



## 26 commandments for personal interviews

Rakesh Kumar, Tawanpreet Kaur | March 02, 2005

You have fared well in the written test and the group discussion.

You are just a step away from admission to your dream programme -- the personal interview.

A panel of management experts, a battery of questions. Are you perspiring already?

Well, a personal interview could actually be challenging and fun if you just relax and remain focused. Think of it as a conversation between the interview panel and yourself, so enjoy it thoroughly.

To begin with, there are four main focus areas in any personal interview:

- Personal details
- Academic details
- Your background
- Current affairs
- [Key GD tips, revealed!](#)

### **Commandments for every personal interview**

Even after months of preparation, some candidates do not perform well inside the interview room.

The trick is to follow the below commandments practice them during mock interview sessions diligently. You are sure to crack the personal interview.

1. Whenever the interviewer asks any questions, listen carefully. Do not interrupt him midway. Ask for a clarification if the question is not clear. Wait a second or two before you answer. And don't dive into the answer!
2. Speak clearly. Don't speak very slowly. Be loud enough so that the interviewers don't have to strain their ears.
3. Brevity is the hallmark of a good communicator. An over-talkative or verbose person is disliked and misjudged instantly, so keep it short.
4. If you don't know an answer, be honest. The interviewer will respect your integrity and honesty. Never exaggerate.
5. Never boast about your achievements. Don't be overconfident -- it is often misinterpreted by interviewers for arrogance.
6. Don't get into an argument with the interviewer on any topic. Restrain yourself, please!
7. Remember your manners. Project an air of humility and be polite.

8. Project enthusiasm. The interviewer usually pays more attention if you display enthusiasm in whatever you say.
9. Maintain a cheerful disposition throughout the interview, because a pleasant countenance holds the interviewers' interest.
10. Maintain perfect eye contact with all panel members; make sure you address them all. This shows your self-confidence and honesty.
11. Avoid using slang. It may not be understood and will certainly not be appreciated.
12. Avoid frequent use of words and phrases like, 'I mean'; 'You know'; 'I know'; 'Well'; 'As such'; 'Fine'; 'Basically', etc.
13. When questions are asked in English, reply in English only. Do not use Hindi or any other languages. Avoid using Hindi words like *matlab*, *ki*, *maine*, etc.
14. Feel free to ask questions if necessary. It is quite in order and much appreciated by interviewers.
15. Last but not the least, be natural. Many interviewees adopt a stance that is not their natural self. Interviewers find it amusing when a candidate launches into a new accent that s/he cannot sustain consistently through the interview or adopts a mannerism that is inconsistent with their own personality.

It is best to talk naturally. You come across as genuine.

- [Are you good at group discussions?](#)

### **Mind your body language!**

1. Do not keep shifting your position.
2. Your posture during the interview adds to or diminishes your personality. Be a little conscious of your posture and gestures. They convey a lot about your personality.
3. Sit straight. Keep your body still. You may, of course, use your hand gestures freely.
4. Avoid these mannerisms at all costs:
  - Playing with your tie
  - Theatrical gestures
  - Shaking legs
  - Sitting with your arms slung over the back of the adjoining chair

### **Post interview etiquette**

1. Make sure you thank the interviewers as a mark of respect for the time they have spared for you.
2. As you rise and are about to leave, make sure you collect up your pen/ pencil/ all other stationery.

3. After getting up, place your chair in its original position.

### **The last word**

1. Some institutes (like the Faculty of Management Studies) ask you to deliver an extempore speech suddenly while the interview is going on. Be mentally prepared for the same.
2. Competition will be very tough. Every mistake you commit will turn into an advantage for the other candidates. Hence, be very particular about your preparation. Do not leave anything to chance or the last minute.
3. Remember you have to sell yourself in an interview.
4. Be very particular about what you write in your resume. Check and re-check your resume for facts, spelling errors, etc. Ensure that there are no grammatical errors in the descriptive type questions in the sheet.

Use these hints, and say goodbye to your interview phobia

Although it is relatively rare that a personal interview is required, many colleges recommend that you take this opportunity for a face-to-face discussion with a member of the admissions staff. Read through the application materials to determine whether or not a college places great emphasis on the interview. If they strongly recommend that you have one, it may work against you to forego it. In contrast to a group interview and some alumni interviews, the personal interview is viewed both as an information session and as further evaluation of your skills and strengths. You will meet with a member of the admissions staff, who will be assessing your personal qualities, high school preparation, and capacity to contribute to undergraduate life at the institution. On average, these meetings last about 45 minutes - a relatively short amount of time in which to gather information and leave the desired impression - so here are some suggestions on how to make the most of it.

### **Scheduling Your Visit**

Students usually choose to visit campuses in the summer or fall of their senior year. Both times have their advantages. A summer visit generally allows for a less hectic visit and interview. Visiting in the fall, on the other hand, provides the opportunity to see what campus life is like in full swing. Always make an appointment and avoid scheduling more than two college interviews on any given day. Multiple interviews in a single day hinder your chances of making a good impression, and your impressions of the colleges will blur into each other as you make your way from campus to campus.

### **Preparation**

Know the basics about the college before going for your interview. Read the college catalog. You will be better prepared to ask questions that are not answered in the literature and that will give you a better understanding of what the college has to offer. You should also spend some time thinking about your strengths and weaknesses and, in particular, what you are looking for in a college education. You will find that as you get a few interviews under your belt, they will get easier.

### **Asking Questions**

Inevitably, your interviewer will ask you, "Do you have any questions?" Not having one may suggest that you're unprepared or, even worse, not interested. When you do ask questions, make sure that they are ones that matter to you. The questions that you ask will give the interviewer some insight into your personality and priorities. Avoid asking questions that can be answered in the college literature - again, a sign of being unprepared. Although the interviewer will undoubtedly pose questions to you, the interview should not be viewed merely as a question-and-answer session. If a conversation evolves out of a particular question, so much the better.

## Be Yourself

In the end, remember to relax and be yourself. Don't drink jitters-producing caffeinated beverages prior to the interview, and suppress nervous fidgets like leg-wagging, finger-drumming, or bracelet-jangling. Your interviewer will expect you to be somewhat nervous, which will relieve some of the pressure. Consider this an opportunity to put forth your best effort and to enhance everything that the college knows about you up to this point.

## CHECKLIST

Here are some questions you may be asked in your interview:

- What courses have been most difficult for you?
- How would you describe your high school?
- If you could change one thing about your high school, what would it be?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What do you want to know about our activities?
- Have you worked up to your potential?
- What other colleges are you considering?
- What do you expect to be doing seven years from now?
- Have you ever thought of not going to college? What would you do?

Here are some questions you may want to ask during your interview.

- How do you treat AP scores?
- Is there a limit on the number of AP credits you will give?
- How do you match roommates?
- What new offerings are there in my major?
- Is there an opportunity for me to design my own major?
- Are there any new buildings being planned?
- How does student advisement work?
- What is your system for course selection?

## Interview tips

### :: Research

Before attending the interview, ensure that you have read about the company including its product range, businesses in which it operates and recent news features. A person who already knows about the company comes across as a person who is keen and enthusiastic to join the company.

### :: Body language

Always maintain eye contact with the interviewer. It shows your confidence. Never droop in the chair. Sit upright and keep track of your hand movements while answering questions.

### :: Prepare for basic open-ended questions

The interview is a process by which the interviewer gets to know you and judge whether you match the requirements both academically and as a person. Generally, the interviewer will throw up some open-ended question like "Tell me about yourself". This is meant to relax the applicant. This can be used as an opportunity to divert the interview into your areas of strength. Open-ended questions like those on hobbies, achievements, etc reveal a great deal about you as a person. Treat these questions very seriously.

### :: Listen

Listen to the question before answering it. Understand what the interviewer is looking for. If you need time to think about the answer, request for the same. Most interviewers would

comply with such a request. But after you have taken time to think, better come up with a good answer.

:: **Ask questions**

Generally, the last question of the interview is "Do you have any questions about the company?" Use this opportunity to ask something relevant about the company. If you do not ask any questions at this point, chances are that you may come across as a person who is not keen to join the company.

:: **Be yourself**

Do not try to be someone you are not during an interview. Be natural. An interview is a process by which the candidate and the interviewer get to know each other and the candidate's role in the organisation is established. Any mask that you may don for the interview will wear down in no time.

:: **Mock interviews**

It is always a good idea to attend mock interviews and use the feedback to improve your interview skills

## GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### Key GD tips, revealed!

Brijesh Singh | February 16, 2005

In our [previous article](#), we discussed the personality traits required to excel at Group Discussions.

Let's go on to how GD is initiated and summarised.

A group discussion can be categorically divided into three different phases:

- i. Initiation/ Introduction
- ii. Body of the group discussion
- iii. Summarisation/ Conclusion

Let's stress on the initiation and summarisation:

#### **Initiation Techniques**

Initiating a GD is a high profit-high loss strategy.

When you initiate a GD, you not only grab the opportunity to speak, you also grab the attention of the examiner and your fellow candidates.

If you can make a favourable first impression with your content and communication skills after you initiate a GD, it will help you sail through the discussion.

But if you initiate a GD and stammer/ stutter/ quote wrong facts and figures, the damage might be irreparable.

If you initiate a GD impeccably but don't speak much after that, it gives the impression that you started the GD for the sake of starting it or getting those initial kitty of points earmarked for an initiator!

When you start a GD, you are responsible for putting it into the right perspective or framework. So initiate one only if you have indepth knowledge about the topic at hand.

There are different techniques to initiate a GD and make a good first impression:

- i. Quotes
- ii. Definition
- iii. Question
- iv. Shock statement
- v. Facts, figures and statistics
- vi. Short story
- vii. General statement

#### **~ Quotes**

Quotes are an effective way of initiating a GD.

If the topic of a GD is: Should the Censor Board be abolished?, you could start with a quote like, 'Hidden apples are always sweet'.

For a GD topic like, Customer is King, you could quote Sam (Wal-mart) Walton's famous saying, 'There is only one boss: the customer. And he can fire everybody in the company -- from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.'

#### **~ Definition**

Start a GD by defining the topic or an important term in the topic.

For example, if the topic of the GD is Advertising is a Diplomatic Way of Telling a Lie, why not start the GD by defining advertising as, 'Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services through mass media like newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor'?

For a topic like The Malthusian Economic Prophecy is no longer relevant, you could start by explaining the definition of the Malthusian Economic Prophecy.

#### **~ Question**

Asking a question is an impactful way of starting a GD.

It does not signify asking a question to any of the candidates in a GD so as to hamper the flow. It implies asking a question, and answering it yourself.

Any question that might hamper the flow of a GD or insult a participant or play devil's advocate must be discouraged.

Questions that promote a flow of ideas are always appreciated.

For a topic like, Should India go to war with Pakistan, you could start by asking, 'What does war bring to the people of a nation? We have had four clashes with Pakistan. The pertinent question is: what have we achieved?'

#### **~ Shock statement**

Initiating a GD with a shocking statement is the best way to grab immediate attention and put forth your point.

If a GD topic is, The Impact of Population on the Indian Economy, you could start with, 'At the centre of the Indian capital stands a population clock that ticks away relentlessly. It tracks 33 births a minute, 2,000 an hour, 48,000 a day. Which calculates to about 12 million every year. That is roughly the size of Australia. As a current political slogan puts it, 'Nothing's impossible when 1 billion Indians work together'.'

#### **~ Facts, figures and statistics**

If you decide to initiate your GD with facts, figure and statistics, make sure to quote them accurately.

Approximation is allowed in macro level figures, but micro level figures need to be correct and accurate.

For example, you can say, approximately 70 per cent of the Indian population stays in rural areas (macro figures, approximation allowed).

But you cannot say 30 states of India instead of 28 (micro figures, no approximations).

Stating wrong facts works to your disadvantage.

For a GD topic like, China, a Rising Tiger, you could start with, 'In 1983, when China was still in its initial stages of reform and opening up, China's real use of Foreign Direct Investment only stood at \$636 million. China actually utilised \$60 billion of FDI in 2004, which is almost 100 times that of its 1983 statistics.'

#### **~ Short story**

Use a short story in a GD topic like, Attitude is Everything.

This can be initiated with, 'A child once asked a balloon vendor, who was selling helium gas-filled balloons, whether a blue-coloured balloon will go as high in the sky as a green-coloured balloon. The balloon vendor told the child, it is not the colour of the balloon but what is inside it that makes it go high.'

#### **~ General statement**

Use a general statement to put the GD in proper perspective.

For example, if the topic is, Should Sonia Gandhi be the prime minister of India?, you could start by saying, 'Before jumping to conclusions like, 'Yes, Sonia Gandhi should be', or 'No, Sonia Gandhi should not be', let's first find out the qualities one needs to be a good prime minister of India. Then we can compare these qualities with those that Mrs Gandhi possesses. This will help us reach the conclusion in a more objective and effective manner.'

### **Summarisation Techniques**

Most GDs do not really have conclusions. A conclusion is where the whole group decides in favour or against the topic.

But every GD is summarised. You can summarise what the group has discussed in the GD in a nutshell.

Keep the following points in mind while summarising a discussion:

- Avoid raising new points.
- Avoid stating only your viewpoint.
- Avoid dwelling only on one aspect of the GD.
- Keep it brief and concise.
- It must incorporate all the important points that came out during the GD.
- If the examiner asks you to summarise a GD, it means the GD has come to an end. Do not add anything once the GD has been summarised.

## **HOW TO SUCCEED IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Group discussion is becoming a very important tool for selection. It is used for selecting candidates for admission in management courses. It is also used for selecting young managers. As the preference is for selecting team players, and not loners who cannot function effectively in-groups, this tool is progressively getting higher weightage.

In-group discussions, it is possible for candidates to play different roles. These roles can be grouped under three categories viz, group task roles, group building and maintenance Roles, and self-centered roles.

### **GROUP TASK ROLES**

Group task roles are behaviours that help the group solve its problems or accomplish its tasks. These roles include:

- (a) Initiator: starts discussion, suggests new ideas and solutions.
- (b) Information opinion seekers: Asks for information from other members and tries to elicit their opinion.
- (c) Information Opinion Giver: Gives facts and information and shares his own opinion with others.
- (d) Clarifier: Expands on ideas of others by giving examples and



explanations.

(e) Coordinator: Helps in integrating and summarizing the ideas of the other members.

(f) Orientor: suggests the direction for further discussion and defines the goal/objective of the discussion.

Candidates playing roles of initiator, coordinator and orientor score better marks in-group discussion.

### GROUP BUILDING ROLES

These roles help members to function together as a group and maintain good interpersonal relationships.

(a) Supporter: Praises and agrees with others.

(b) Harmonizer: Helps in resolving disagreements and conflicts between others.

(c) Tension Reliever: Makes people feel relaxed by cracking jokes and generating humour.

(d) Encourager: Encourages those who have not spoken to participate.

Candidates playing roles of harmonizer and encourager score better marks in-group discussion.

### SELF-CENTERED ROLES

These roles satisfy an individual's needs without regard for the other members of the group. (a) Blocker: Always raises objections and brings up the same topic after the rest of the group have disposed it of.

(b) Aggressor: Criticizes others, expresses hostility and jealousy.

(c) Recognition Seeker: Boasts and tries to always seek the attention of others.

(d) Clown: Shows lack of involvement in the group task by cracking jokes and passing cynical comments.

(e) Dominator: Attempts to dominate by ordering others, interrupting and imposing his own point of view.

All these self-centered roles mentioned above must be avoided as they considerably reduce the chances of selection.

Remember the Group Discussion tests not only your communication but also your listening skills.

## 1. TIPS FOR LEADING DISCUSSIONS

**by Felisa Tibbitts, Human Rights Education Associates**

There are some simple procedures that can help you to foster equal and open sharing in group discussions, whether with fellow teachers or with your students. The ones below are not intended to be prescriptive, but to encourage you to explore and experiment with communication techniques. It is fairly easy to tell if the discussion is going well by the participation levels among the members, and by the creative quality of the comments. So have fun!

### **Establishing the Tone**

There are two predictable times when how a group is handled will be fundamental for affecting the quality and tone of the discussion. The first such time is at the very start of the discussion. The most important thing is to establish that everyone has a right to speak, and that they are, in fact, expected to contribute. This will only work, of course, if group members feel that they can trust one another, and that their ideas will be welcomed. Here are some hints for how to start.

- If possible, have people sit in a circle, or at least facing one another. If you are in a setting where this is not possible (for example, a classroom where the seats are bolted to the floor), then the facilitator of the discussion can lend an inclusive element by walking among the members when he or she is speaking.
- If group members do not know each other, then 'introduction' exercises might be used. Members of the group can introduce themselves, or members can be asked to interview another person and then 'present' them to the group. Introductions can be more fun if people are asked to share such things as their favorite hobby, the animal they consider themselves most like, and so on.
- The facilitator can de-emphasize his or her own role and emphasizing that of the group members by beginning the discussion with open-ended questions. As participants offer their views, the facilitator can encourage group members to respond to each other (and not to the facilitator) by asking questions like: "What does everyone else think?" or "Is there anyone else who agrees?" "Anyone else who disagrees?" -- These kinds of questions will encourage members of the group to speak with each other, and also reinforce the idea that it is alright if people disagree with one another.
- Sometimes it is a good idea to establish 'ground rules' for discussion. This can be especially important when the group members are children. If the students are old enough, they can even help you establish the ground rules. You could ask them to think about what should be the rules for discussion so that everyone is encouraged to speak. Here are some ideas for some rules:
  1. Everyone should listen respectfully to the other (even if they disagree).
  2. The person who is speaking should not be interrupted.
  3. No more than one person should speak at the same time.

4. No one's ideas should be made fun of.
5. If you disagree with someone, disagree with their ideas, but don't attack the person.
6. Try to understand the others, as much as you hope they try to understand you.

## **Facilitating Discussion**

The facilitator can use different kinds of forums for discussion, depending upon the number of group members, and the degree to which it is important that every single person participate. This will depend on the setting. For example, in some general classroom discussion, the facilitator could simply invite discussion, and call on those individuals who want to volunteer their opinion. However, if the group is particularly shy, or if the facilitator wants to make sure that every person is actively engaged in the exercise, then discussions can be more structured.

Here is how the discussions can be structured:

- The facilitator can simply go around the circle (or down the rows) and ask everyone to give their comment. This technique is very inclusive, but it can take a long time or get a little boring.
- Group members can break into pairs for discussion. In a debate format, their opposing 'positions' can be assigned. (If you do this, it is interesting to assign positions that are unlike their personal ones.) Also in pairs, the facilitator can ask each of the group members to 'interview' each other; they could then later present their partners' comments to the rest of the group. Using pairs is particularly nice when members of the group do not know each other, since this provides an easy and personal way to become acquainted with at least one person. You can also ask people to work in a sequence of pairs (for example, first the person seated to their left, and then the person seated to their right).
- The large group can be broken into small groups of up to six or eight people; for children, these numbers normally do not exceed four.

The discussion can then take place on a voluntary basis or, depending upon the task, everyone can be required to do some activity. In order to create some structure for students, teachers often assign roles, such as 'recorder' (writing down what takes place), the 'organizer' (who makes sure that the group stays on task), the 'materials person' (if materials are involved in the exercise), or special roles associated with the exercise.

Please note that it is ideal that such groups "report back" to the larger group, either orally, on a large sheet of paper, or both. This way, you bring the discussion back to the whole group. The small group format works is usually ideal for 'hands-on' exercises, rather than simple discussions or sharing of ideas.

As the facilitator, you may have to make some quick decisions about how to organize the discussion. On the basis of how well communication is going, you might leave everyone in the large group, or you might let people remain in their small groups. There are rarely set rules in this respect.

Your job during the heart of the discussion will be to maintain the flow, to keep the atmosphere respectful and pleasant, to keep the group "on task", and to handle conflicts that may arise. It is important that when conflicts arise, feelings as well as ideas are addressed. Try to involve the group in the mediation of such tensions, if possible. If the conflict is too intense and personal, then handle this privately outside the group setting. Much more can be said about conflict resolution as a skill, but there is not enough space here.

The facilitator should affirm the participation of group members. This can happen by complementing individuals or groups for their effort or creativity, directly encouraging some of the shier group members to express their ideas (although they should not be coerced to do so), and building on the ideas that are expressed. This encouragement can be expressed through words, facial expressions and body language. It is also important to "listen" to the members of the group in the same way.

## **Wrapping Up**

A session can be ended in many different ways. It is always a good idea to highlight the positive aspects of the discussions and exercises, and to personally thank the participants for their involvement. If you enjoyed the discussion, you should say so!

If the discussion was part of an ongoing series of some kind (as in a class), you might want to make assignments that build on what transpired. For example, if some interesting differences of opinion arose, you might ask participants to write a position paper of their own. Even a larger research project could be developed. If the goals for the discussions/exercises are for the participants to learn more about themselves and to grow, you might ask them to keep a personal diary in which they keep their thoughts, reactions and questions to the discussions. These could be kept by the participant, or also shared privately with the facilitator in order to have some feedback.

If you want to reinforce the communication techniques themselves, you might ask the participants to reflect aloud or in writing to the following kinds of questions:

- What went well in the discussion? How do you know?
- What was difficult in the discussion, and why?
- How were disagreements or conflicts handled?
- Did everyone get a chance to participate? If not, were they invited to participate?

- Did you notice the difference between when you differed with someone's opinion on an intellectual basis, and when you felt an emotional reaction to someone's statement? Can you explain why one reaction and not the other?

## **In Conclusion....**

Learning how to facilitate is both an art and science. Don't be too hard on yourself if it feels "rough" at first! Although this article contains some ideas, the best resource will be your own intuition. You can improve your skills at facilitation every day, simply by observing the circumstances in which people feel free to express their ideas. If you know someone who is particularly skillful at involving people in discussion, you might observe them to get some ideas.

Remember... **Have Fun!**

### **Group discussion tips**

#### **:: Stay calm**

It is seen that many group discussions degenerate into a fish market. This is because the participants lose their sense of calm. They panic either due to the topic under discussion or due to other participants. Regardless of what the situation may be, it is important for you to maintain your composure. Staying calm in the face of adversity is a quality that is absolutely required of a leader.

#### **:: Meaningful contribution**

Some participants enter a group discussion with the impression that the more they talk, the greater is the chance of being selected. This cannot be further from the truth. How long you talk is irrelevant, what you talk is important. Repeating the same points over and over again shows the lack of content in the candidate.

#### **:: Reaching consensus**

Decisions in real life business situations are normally taken by a team. It is a case of give and take. Flexibility in your thought process is crucial. Being adamant on a point just because you do not want to be seen as backing down reflects very poorly on the person. Understanding the other person's point of view is very important. If you feel strongly about what you believe in, push forth your point but in the form of clear reasons. Repeating the same point serves no purpose. It is well known that in a group discussion, reaching a consensus is extremely difficult. The fact that the group reached or did not reach a consensus is not relevant to your being selected. What is of relevance is what you did in order to try and reach a consensus.

#### **:: Be seen**

Regardless of how many points you may have, unless you ensure that the group and the evaluators hear them out, they remain just what they are - ideas. To make them count you have to ensure that you are heard. Rarely will anyone gift you with an opportunity to speak. You will have to create that opportunity. And once you get that opportunity, make it count.

:: **Listen**

Some candidates have so many points to put across that they find the time limit too short. So they end up occupying a lot of airtime. This shows favourably in terms of knowledge but is a poor commentary on team skills. In most business situations, decisions are seldom taken independently. You have to let others express their point of view.

## **INTERVIEW TIPS**

Successful interviews are the result of preparation, experience and confidence. Your preparation should include learning all you can about an opportunity. As a H.I.M. professional and specialist, we feel our understanding of an opportunity allows us to share it with more insight than others. In addition to our insights, we recommend utilizing the internet, library or other resources to research a potential employer.

Due to cost, time and distance, many employers perform telephone interviews to screen candidates prior to proceeding to personal or face-to-face interviews. See each of the items below for further insight.

### **Telephone Interviews**

**Phase I** - *The goal of a telephone interview is to get a face to face interview.*

1. Who calls who?: Employers often prefer to call candidates at their convenience, but employers may ask a candidate to call them to test how serious they are.
2. Candidate calls employer by first or last name?: This is up to the candidate and their comfort level, but calling an employer by their first name can break down barriers, but is NOT a 100% rule.
3. Stand when on phone: This common technique allows your voice to project and sound more confident. Insure you are in a location where you will have no distractions. If you can have a mirror to look in, use it. Your facial expressions will reflect through your voice. If you are smiling, you will sound interested. If you are frowning, you will sound disinterested.
4. Be Up, Enthusiastic: You are only a resume, a piece of paper, to the potential employer. They likely have many resumes. Your enthusiasm/energy must stand out, but don't sound phony.

5. Speak clearly and slowly: Many people get very nervous during telephone interviews and may have a tendency to mumble into the phone. Relax, speak slowly. Do not sound rushed or anxious.

6. Make preparation notes (questions): But do not write a script for the interview, just speak freely from your notes. See "Questions to ask" for further insights.

---

## **Phase II**

1. Be prepared to give highlights: Be prepared to give a positive two minute summary of your professional career. Rehearse this!

2. Asks questions: You should talk and carry the conversation, not the employer. Avoid yes & no answers. See ["Questions to Ask"](#) for further insights.

A) Determine what are the employers short term concerns. "How can I make an immediate impact on the job?" Tailor the balance of your responses to examples where you resolved similar concerns.

B) Ask hiring authority what his/her background is? This provides you with insight and generally places each of you more at ease.

---

## **Phase III**

1. Have script for this item only... When you sense the conversation is ending, be proactive and ask... "I know you are busy , and there is only so much we can cover on the phone. Based upon what we have both shared, I would like to meet with you. I have my schedule in front of me, when do you think we can get together?" You always want to end the conversation knowing what the next step will be.

2. Know your skeletons, such as job hopping, being fired. Avoid weak excuses. NEVER CRITICIZE YOUR FORMER EMPLOYERS. Role-play and rehearse your responses to difficult or uncomfortable issues that may come up in the conversation.

3. NEVER ASK QUESTIONS IN THESE AREAS IN A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

a) Dollars, b) Security, c) Benefits, d) Commute, e) Comfort &

convenience, f) Hours

There will be ample time to get these questions answered later or at the time of an offer.

4. Call H.I.M. Recruiters with feedback and to share the results of your interview!

## Personal Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are where decisions are made! It may seem obvious, but dress professionally and come prepared. Bring several copies of your resume, writing utensils, notebook, references, questions, breath mints, a comb, etc. & anything that will make you feel comfortable and prepared.

During the employment interview, the interviewer meets with the candidate to evaluate their skills, capabilities, and level of experience. When sitting in the hot seat, keep in mind that while there are no standard responses, your replies should be clear and relevant.

### **To answer questions appropriately, remember these guidelines:**

- Listen carefully. If you feel the question is unclear, ask politely for clarification.
- Pause before answering to consider all facts that may substantiate your response.
- Always offer positive information.
- Get directly to the point. Ask if the listener would like you to go into great detail before you do.
- Discuss only the facts needed to respond to the question.
- Do not open yourself to areas of questioning that could pose difficulties for you.
- Be truthful, but do not offer unsolicited information.
- Focus and re-focus attention on your successes.



## Questions to Expect

Following are sample questions frequently asked during interviews. We would suggest that you consider them and a mentally prepared "positive" response to each. To get to know you, the interviewer may first pose some general questions, such as:

- If you could have your choice of any job, what would it be and why?
- Why do you want to go into this field?
- What are your short- and long-range goals and how do you expect to achieve them?
- What does success mean to you? How do you measure it?
- What motivates you?
- Do you plan to further your education? If so, to what extent?
- What have you done to improve yourself during the past year?
- If you could relive the last 15 years, what changes would you make?
- Tell me about your greatest achievement and greatest disappointment?
- What are some of your weaknesses?
- Tell me about the best and worst bosses you've ever had.
- What constructive criticism have you received from employers?
- Everybody has pet peeves. What are yours?
- What else do you think I should know about you?

The interviewer will also want to learn about your experience and your reasons for seeking a new position and may ask the following questions:

- When did you leave your last job and why?
- How long have you been out of work?
- What have you been doing since you left your last job?
- What did you like most and least about your last job?
- At your last job, how much of the work did you perform independently?
- At your last job, how much was performed by a team?
- Do you prefer working independently or as part of a team?
- What are some of the problems you have encountered in your past jobs?
- How did you solve the problems?
- Have you ever offered suggestions to management? How did management respond?
- What prevented you from advancing in your former positions?

To learn about your plans for the future and your motivation for applying for the job, the interviewer may ask the following questions:

- Why do you want to work here?
- What could you contribute to our facility?
- If you feel you have any weaknesses with regard to this job, what would they be?
- What do you expect to experience in this job that you did not experience in your past jobs?
- Assuming we make you an offer, what do you see as your future here?
- Why should we hire you?
- How do you feel about evening work? Weekend work?

- Are you considering other positions at this time?
- How does this job compare with them?
- What is your leadership style?
- How do you feel about relocating?

Sometimes the interviewer will ask vague questions that, if unexpected, may be difficult to answer. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Are you switching careers?
- You don't have the necessary experience or background for this position.
- Why do you believe that you could handle this position?
- Since you are overqualified for this position, what do you hope to gain from it?

Eventually, money will become an issue. Among the questions that may arise pertaining to compensation are the following:

- What are your financial needs?
- What is the minimum salary you will accept?
- What is your salary history?

## **Questions to Ask**

Remember that an interview is a two-way conversation. For you, the interview has two purposes: one, to sell yourself, and two, to evaluate the position. After asking questions, the interviewer usually invites you to ask questions. By asking informed questions, such as the following, you not only gain knowledge about the potential employer, but you also make a good impression. Select the questions that are appropriate to the situation and your comfort level:

- What is the size of the organization, volume of business,

profitability?

- Does the company plan to expand?
- What are the significant trends in the industry?
- Are any acquisitions, divestitures, or significant changes on the horizon?
- Who is the owner, chief executive, or president?
- What is his or her character and how does this influence the organization?
- How does the organization rank within its field?
- What is the public image of the company?
- What is the reputation of the department to which I am applying?
- What are the greatest problems of this department and company?
- What are the greatest strengths of this department and company?
- What would you expect me to accomplish in this job?
- What responsibilities have the highest priority?
- How much time should be devoted to each area of responsibility?
- How might these responsibilities and priorities change?
- What qualifications are you looking for in the person who fills this job?
- If this position is offered to me, why should I accept it?
- What are the initial projects for which I would be responsible?
- What are some examples of the achievements of others who have been in this position?

- How much travel is involved?
- Why isn't this job being filled from within?
- What is the history of this position?
- How many people have held this job in the last five years?  
Where are they now?
- How soon do you expect to make a decision?
- If I am offered the position, how soon will you need my response?

When the position involves management of other employees, these questions may be appropriate

- How much authority will I have in running the department?
- Are there any difficult personalities on the staff?
- What will be the greatest challenge in the job?
- Who would I supervise?
- What are those employees' backgrounds?
- How do you feel about their performance?
- How does their pay compare with what they could get elsewhere?
- What is the philosophy of the management team?
- May I see an organizational chart?
- To whom would I report?
- What is your management style?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?
- What should be the relationship between superior and subordinate?

Finally, you may want to discuss issues of compensation, but

generally these questions are best left to the time of offer. Following are some suggestions for questions pertaining to salary and benefits packages:

- What are the benefits and perks?
- What is the salary range?
- What is my earnings potential in 1, 3, 5, and 10 years?

If commissions are involved, ask about the median salary of a person holding a position comparable to that which you are seeking.

### Resume tips

- :: Be as concise as possible in the resume without omitting any important details. Remember that your resume is not an essay writing competition. The recruiter will read it for less than a minute. You have less than a minute to catch the recruiter's eye.
- :: All achievements aside, your resume should be reader friendly. Important points should be highlighted in bold. Ensure that the resume does not become too glossy.
- :: It is surprising to note that a number of students fail to proof read their resume for grammatical mistakes. It reflects poorly on the applicant if any grammatical errors are found on his/her resume.
- :: When you write about your projects/hobbies in your resume, it is expected that you know everything that there is to know about it. If you mention that you have done a project on a particular topic and are not able to talk about it or answer questions on it, it shows the hollowness of your preparation and lack of interest in the organisation.
- :: A resume can be used smartly to lead the interview into your area of comfort. Else it may divert into areas in which the interviewer is very comfortable and you might find yourself clueless.
- :: Take feedback from others about your resume. They will be able to give you an unbiased opinion.