Now that you have spent weeks or even months working on your job searching skills, networking with employers, and sending out résumés, your hard work has finally paid off with an interview. The interview process will allow not only the employer to evaluate you, but also you to evaluate the employer. Interviews are a great opportunity to determine if you will fit within a particular organization and will be an excellent opportunity to learn more about how your skills and abilities can be utilized in a professional setting.

Many job seekers mistakenly think the interview begins when you step foot into the company on the day of the interview. In reality, the interview began the second you were contacted by the employer and invited for an interview.

Your communication, organization, and preparation skills will determine the success of the interview from beginning to end and even beyond. Perhaps the most important element to remember is to be yourself!
**Interview Preparation**

**Research the Company**

Learn as much as you can about the company and the position. This provides a basic understanding of who the company is, services and/or products they provide, dress code, culture, and any other points of interest.

Much of this information can be found by researching the company’s website, networking with contacts within the company, and researching employer databases such as Hoovers.com or Vault.com.

**Know the Job Description**

It is important to have a complete job description prior to the interview in order to understand the full spectrum of duties and responsibilities. If you are unable to obtain a complete job description prior to the interview, research the occupation using the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) or Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), both of which are available online.

**Practice Your Interview**

Conduct practice interviews with the CSO staff, friends, family members or even yourself. Practicing the interview beforehand will allow you the opportunity to pinpoint areas in need of improvement such as communication, posture, dress code, etc.

**Prepare for Questions**

Evaluating and thoroughly understanding your interests, skills, and abilities as they relate to the position will help you answer questions. Although you want to be prepared with answers to possible questions, you want to be genuine and sincere in your answers. It is best to have a general idea of the types of questions anticipated and be able to communicate your answers concisely, while allowing yourself freedom to change gears if asked a question you did not expect. The next page has a list of possible questions you may answer and questions you may want to ask.
Questions Employers May Ask You

- Tell me about yourself.
- What attracted you to this position?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your short- and long-term goals?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?
- Describe your most rewarding accomplishment.
- What qualifications do you have that you think will make you successful in this position?
- Why are you interested in working for our company or organization?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Why should I hire you?

In addition to answering questions, be prepared to ask questions. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your interest and knowledge of the business as well as garner information from the interviewer. Below is a list of possible questions you may want to ask.

Questions You May Ask Employers

- What skills and abilities would you look for in the ideal person to fill this position?
- What are the major responsibilities of this position?
- How would you describe a typical day in this job?
- How does one advance in the organization?
- What is the greatest challenge your organization faces or will face within the next year?
- What are the challenging facets of this position?
- What will be expected of me as a new employee?
- Why do you enjoy working for this company or organization?
- If I am extended an offer, how soon would you like me to start?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- May I have your business card?
Legal and Illegal Questions

In addition to anticipating what questions they may ask, you should be aware of legal and illegal questions.

Legal Questions

• Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?
• Are you over the age of 18?
• Will you be willing to relocate if necessary?
• Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job?
• Have you ever been convicted of ____ (with relevance to the job)?
• In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?

Illegal Questions

• Are you an U.S. Citizen?
• How old are you?
• Are you married/ have kids/ plan on moving?
• Do you have any disabilities?
• Have you ever been arrested?
• Were you honorably discharged from the military?

Prepare an Interview Package

It is always best to be well-prepared and make a checklist of items you will need to bring with you when you attend an interview. Your list might include:

- Extra copies of your résumé
- Copies of your references
- Portfolio of work samples, if requested or needed
- List of skills and abilities for your own reference
- Complete job description
- Names of interviewers
- Paper and pen to take notes
- Breath mints (no gum!)
- Maps and directions, flight or hotel accommodations (if needed)
- Briefcase or portfolio to hold items
DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Dress the Part

You will need to identify proper interview attire including outfit, accessories, and overall appearance prior to the interview. If you are concerned about what this may entail for a particular employer, be sure to contact them and simply ask. Here are some guidelines for men and women:

**Men and Women**

- Neatly trimmed, well groomed hair
- Modest jewelry and accessories
  (no visible, eccentric piercings or tattoos!)
- Polished shoes
- No missing buttons, crooked ties/scarves, lint or loose threads
- Crisp and clean clothing (dry cleaning interview attire is best)
- Portfolio or briefcase instead of a bulky purse or backpack

**Women**

- Solid black, gray or navy blue suit with a knee length skirt or dress slacks
- Tailored blouse
- Pumps or dress shoes
- Stockings without runs
- Use makeup conservatively
- No perfume

**Men**

- Solid black, gray or navy blue two piece suit
- Solid color and collared shirt
- Simple and elegant tie
- Dress shoes with dark socks high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs
- No cologne

---

If you take the time to prepare an interview package or file, be sure to actually bring it! Make sure you have all your items in the package and keep it near the door or in your car, so you will not forget it. You will appear to be and feel much more confident about yourself.

---

**Punctuality**

Before the interview, know where you are going and arrive 15-20 minutes before the interview. This will allow you time to get adjusted and prepare for the interview while indicating to the employer your commitment and promptness. Do not arrive late or miss an interview. If you cannot avoid being late for your interview (e.g. involved in a traffic accident), call ahead and indicate so. Although employers do not look favorably upon tardy interviewees, they will appreciate your consideration in calling.

**Relax Before the Interview**

If you are like most job seekers, you may have some anxiety and nervousness associated with interviewing, which is normal. Practicing some relaxation techniques may help relieve some of your nervousness.
**During the Interview**

**Greet and Shake Hands**

It is common in American business culture to shake hands with those you first meet. It is seen as a sign of respect. Also, making physical contact with an individual will have a much greater positive impact on their impression of you, if handled properly. The general rule for shaking hands is for the receiver of the handshake to adjust his or her grip depending on the individual who initiates the handshake. Before shaking hands, be sure your hands are clean and not sweating, clammy or cold because this may come across as unfavorable.

**Atmosphere and Culture**

Do the people seem happy? Are they helpful? Are they enthusiastic about their work? Do you feel welcome? Do you like the people? Does this seem like a good place to work?

Nonverbal cues are any gestures or ways in which we communicate without using words. These can include but are not limited to body posture, facial expressions, gesturing of hands and eye contact. Nonverbal cues help us in evaluating situations and determining our effect on others.

**Salary Negotiations**

Salary negotiations take place only after you have received a job offer.

**Before You Leave**

Ask when a hiring decision will be made about the position. This will give you an approximate date by which you can expect to receive a telephone call or e-mail regarding the hiring status.

Get business cards from all the interviewers. The business cards you collect will come in handy later when writing thank you notes or e-mails and when following up after the interview. In addition, the business cards should be kept in a network file for later use.
**Interview Skills**

**After the Interview**

**Thank You Note**

Be sure to follow up with a thank you note or e-mail. It is a rarity for employers to be thanked for their time. A thank you note not only shows your gratitude for the interview, but also may help you stand out from other candidates.

A handwritten note may be the thing that sets you apart from the other candidates. This will only be the case if your handwriting is legible. Otherwise the e-mail may be the better option.

**Job Search Status**

June 28, 2013

Dear Ms. Sheffer:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning. I enjoyed meeting you and Ms. Metzger.

My enthusiasm for IU South Bend has been strengthened by our talk. I am energized by the opportunity to leverage my skills and past successes for the benefit of IU South Bend. Please be assured of my strong interest in the position and in working with you and Ms. Metzger. Feel free to contact me at 574-520-4425 or sbcareer@iusb.edu if I can provide you with any additional information. Thank you again. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Marie Geico

Follow up with the interviewer within one to two weeks after the interview. If the employer has given you a deadline for making a hiring decision, do not be afraid to contact them by either telephone or e-mail if you do not hear by that date. This will allow you to determine the status of the hiring process and whether or not you have a chance of being offered the position. Depending on the outcome, you can continue to focus your energy on your job search or accepting/rejecting job offers.

If offered the job, be sure to follow up with an acceptance or rejection letter. An acceptance or rejection letter will serve as formal means of concluding the interview process. It is important to objectively weigh the pros and cons of each job offer and make a sound decision based upon your individual needs.