

Interview Prep

Fundamentals of a Successful Interview

To a large degree, the success of your interview will depend on your ability to discover needs and empathize with the interviewer. You can do this by asking questions that verify your understanding of what the interviewer has just told you, without editorializing, or expressing an opinion. By establishing empathy in this manner, you'll be in a better position to freely exchange ideas, and demonstrate your suitability for the job.

In addition to establishing empathy, there are four intangible fundamentals to a successful interview. These intangibles will influence the way your personality is perceived, and will affect the degree of rapport, or personal chemistry you'll share with the employer.

1. **Enthusiasm.** Leave no doubt as to your level of interest in the job. You may think it's unnecessary to do this, but employers often choose the more enthusiastic candidate in the case of a two-way tie. Besides, it's best to keep your options open -- wouldn't you rather be in a position to turn down an offer, than have a prospective job evaporate from your grasp by giving a lethargic interview?
2. **Technical interest.** Employers look for people who love what they do; people who get excited by the prospect of tearing into the nitty-gritty of the job.
3. **Confidence.** No one likes a braggart, but the candidate who's sure of his or her abilities will almost certainly be more favorably received.
4. **Intensity.** The last thing you want to do is come across as "flat" in your interview. There's nothing inherently wrong with being a laid-back person; but sleepwalkers rarely get hired.

Both for your sake and the employer's try not to leave an interview without exchanging fundamental information. The more you know about each other, the more potential you'll have for establishing rapport, and making an informed decision.

The Short and Long of It

There are two ways to answer interview questions: the short version and the long version. When a question is open-ended, I always suggest to candidates that they say, "Let me give you the short version. If we need to explore some aspect of my answer more fully, I'd be happy to go into greater depth, and give you the long version."

The reason you should respond this way is because it's often difficult to know what type of answer each question will need. A question like, "What was your most difficult assignment?" might take anywhere from thirty seconds to thirty minutes to answer, depending on the detail you choose to give.

Therefore, you must always remember that the interviewer is the one who asked the question. So you should tailor your answer to what he or she needs to know, without a lot of extraneous rambling or superfluous explanation. Why waste time and create a negative impression by giving a sermon when a short prayer would do just fine?

This article was brought to you by Trenton Beriont and the Renascent Group executive search group.