

Chapter Five: Interviewing

A very close relative of networking is interviewing. Have you noticed how often the best people at networking are also the best at interviewing? I think the reason for this is, that if a person is to be great at either, he or she has strengthened their people skills through practice and study.

Yes, we all have known the “Networking Natural.” He or she is glib. They smile all the time. They slap backs with the best of them. They always have a kind word to say. In a word, they have charisma. Charisma to some degree is a gift but I think in most cases the charisma and networking and interviewing skills are learned. Or should I say earned.

It’s amazing to me that people will spend 4-6 years or more in college but take maybe only one or two classes on the subject of how to interview. I cannot think of any one skill you could invest time in, become great at, and then get a better return on your investment.

Imagine yourself as a ship at sea. All the way of your 40-year career voyage, people and companies make judgments about you. You move up here and there as you bump into accidental rapport with persons and opportunities to advance in your career. Mostly, however, you are adrift, subject to the accidental advancement caused by chance rapport.

I went to the San Francisco Main Library a number of times in writing this book. Six floors, 5 elevators and 376,000 square feet and the entire combined knowledge of man. Pretty mind-boggling, isn’t it? It got me to thinking that if all of the shared knowledge of man is so available, then how come people don’t study something as valuable as interviewing? Maybe people don’t fully comprehend the value of interviewing well. Maybe they don’t get honest feedback on interviews. You see, the feedback you get, when you go on interviews is that they really liked you, but in the end, someone was just a smidge better than you.

Usually that’s not the truth. It’s something you did tactically wrong in the interview. The librarian and I discovered that while there were more than 1000 books with “interview” in the title there were only about 30-40 books on “How to Interview.” Many of the interview books were “An interview with Winston Churchill,” or some other famous person, and not “How to Interview” books.

What if you read 10 of the 30-40 books on “How to Interview” which puts you in the top 1% of job-hunters? Imagine investing the time that others refuse to. You become great at building rapport with people. You do role-play interviews with a friend or relative. You take a Dale Carnegie or Toastmasters or related class. Honing your people skills to the point where you maximize your natural charisma and, more importantly, using your earned stripes to put you in the position of the Master and Commander of the ship of your career. Mastering the interview is one of the most career leveraging moves you can make.

Now, at every turn you are out there commanding the sail, directing your career. In each interaction and opportunity to advance you make a choice. Because you have great

people and interviewing skills, you have charisma. Imagine yourself now as a “Networking Natural.”

I can't really imagine a bigger career payoff than becoming great at networking and interviewing. Will it take some work and self-study? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely YES! Will most people do it? No. Will you do it? My friend, if you will, you are a rare bird indeed. That's why it's so easy to get ahead in life. Most people will be taking a right on “I Give Up Avenue,” just before the “Heights of Success.” I am telling you...it is there...continue, on past I Quit Avenue...past I Give Up, past Procrastination. Make the right turn on “Whatever It Takes” and it will turn into “The Heights of Success.”

Start now to follow the Boy Scout motto, “Be Prepared.” It's much better to get prepared and have no opportunity, than to have an opportunity and not be prepared for it! The average bear will say, “When I am given a chance I will be ready.” Like the stubborn man who sits in front of the fire and says, “Give me heat and THEN I will give you wood.”

You MUST get ready now. Opportunity favors the prepared mind. In any new job your first assignment is to update your resume. Listen, I don't propose you attend the Pogo Stick School of Career Planning, bouncing around from job to job until no one wants to hire you. But, we have studied the Ostrich School of Career Planning for nearly 20 years now. The only thing sure to happen if you attend the Ostrich School of Career Planning is sooner or later someone comes along and kicks you in the butt! I don't think it hurts to go out on an interview every year or two just to see what's out there. Just because you look, you don't have to leap, right?

The CEO of WR Grace runs a two billion-dollar operation like this. He actually encourages his employees to go out into the market to look for better opportunities every few years. He figures if they find something better he can match it or allow them to proceed in their career. He'd rather do that than hold them back. In exchange, he gets the loyalty of someone who knows the boss cares about their best interest. Furthermore, he says when they look around and realize what a good job they have, which happens more often than not, they become much better employees.

The average bear is unable to answer the knock of opportunity because he or she does not have a current resume. I can't tell you how many times I've called someone with a great opportunity but the person didn't have his or her resume ready. By the time they got it together...well, opportunities knock at funny times. Always be ready.

OK, so you got laid off and you need a job. You can't believe you got caught flat-footed but it happens to the best of us. Take a break if you want, then get ready to work. Getting a job is a job. It's a 40-hour a week job, according to Jeffery Allen, author of "How to Turn an Interview into a Job." Allen says you should get up every day and get your suit on. Make it a goal to get at least one face-to-face interview per day. I

recommend reading Allen's book and others while job searching. Here is my recommended reading list during your job search:

Dress for Success, by John T. Malloy

Hire Me! : Secrets of Job Interviewing, by Patricia Noel Drain

Knock 'em Dead, 2001 by Martin Yate

Rites of Passage at \$100,000 to \$1 Million+: Your Insider's Lifetime Guide to Executive Job-Changing and Faster Career Progress in the 21st Century, by John Lucht

How to Turn an Interview into a Job, by Jeffery D. Allen

Someone once said the definition of a consultant is a person too proud to go to the unemployment office and pick up a check. If you are unemployed reading this get yourself signed up for unemployment. Then go to the bookstore and buy several books. If you cannot afford the books, go to the library. Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body and you'll need to be in good shape during your job search.

Get a good interviewing suit. Even if you think the old suit is just fine, it probably isn't.

Master the First Impression

A UCLA study found that when 2 people meet for the first time they make 20 distinctions about each other in the first 20 seconds, then spend the next 20 minutes finding out whether or not they were right! The same study found that a handshake is worth an hour's conversation between two people. **THIS NEXT BIT OF ADVICE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN INTERVIEWING DUE TO THE HUGE JUDGMENTS WE AS HUMANS MAKE ABOUT EACH OTHER IN THE FIRST 20 SECONDS.** To make the right first impression, try this. Pick a seat facing the hallway or door that your interviewer will come from. Watch the door like a hawk. Greet every person that comes out that door with a smile and that famous, "Hi, you must be my interviewer" look. The people who come out first, who are not your interviewer, will think you are either selling something or on something! ;) Doesn't matter what they think; you can explain it to them later, after you get the job. What matters is that when your interviewer emerges, you'll make your look. The interviewer will make the "You must be my interviewee" look, and that will get you off to the right start. **VERY IMPORTANT!!!** Some experts say this first impression is as much as 80%-90% of the interview. This is the way you start a good interview.

First, pay attention to speed. I tell people to gauge this in terms of miles per hour. If your interviewer comes out let's say at 80 miles an hour and you are at 30, you are out. Period! You may as well end the interview right then and there. The same goes the other way if your interview is relaxed at 40 miles per hour and you are at 80 miles per hour.

People like people who are like themselves. The word like offers us two meanings: "**I like you and I am like you**" and that didn't happen by accident. Come out neutral leaning towards high energy. Gear up or gear down to match your interviewer.

Someone asked me, is it OK to stand? Yes. Is it OK to read? No. It's not that you can't read and get the job. It's just that you're not playing the percentages. If you're reading not only do you have to close your book but now you have to shuffle up all your papers and put them away. Plus how can you watch the door like a hawk, your top priority! Can't recommend it; no reading while waiting, even if they have your favorite magazine.

Come in for your handshake at a little bit of an angle to get maximum thumb lock. Ever shake hands with someone who had a bad handshake? Weren't you impressed with them? Seriously, the most successful people have the best handshakes. Practice with a friend or family member 'till you can get a great thumb lock 95% of the time. The little things make all the difference.

Let the interviewer run the show. A lot of people get ruled out because they ask a lot of well thought out questions too early, throwing interviewers out of their rhythm, thus frustrating the interviewer. One of your goals is to get into a conversation. Sometimes you can score more points on your interview by smiling and nodding, smiling and nodding, smiling and nodding. Try less to impress and more to be impressed.

Salary Negotiation

My favorite salary related poem comes from my favorite book, *Think And Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. It goes like this:

I bargained with Life for a penny,
And Life would pay no more,
However I begged at evening,
When I counted my scanty score.
For Life is a just employer,
He gives you what you ask,
But once you have set the wages,
Why, you must bear the task.
I worked for a menial's hire,
Only to learn dismayed,
That any wage I had asked of Life,
Life would have willingly paid.
Anonymous

In salary negotiation, often he who speaks first loses. Try to get the employer to give you the first number. ALWAYS act as if salary is the last thing you are interested in even if it's first. If pressed, give a salary range, not a number.

References

Bring several copies of your references and resumes with you on every interview.

When they ask for references you hand them a sheet. It's a nice touch and shows you are organized. On the sheet are 12-15 references. OK, I'm exaggerating a bit, but better too many than not enough. If you are getting your references checked and not getting an offer, you may have a bad reference. Test your references by having a friend call them and find out what's really being said about you. They don't need to lie; just have your friend say, "My name is ____ ____, I'm with ____ Company, ____ ____ has listed you as a reference. What can you tell me about him?"

Study the company

These are my favorite sites for research. <http://www.yahoo.com>, Yahoo Finance, <http://www.freedgar.com> <http://www.hoovers.com> <http://www.Amcity.com> your local newspaper's website and the website for the company with which you are interviewing.

Your Mental State

Psychologists say it's OK to talk to yourself, even OK to answer yourself, (as long as the answer isn't... HUUUUUUUUUUUH!! ;) Talk to yourself before your interview and see yourself having a good interview and getting the job or the second interview. To capture the proper mental state, you MUST arrive early. Sit in the car and review your best interview ever. Review this many, many times in your mind. Get ready for a winning interview. Each of us has had one great interview in our lives where everything worked. I don't know what interview that is for you but there's one in your history that you will want to find then run back in your mind several times before you go in.

Questions & Answers

Below are some of the most commonly asked Interviewing Questions. Practice answering these with a friend, spouse, mentor or family member. Better you make your mistakes with them, rather than out on the career interview of your life. My Vice President, Dennis Billingsley says, "If you are answering these types of questions for the first time in an interview, you're in trouble." You know the questions you will get. Have your answers ready. Practice answering these questions with your "Interviewer" 'till you like your answers. Writing your answers down will give you better answers and more self-confidence.

Tell me about yourself.

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

Why did you leave your last job?

What are your accomplishments?

Why do you want this job?

Why do you want to leave your current job?

Why do you want to come to work here?

What are your personal and professional goals?

What do you like most about your current job?
What do you like least about your current job?
Where do you see yourself in five years?
Tell me about your favorite boss and what you like about him or her?
How would you describe yourself?
What was the most difficult situation you have faced? How did you react?
How would a close friend describe you?
What are your accomplishments?
Give an example of a time when you took the initiative to work.
Think of a crisis situation where things got out of control. Why did it happen and what was your role?
Have you ever failed?
If you had your life to live over again, what would you do differently?
What are your goals?
Why did you select your college or university?
What college subjects did you enjoy the most and why?
What college subjects did you enjoy the least and why?
What are your hobbies?
How did you like school?
Did you hold any positions of leadership in any organizations?
If you had the chance to repeat your career, what would you do differently?
What past jobs have you held?
What job did you enjoy the most?
Why should I hire you?
If you could meet anyone in history, living or dead, who would you meet and why?
What words best describe you?
What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
What do you know about our company?
Describe your ideal boss.
Give an example of when you have gone the extra mile.
Describe your management style?
Are you willing to relocate?
How do you feel about working overtime?
Have you ever been fired?
Why should we choose you over any other candidate?
What's the most important thing you want me to remember about you, based on this interview?

In addition to practicing answering the above Interviewing Questions you should have 20 written questions to ask on each interview. You may not ask them all but just having them with you will boost your confidence. Remember MOPFI, taught by Dale Carnegie. It stands for: Make Other People Feel Important.

Here's a great interview question using MOPFI. See how many more you can think of and write them down! "You seem like the kind of person who could work anywhere you want.

"Why did you choose to work for this company?"

I know you already know not to ask these, but just to be safe, DO NOT ASK:

What are your benefits?

What's the salary?

Let them ask you.

Thank You

Send a thank you letter after every interview. When you get a job, be a class act, and send an announcement to EVERYONE you talked to during your entire job search. Thank them for their assistance during your search and inform them of where you are going to work. Note: 18 out of 20 people skip this last step so it's an easy way to show the world you are a class act and be in the top 10 percent.

Biggest part of interviewing is your attitude and mental state.

The Man Who Thinks He Can!

*If you think you are beaten, you are,
If you think you dare not, you don't!
If you'd like to win, but think you can't,
It's almost a cinch that you won't.*

*If you think you'll lose, you're lost
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will,
It's all in the state of mind!*

*If you think you're outclassed, you are,
You've got to think high to rise.
You've got to be sure of yourself
Before you can win the prize.*

*Life's battles don't always go
To the strongest or fastest man.
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the man who thinks he can!*

Better to be an hour early than a minute late. Get there early so you have time to get your head right. Ninety-five percent of the first impression is based on what you wear and how you present. Anthony Robbins says style is more important than substance initially.

The problem with wearing the wrong clothes is that most people don't have the courage

to tell ya. So they'll rule you out giving you some other reason. And you won't upgrade your wardrobe, you won't go to the library and you won't get the books. So now I give you permission to take your Visa and charge up all the suits, shirts and ties you want. It's going to come back to you, they are going to think of you as a higher level candidate and they're gonna offer you more money.

Remember employers are looking for confidence and energy. Step confidently with energy to the receptionist's desk and say, "My name is ____ _____, I have an appointment with ____ _____," handing off your business card or your resume.

There are seven career development guides available free at our Website, including an excellent article on how to interview by Bill Radin. Go to www.josephmichaels.com and look for the 7 Free Career Development Guides.

