for the interviewers' business cards.

### What Do Interviewers Look For?

- Professional presentation skills, both verbal and written
- Eye contact
- Good listening skills
- Adaptability/flexibility
- Enthusiasm
- Self-confidence
- Sense of humor
- Conscientiousness

- Optimism
- Alertness
- Sincerity
- Decisiveness
- Persuasiveness
- Thoughtfulness
- Analytical capability

### **What's Appropriate for the Interview?**

- Discuss employer expectations and job responsibilities.
- Focus on the company's needs.
- Ask questions.
- Listen carefully. Be sure you understand the question before you answer.
- If asked when you can start, ask when they need you. Duration of the project.
- Stress how your qualifications meet their needs.
- Be honest.
- Be concise. Stick to the point.
- Be aware of your body language. Don't slouch. Lead forward.
- Try to find some common interest.
- Be relaxed.
- Smile, laugh, frown and nod. Look interested. Be human!

If the job requirements don't exactly match your skills, find some commonality with a skill you do have. Admit what you do not know, but put a positive spin on it by giving examples of how you would research the appropriate information.

### **Typical Mistakes**

- Smoking, eating and swearing.
- Too much cologne/perfume. It is best not to use either prior to an interview.
- Discussing money.
- Discussing your personal life.
- Interrupting.
- Offering unsolicited negative facts.
- Bad-mouthing previous/current employer(s) and/or colleagues.
- Giving one-word answers or going overboard with your explanation.
- Making up answers. It is better to admit when you do not know something or if you have no experience in a particular area. Let the interviewer know how you would go about finding the information.
- Asking for a permanent job if that's not what you're there for.
- Getting flustered if you have to repeat your answers to multiple interviewers.
- Discussing flex hours and working at home.
- Discussing administrative details such as desk, contract, passwords and mileage.
- Failure to prepare fully or the inability to describe skills and abilities concisely.
- Making sweeping generalizations with no evidence.
- Lack of enthusiasm or interest in the company.
- Making disparaging remarks about a previous boss or employer.
- Being overly serious, formal, cold, distant or content orientated.
- Evasiveness, hedging and making excuses.
- Failure to attend to personal chemistry with the interviewer.
- Emphasizing personal needs rather than communicating value to the employer.

### **Closing**

- Make sure the interviewer has all the information needed from you.
- Make sure you have all the information you need from the interviewer.
- If you want the job, tell the employer!
- Make notes soon after the interview and include points covered, comments which sparked interest, concerns and strengths to be re-emphasized.
- Follow up with a thank you note or email.
- Be patient.

### **Sample Questions**

- Is there any research I could do before I start that could help me get up-to-speed faster?
- What is most important to you in the person filling this position?
- Is this a new position or a backfill? If it is a backfill, what has or has not made previous employees/consultants successful.
- Who will I be working with? Can you tell me about the team?
- Do you feel based on our conversation that I would be a fit for this position?