

Take It From the Experts:

Smart Advice on Interviewing for a Job

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FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Know Your Librarian

"Get to know the reference librarian in the career section of your public library. He or she can help you research companies that use (and probably need) people who do what you do." — Marvin Walberg writes "Getting Hired," a national weekly column.

Talk About the Next Five Years

"Questions about your future plans have become interview classics. Jobseekers can't expect to avoid the issue. So, if someone asks about your next five years, you should realize that there is no perfect answer. While it's good to have goals, it is very, very bad to stick to them too rigidly. Be honest, focused, realistic, and flexible. Maybe you should say, 'I hope I'll be working somewhere I can continue to grow while knowing that I have already contributed and learned a lot.'" — Ana Honigman, a freelance writer on careers.

Crib Notes for Job Seekers

During a telephone interview, keep your notes handy: Have any key information, including your resume, notes about the company, and any cue cards you have prepared, next to the phone. You will sound prepared if you don't have to search for information. Make sure you also have a notepad and pen so you can jot down notes and any questions you would like to ask at the end of the interview.

Don't Forget to Ask

Prepare five good questions. Understanding that you may not have time to ask them all. Ask questions concerning the job, the company, and the industry or profession. Your questions should indicate your interest in these subjects and that you have read and thought about them.

Research the Company

The more you know about the company and the job you are applying for, the better you will appear in the interview. Find out as much key information as you can about the company, its products and its customers. If possible, talk to people

who work at the company. Search for the following: Office locations, products and services, customers, competitors, philosophy, history, recent news, financial info, including salary and stock.

Tell Them What You Make

"How can you make the most of your current salary without lying? The simplest way is to consider the value of your total compensation. When providing salary information, include not only base salary and bonuses but also benefits such as car allowance, reimbursement for club dues, expense accounts, deferred compensation, stock and stock options, pension benefits, 401(k) plans, company-paid insurance, and so on. If possible, avoid being too precise, at least during the preliminary discussions." — Lee Miller, author of "Get More Money on Your Next Job."

Negotiating the Deal

"So what rights and perks are fair game at the bargaining table? Surprisingly, a lot more than you may think. For starters, learn your "street value" and try to justify your salary requirements. Don't forget to factor in your cost of living and any travel expenses. Discuss your opportunities for job advancement and, if applicable, a fair commission rate. Additional negotiating points include vacation, overtime, telecommuting, and tuition assistance. "Non-negotiables" are those things offered to every employee, regardless of position: pension and profit sharing compensation, health insurance, and disability plans. Those things are typically carved in stone and shouldn't be subject to change." — Erika Welz Praefder, president of Real World Careers and columnist for the "New York Post."

Suggest an Audition

Note: In situations where other candidates appear to have an edge because of stronger educational qualifications or experience, you might want to suggest an audition. You could gain a lot, and you have very little to lose!

Breaking the Rules with Style
"A common piece of advice that's given to job seekers on the issue of dress is to scope out the company before your interview

by actually dropping by the office unannounced (for instance you could go disguised as a bike messenger). — Apurna Kumar of wetfeet.com.

Get the Offer in Writing

"The written offer should spell out the important terms of the job and your obligations to the company. Even if you've had some time to think over an offer and you've assured the company that you'll accept it, you should still ask to see the offer in writing. Make sure the job title, salary and benefits match or improve upon what you had in mind

when you said you'd accept it. If it doesn't measure up, promptly send it back and let the company know what's amiss. You may want to find out when you will be paid, too; some companies pay every two weeks, while other pay twice a month. This will mean the difference between 24 annual paychecks and 26!" — Amy Boutell of wetfeet.com



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