Preparing for the 'Face-to-Face' Interview

The "face-to-face" interview is of course a very important stop along the way to a new position. If you bomb here... well, you know what happens. So, Remember...

- If you don't play to win, you won't.
- Know time, date, location, directions, dress, itinerary, and whom to ask for.
- Be enthusiastic, confident, prepared, professional, and definitely be on time.
- Review employer "hot buttons."
- Write down and take 15 good thought-provoking questions to the interview.
- Put together a "brag book," include copies of reviews, letters, plaques, diplomas, etc.
- Take plenty of current resumes on resume grade paper.
- Take current business cards.
- Take a professional portfolio binder (leather or nice vinyl) that holds an 8 ½ x 11 pad of paper. DO NOT take a large gaudy notebook or briefcase.
- Research the company; absorb their Web site, news articles, etc.
- Let interviewer control interview. If you feel you are "hogging" the interview, you probably are.
- Know your personal accomplishments, statistics, and trend of performance over time.
- Memorize five reasons why this client should hire you, i.e., the value you can bring to the organization, etc.
- Memorize five reasons why this position looks attractive and why you would want it.
- Think of your three biggest weaknesses, how you have overcome them and what you learned from them.
- Tie this position into past positions and state similarities as often as you can.
- Give short, positive reasons why you left your last or previous jobs.
- Know how you plan your days, weeks, months, in order to demonstrate that you can plan and organize your time.
- Be able to handle the money question if it comes up (see below).
- Be able to ask good, solid, thoughtful questions (see below).
- At the end of each interview - MAKE SURE YOU CLOSE AND ASK FOR THE JOB.
- Here are some sample "closes" to consider:
  - "This is exactly the position I have been looking for, what is the next step?"
  - "I am very interested in this position. Are there any concerns that you might have that I could address at this time?"
  - "I feel that this is an excellent match, and I look forward to the next step. What will that be?"
- Follow up with "Thank You" letters or emails at the earliest opportunity after the interview.
Also, today most companies do background checks and assessments. Different companies go to different lengths, but many do include the following:

- Employment verification
- Salary verification (they ask for a copy of your W-2)
- Educational verification
- Reference checks
- Credit report
- Personality/behavioral profile tests (online, proctored); some even use an industrial psychologist.

Additional Details:

- **Dress Code** – You will never go wrong wearing a suit. (Also make sure your shoes are *shined*)!
- **Personal Hygiene** – Make sure your hair is cut, facial hair (if any) neatly trimmed, fingernails clean and trimmed (women, avoid "flashy" colors, nail styles), use no aftershave or perfume because some people are allergic to them.
- **Handshake and Introduction** – Not surprisingly, many interviews are often "won" or "lost" in the first moments. Be sure to offer a *firm* (not crushing!) handshake, and this applies both to men and women. Say something such as this: "Thank you very much, (interviewer's name, e.g., "Mr., Ms. Smith"), for setting aside your valuable time today to interview me for this outstanding career opportunity."

Preparing for questions to be asked by interviewer:

- Have your 90-second "elevator speech" prepared, i.e., the infamous, "Tell me about yourself" question often posed while you're riding up the elevator with the interviewer. You might say something like this:
  - "Let me bring you up-to-date on my career. I graduated from UMass Dartmouth in 1994 with a degree in engineering. From there, I have 10 years of experience as a process engineer and technical sales rep. Most recently, I was given the opportunity to open a new territory and sold four new accounts worth over $150,000 in a highly competitive market, etc., etc., etc. From your perspective, tell me what it is that you are looking for in someone to fill this position?"

(Practice this. Ensure that it is no longer than 90 seconds. The dialogue usually will naturally progress from this 90 second introduction. Make sure that in addition to facts, you mention *specific* accomplishments that demonstrate you can bring *value* to an organization.)

- Be professional at all times and in all ways.
- Be prepared with your *own* questions. This will reveal how you think. Indeed, employers often place considerable weight on what *you* ask them!
  - Here are some questions you ought to consider asking:
- Describe the position. What qualities are you looking for?
- What would be the duties and responsibilities? Whom would I be working for?
- What are some of the objectives that you would like me to accomplish in this position?
- What is most pressing? What would you like to have done within the next 2-3 months? What projects would I be involved in now and in the future?
- What are some of the longer-term objectives that you would like completed?
- What are some of the more difficult problems facing someone in this position? How do you think these could best be handled?
- What is the company philosophy on training and personal development? What are the future opportunities for a person who is successful in this position and within what time frame?
- In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
- What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
- What is the market place potential?
- Where do you see the company (or position) going in the next few years?

**Handling "the salary question"** – While you should never bring up "the salary question" at the face-to-face interview, sometimes the interviewer will. Here is one way you might respond to that question, if it is brought up by the interviewer: "I am on a package that pulls me to $x. However, I am more interested in this opportunity. I would like the chance to improve myself as well as my career. Can I do that by joining your team?" Remember, the key is to have established your value to the organization. Once you have sold them on your worth and value, the roles are reversed and they now need to recruit and sell you (within reason, of course).