Tips on Interviewing

The current demand for your degree is certainly a large factor in your employment prospects. However, whether or not you land the job you want often depends upon your skill in marketing your potential.

Avoid the Negative:

Jobs are seldom secured during the first few minutes of the interview. You can, however, kill your chance for success during that initial critical period. Here are examples of negative factors to avoid. Each has resulted in rejections during job interviews.

- Lack of planning for career - no purpose or goals - no interest of employer.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive, indifferent.
- Lack of confidence and poise - no eye contact.
- Lack of courtesy - ill mannered.
- Lack of social understanding - radical ideas.
- Lack of knowledge in field of specialization.
- Dress and grooming not compatible with vocational standards.

Accentuate the Positive:

It is the interviewer's responsibility to investigate and evaluate your qualifications and suitability for employment with his/her company. Be positive in your responses to his/her questions.

Questions: Education:

- In what college activities have you participated? Why?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- If you were starting college all over again, what courses would you take?
- Why did you decide to go to this particular school?
- How did you rank in your graduating class in high school? Where will you probably rank in college?
- Have you changed your major field of interest while in college? Why?
- Do you feel you have done the best scholastic work of which you are capable?
- Do you feel that your grades are an accurate reflection of your knowledge and ability?

Questions: Activities:

- How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- What extracurricular offices have you held? What motivated you to seek these offices?
- Do you think your extracurricular activities were worth the time you devoted to them? Why?
- How did you spend your vacations while in school?
Questions: Employment:

- In what type of position are you most interested? Why?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel you will be successful in your field of interest?
- What personal characteristics do you consider necessary for success in your field?
- What are your long-term goals?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others? Why?
- What kind of boss do you prefer?
- What have you learned for jobs you have held?
- What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
- Why do you want to work for our organization/company?

Questions: Personal:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Who are your best friends? Why do you value their friendship?
- Describe your value system.
- What is your major weakness?
- What type of people seems to rub you the wrong way?
- Do you think employers should consider grades? Why? Why not?
- Who or what had the greatest influence on your life?
- Have you ever used or tried liquor? Drugs? To what extent?
- What are your major strengths?

If weaknesses exist in your experience or academic background, don't try to hide them if questioned directly. Mention them in context with, or relate them to, factors of strength. Talk about what you are doing to improve areas of weakness.

Illegal/Inappropriate Questions:

Occasionally, an interviewer may pose personal questions that you consider inappropriate. For example, questions about race, religion, marital status, political affiliation, age, sexual preference, and physical and mental status or condition are generally illegal as grounds for making employment decisions. How you respond to such questions, should they arise, is up to you. Keep in mind, however, that the nature of your response may affect the outcome of your interview.

Career Services and Placement expects employers interviewing on campus to maintain the highest possible ethical and legal standards in their recruiting activities. If you are asked questions that seem inappropriate during a campus interview, please call the SIRC office immediately after the interview. For more information, please see the "Pre-Employment Inquiry Guide" published by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. Since laws vary among states, you may want to check with the Civil Rights Department in the state in which you are looking for employment. Also refer to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990.
Not a One-Way Street:

Don't assume that the interview is, or should be, a one-sided affair. The initiative should remain with the interviewer as s/he tries to gain insight into your character, job aspirations and preparation, and how you might fit into the company in general and the job in particular. However, you should also ask questions. Your questions should be designed to help you evaluate the job and its organizational environment to see whether they match your needs, aspirations, and aptitudes.

Watch for Clues:

Stay alert for clues that you are on the right track and have the interviewer with you. If the person seems interested and relaxed, is following closely and encouraging you with comments, nods, and expressions of interest, you're probably right on. If the interviewer appears puzzled, stop and restate your reply. If s/he obviously has lost interest (starts doing things not related to the interview, such as sorting through papers or looking around), try getting the interviewer back by asking if you covered the point adequately. Maintain eye contact at all times to try to aid in holding interest. Watch for indications that the interviewer has received enough information and is ready to close the interview. S/he will make this evident. Don't try to extend it unless you have an extremely important question to ask. If so, make it brief or you run the risk of overselling yourself and losing the good impression you have made.

Your Objective:

Finally, your objective is to create a job opportunity. Conduct your portion of the interview in this vein. Don't waste precious minutes talking about job security, sick leave, retirement benefits, or salary. If you are successful in the interview you'll have plenty of opportunity to investigate these aspects of the job at a later date.