

THE GOLDEN INTERVIEW

THE KEY TO LANDING THE
PERFECT JOB

~by Glenn Pack



INTERVIEWING 101

So, you have everything you need to land that great job. Your resume is stellar. You know the field, and maybe even the position, inside and out. Maybe you already have some connections at the place you're applying so it's only a matter of time before the offer comes, right?

Wrong. While your resume, experience and networking skills are crucial, often it comes down to something much more simple: the interview process. It's amazing how quickly a qualified professional can blow an opportunity with an awkward conversation during the interview, an ill-fitting suit, stinky cologne, a dead-fish handshake, a wrong answer or even a stray nose hair (gross, I know, but it happens).

The interview process is your chance to really show what you can do. It's sort of like walking into a store looking for a cute stuffed animal. Yes, it seems like a silly comparison but bear with me here. When you look at a cute stuffed bear and find it doesn't have a button to push, you might move on. If the next bear has a button but doesn't do much, you move on again.



Then you finally get to one that dances a little jig...well, now you're interested. You're willing to let it show what it can do. It's just how people are. We move on when we're unimpressed. As a job candidate, you must keep the interviewer from moving on. The Golden Interview will help you accomplish this.

If you really want that job, whether you're fresh out of college or a top-level executive, you must learn how to nail the interview. This manual provides everything you need to do just that. You'll get the simple but important pointers, as well as the more difficult aspects of interviews.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW



It's amazing how many people think they can stroll into an interview and wow everyone with their impressive work history and education. While those things help, of course, they can't save any job applicant who hasn't taken the time to prepare properly for the interview. Below are the key steps in preparing for the big day.

HAVE RESUME READY

Even though the employer has seen your resume, you're expected to bring one to the interview. This is so crucial that your chances of landing the job decrease instantly when you show up without one. Bring several copies, enough for as many people as you might interview with. It's irritating to managers if you assume they have your resume. Bringing it shows respect and professionalism. The resume should be in a nice, inexpensive, clear presentation folder. This will protect it from spills and wrinkles, and set it apart from other resumes.

Ideally, a short cover letter should appear first, then the resume, then testimonials from current employers and references. The focus is your resume, and in many cases that is all they will look at. Don't worry if you do not have references or a cover letter. Just a resume and cover page (name, phone number and address centered on the page) in the folder puts you ahead of most others.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Go to the company's website and find out exactly what they do, how long the company has been in business, where it fits in the marketplace, how many employees it has, whether it's public or private and how much revenue is generated annually. Make sure you know the job description, so throughout the interview you can show how your experiences and skills will help the company. Make sure you are running parallels that will spark some interest. Make sure you know who you're interviewing with and how to pronounce the names of interviewers and key people.

RESEARCH THE POSITION

Get as much information you can about the job description. Also make sure you have an idea of the salary range, to ensure neither you nor the company will be wasting time with the interview. A recruiter will help you find this information, but if you're not using a recruiter, you will usually find the salary range listed within the career section of a company website.

RESEARCH YOURSELF

Be prepared for questions about your professional success stories and challenges. Take some time to mentally outline accomplishments and how you resolved problems in ways that will show how you could be valuable to the new company. Even though your experience is on your resume, the interviewer will want to hear you expand. While researching yourself, take an honest, hard look. I once coached a job applicant who couldn't figure out why he wasn't getting offers. I knew why as soon as I met him. He was very sharp but came across as arrogant. He was burnt out on his job, and his communication style lacked enthusiasm. After I told him he seemed arrogant, he thanked me for my honesty and successfully changed his style.

ANTICIPATE THE QUESTIONS

In addition to the job-related questions, be ready for some of the more general questions that always tend to come up in interviews. Think about how you would answer the following in an informative and positive manner. It's also a good idea to practice these questions, especially the ones you find difficult.

1. What are your short-term and long-term objectives?
2. What are you looking for in a job?
3. What is your management style?
4. How do you like to be managed?
5. How do you like to manage?
6. Where do you see yourself in five years?
7. Why are you considering leaving your current company?
8. What are your strengths?
9. What are your weaknesses? (And please, please, please, don't answer this with, "Well, I'm a perfectionist ..." or "I work too hard" or other variations of this fake answer.)
10. How would your supervisor describe you?
11. Have you hired people before? If so, what do you look for?
12. Why should we hire you?
13. What can you do for us that someone else cannot?
14. What interests you the most about us?
15. What kind of salary are you looking for?
16. What salary do you think you are worth?
17. What is your current salary?
18. What are your three largest accomplishments in your career?
19. What are your three largest accomplishments in your current job?
20. What makes you a good leader?

THOSE LAST-MINUTE PREPARATIONS



Once the big-picture preparations have been made, it's time to get ready for the logistics of the interview. Some of the following suggestions seem so simple that they're almost even silly, but not following them can ruin an interview.

TAKE A TEST RUN

Drive to the location of the interview beforehand, if possible, so you can ensure you're not late and know the basic layout of the place. If you are not able to take a test run, print out directions from the Internet and go over them a few times.

MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS WORKING

Ensure your car has enough fuel so you won't have to stop at a gas station. (The smell of gas won't impress any interviewers.) Make sure your cell phone's fully charged in case you get lost and need to call the company. Make sure you have the phone number of the company you are interviewing with.

GET THINGS READY THE NIGHT BEFORE

Lay out your clothes. Shine those shoes. Make sure your outfit is fresh and professional. Remember, the way you look is not only to impress the interviewer; it is for you as well. All of us do a better job when we feel that we look great. Our dress truly does affect our confidence level. Check and double check your alarm clock. If you like the snooze button, make sure to move the alarm away from your bed so you will have to physically get up to hit the snooze.

PACK WELL

Get as much information you can about the job description. Also make sure you have an idea of the salary range, to ensure neither you nor the company will be wasting time with the interview. A recruiter will help you find this information, but if you're not using a recruiter, you will usually find the salary range listed within the career section of a company Web site.

EAT BREAKFAST AT HOME

You don't want your stomach to grumble in an interview, and you also don't want to eat in the car in case you spill something. Brush your teeth after you eat, and make sure you take a mint with you so you have fresh breath. Eat the mint about 5 minutes before the interview. (Do not take gum to help your breath. Chewing gum during the interview is unprofessional and distracting).

LEAVE EARLY

Depart early enough to get to the interview 20 minutes early to allow for parking and any unexpected traffic. This might seem early, but you will be glad you did. Sometimes parking alone can eat up more time than you expected. You will also find that getting to an appointment early allows you time to calm down, relax and get focused.

PREPARE TO BE POSITIVE

It's crucial to be upbeat and positive, so avoid negative things the day of the interview. Don't listen to the news or anything that might cause you to be sad or sidetracked. Listen to upbeat music or anything else that gets you pumped. This really is a game and you are in this game to win. I also recommend that if you are at odds with a friend or spouse you must get it straight before the interview. People can tell when others are feeling stressed about major things in life.

ONE LAST PIT STOP

When you arrive for the interview, make a last bathroom stop. Also take a quick look in the mirror and make sure you do not have anything in your teeth. Take one last look at your clothes, shoes and makeup, too. Remember, this is not just for the person you are interviewing with. It is to give you the most confidence possible.

ARRIVE EARLY, QUIETLY

You should be through the office doors about 10 minutes early - with your cell phone turned off.

MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION



Like it or not, people make judgments or assessments based on appearance. It might seem petty for an employer seeking a specific skill set to base decisions on something as superficial as clothing or grooming, but it happens. It's human nature.

You can't take your personal appearance lightly. It can determine how quickly the ice is broken. That doesn't mean every job applicant needs to head for Hollywood for a makeover, but every applicant needs to look his or her best. Looking your best shows that you take the interviewer and opportunity very seriously and are willing to do what it takes.

The sad but very true fact about first impressions is, you only get one chance. Many job applicants I've interviewed over the years didn't seem to realize that. I will never forget the unshaven man who came into my office looking like he just crawled out of the dryer in a wrinkly suit. Below are suggestions for not being like those men.

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

For men, in most settings, means a blue suit, white shirt and a sharp tie. Typically the tie should be a solid color. Shoes must be clean and polished, and socks must be black. Make sure your suit fits nicely. If you have gained or lost weight, take your suit in to be tailored. Women must wear the appropriate suit or business dress. Avoid looking too busy or wearing clothing with too many patterns. Women should also avoid perfume and styling their hair in such a fashion which requires many jerks of the neck or having to pull it back constantly.

CLEAN UP

Make sure your hair is clean cut and your face is fresh.

THERE'S NO CASUAL DRESS CODE FOR INTERVIEWS

It does not matter if people at the company are business casual at work, It is still a very good idea to dress for success. Remember you are making a first impression. (The employees dressed casually have already made theirs). In fact, don't just dress for success. As I always say, dress "better than success." Once you get the job, enjoy whatever dress code they have. The one exception to this is if a recruiter shares with you that you should NOT wear a suit and tie.

TONE IT DOWN

Piercings, unusually colored hair and tattoos must be hidden or removed if you want to be taken seriously. Take out nose rings, keep the hair a traditional color, and women should avoid showing too much cleavage. You think I am kidding. It is amazing what people will do.

DON'T STINK

Your scent can make the first impression well before you do. While you may think a generous splashing of cologne or perfume will impress, trust me, it won't. Do not wear them. I once interviewed someone with so much cologne that I had trouble breathing. Plus, you run the risk of wearing a scent that the interviewer doesn't like, is allergic to, or sparks a negative memory that distracts from your interview. (The sense of smell is very powerful in evoking memories, good and bad).

DON'T FORGET THE SECOND IMPRESSION



OK, so you're properly dressed, shaved, groomed and not stinky. But you can't relax, because while the first impression is important, it's not enough to nail the interview. You must interact with the interviewers in a pleasant, polite and professional manner.

START EARLY

Be respectful, polite and enthusiastic when meeting the receptionist. When the hiring manager, or his or her assistant, greets you, stand up and shake hands. When I interview a candidate who does not have enough energy or excitement to stand up, it concerns me.

BE FIRM

The first interaction is typically the handshake. This is a very simple task that most everyone should know how to handle professionally, yet many job candidates need coaching in this area. It's this simple: Offer a firm handshake, whether you're a man or a woman, while looking the interviewer in the eye and smiling. That's it. No big secret. Just steer clear of the limp noodles, cold fish and other flimsy handshake comparisons that always send a red flag to the interviewer. However, don't overdo it. A firm handshake is required, not a "break the hand" handshake.

DON'T SWEAT IT

Another good way to blow the handshake is to present a slimy, sweaty hand. It's natural to get nervous before an interview, and some people sweat heavily. If you get sweaty palms, keep a piece of cloth in your pocket so you can discreetly dry off before shaking hands. Quickly wiping your hand on your pants is also an option.

THE INTERVIEW



You've made the preparations. You've done your homework. Now it's time for the big event. The important things to remember throughout the interview are to relax, yet be enthusiastic, positive and honest while selling yourself.

LOOK ALIVE

Enthusiasm goes a long way. Show energy and interest in the job, the company, the interviewer and the conversation. Maintain eye contact and smile. You're not the only person interviewing, after all. If you have the same qualifications as somebody else, your pleasant, engaged manner could be the difference. Think about it in other terms: Which teacher did you learn more from in school, the one who sounded like Charlie Brown's teacher or the one who was passionate and showed personality? Which doctor were you more confident in, the one with the good bedside manner or the disinterested one? Which waitress gets the bigger tip, the one who is helpful and engaging, or the one who is watching the clock?

SELL, SELL, AND SELL

Remember, you are the product. Check your ego at the door and remember you are an unproven "product" when you walk in. The products that sell the best are the products that sell themselves. Products that sell best typically come with excellent packaging or even an excellent demo that actually shows value (remember the stuffed animal example). Take every opportunity to impress upon the interviewer how you stand out from the many other "products" in the marketplace.

SELL WITH CONFIDENCE

Use tangible proof of the benefits of hiring you with confidence, but make sure you don't come across as arrogant. It can be a difficult balancing act, but one way is to answer questions using real examples. Use the SAO approach, which stands for situation, action and outcome. For example: If asked how you have handled a certain situation, make sure you answer by saying "I was in a similar situation with XYZ Company and the action I took was XYZ and in the end this was the outcome."

BE HONEST

Don't try to make up an answer if you don't know it. Instead, either answer using relevant experience or simply say you don't know. Interviewers can usually spot a bluff or evasiveness very quickly. Similarly, don't just tell the interviewer what he or she wants to hear. If you're going to talk about a skill or accomplishment, be prepared to back it up with facts or a demonstration (SAO). A dishonest representation will always catch up with you, perhaps as early as during the interview. It is a small world out there, and if you are exaggerating about your current job, there is a good chance the interviewer will know you're being dishonest _ or find out later.

KEEP IT POSITIVE

A positive outlook transforms the people around you. I have interviewed candidates who reeked of negativity and defeat. Sighing, slouching or even looking tired can ruin the interview. When discussing your current or past employer, don't say anything negative. If you are asked why you are thinking of leaving, be truthful, but if there are indeed negative reasons be vague. Saying too much can backfire. For example, I know of a candidate that said she was leaving her current employer because she wouldn't sign off on improper accounting procedures. When this was relayed to the company she wanted to interview, the company feared she may have been a person unable to solve problems, or that even a slight accounting error could cause her to quit. The best rule of thumb is to avoid all negativity.

DON'T ACT DESPERATE

You may desperately want the job or even be desperate for employment, but try to keep those feelings under control. There's a big difference between the eager and enthusiastic candidate and one who's hard-up.

DON'T QUIT YET

There is a great, and very simple, way to avoid feeling desperate on an interview. Do not quit your current job until you have accepted an offer from the new company. This is a must. Employers prefer to hire happy, employed candidates, and you will feel more confident and less desperate during the interview. Companies are also more likely to offer a little more incentive upfront to entice you to work for them. A happy and content candidate can more easily conduct The Golden Interview.

SHOW YOUR INTERESTED

When the interview is concluded, don't forget to ask what the next step is in the process. Even if you have a pretty good idea what that step is, ask anyway. Not asking could give the impression that you're not all that interested. A statement like this always works: "I am very interested in this opportunity. What is the next step?" When you ask "what the next step is" you are asking for the job in a way that does not come across as pushy. Remember to show passion when you ask. Make sure you get business cards so you can send a thank you email or letter.

DON'T DO THIS

Below are some deadly mistakes on a first interview. If you really do not want the job, make these critical errors.

1. Arrive late.
2. If you are late, indicate you are late because you got lost or the directions were bad.
3. Show up without a resume.
4. Remain seated while shaking the interviewer's hand.
5. Do not show energy during the initial greeting.
6. Slouch in your seat.
7. Look less than professional.
8. Avoid eye contact.
9. Ask, "So, what do you guys do here?"
10. Ramble.
11. Talk more than you listen.
12. Talk over the top of the interviewer.
13. Get so caught up in small talk and war stories that you detract from the interview.
14. Brag about your accomplishments without anything to back it up.
15. Talk so quietly that the interviewer can't hear you.
16. Show no enthusiasm.
17. Call the interviewer by the wrong name.
18. Talk badly about current or past employers.
19. Flirt with the interviewer.
20. Say that you're not looking for a leadership role. (Even if you are not, save this for a later discussion.)
21. Ask about benefits.
22. Ask how much the company is paying.
23. Quickly offer up what you want to make.
24. Ask no questions at the end of the interview.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PASSION



SHOWING NO PASSION IS A MAJOR MISTAKE

It is very frustrating when I meet people that have no passion about what they are trying to accomplish. Passion truly is the difference between an average interview and an exceptional interview. To win the interview game you must express passion. In this market you must set yourself apart from the others, and passion is the key. I must admit you can be overbearing with passion, so make sure you stay in check and do not cross over into the overbearing abyss.

If you want an edge in the interview process you must show a sincere interest and passion in the process.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW



FOLLOW UP

Send an email or letter thanking the interviewer for the opportunity and reiterate your interest. This letter should be sent through your recruiter to the client. Make sure to spell check and have someone else read it for spelling, grammar and tone (your recruiter should do this for you). Mistakes in a letter can actually sink a deal. Your letters should be brief, cordial and to the point. If you say too much, you may say something that could be interpreted wrong. It's also a good idea to try to add a quick personal touch based on something you learned about the interviewer.

Here's an example:

Mr. Smith:

Thank you for your time yesterday. If you have any additional questions please let me know. I am very interested in taking the next step. All my contact information is below.

Sincerely,

Fred Jones

Cell Phone 512-555-5555

P.S. I hope your son did well at his soccer tournament.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS



I've always considered phone interviews the last resort for a first interview because it's just too hard to convey everything you want to. It can work better for a second or third interview, but there are plenty of pitfalls for an initial discussion. Below are some things to do, and not do, during phone interviews.

PREPARE LIKE A FACE- TO-FACE INTERVIEW

Prepare the same way you would for any other interview, including researching the company, having your resume nearby for reference and anticipating questions that might be asked. If you are not good on the phone, call and role-play with someone who will offer honest feedback. (I offer a service called "Phone Interview Role-Play.")

ELIMINATE DISTRACTION

Make sure you're not taking the call while in a busy or loud room. The best way to avoid any distractions is to stare into a blank wall. If you are near a window, you might see a hummingbird, fancy car or unusual event that makes you lose your train of thought. This could make you seem uninterested or not very sharp. This is a huge error. Many of us assume that because we can not be seen then no one will know we're also doing other things. Not true. For example, when I call home to visit with my wife I can always tell if I have all of her attention or if the kids and dogs have the other half. Turn off all distractions.

SET THE TONE

Some interviewers like you to call, but some will call themselves. If they call, make sure you answer the phone in a pleasant manner. Don't be monotone. Act genuinely happy to hear from the person. Remember, the caller can't see your body language, so you need to make your optimism and enthusiasm evident on the phone.

STAND UP AND SMILE

Don't sit during the phone interview because it doesn't allow for a sharp delivery. Also, and this sounds strange, but remember to smile while you are on the phone and make the same gestures you would in a personal interview. I can always tell during phone calls, and so can other experienced interviewers, when someone is uninterested, bored, sidetracked, not feeling well or sad. Conversely, I can tell when someone's enthusiastic, happy and excited or intelligent.

AVOID BAD CELL COVERAGE

If at all possible, make sure you find a place that gets good cell service and stay there. If you have to be in a car, drive to a spot you know will have the cell tower you need so you are not worried about dropping signals or having to say, "Can you hear me now?" Charge your phone the night before and also make sure you have plenty of gas in your car. The windows should be up. If you have your air-conditioning on, make sure the vents aren't facing directly toward you so you don't sound like you're in a windstorm. If you can, use a headpiece so you can hear clearly and the conversation can be clear and sharp.

TRY TO RELAX

You'll come across much more calm and in control if you can find a way to relax and enjoy the conversation. One of the best ways to relax is to remember you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you. They have a need they want filled quickly, and you have a need that you want filled quickly. You are both in the same boat. Again, remember that this is a game. The qualified applicant with the most natural confidence, communication skills, personality and likeability will win.

GET THE JOB OFFER



Of course, the entire purpose of all these interviewing tips is to get a job offer. Proper interviewing skills cannot only help you get the offer, but get the higher offer.

I have met with college graduates with many years of experience who were making \$40,000 a year when they should have been making closer to \$60,000. I have also met with people right out of school making nearly \$60,000. What's the difference? There were many factors, but the point is not everyone gets paid what they should. Superb interviewing skills can ensure the best offer.

If you are using a recruiter it is much easier to deal with the question of your salary expectations. If you are handling it on your own, be prepared with a number.

WORKING WITH A RECRUITER

When working with a trusted recruiter, the best approach is to say something like: Well, Glenn shared that the salary range was "X" and that fits within the compensation range I am looking for.

DO NOT decided to try and get a little more during an interview, make sure your answers falls within the range that you know you were submitted at. If you are dealing with a recruiter and they don't tell you the salary (or salary range) you were submitted at you need to FIRE them.

Remember, the last thing you want to do is express a much larger salary requirement than what they have budgeted for or that they were told you were looking for. Your recruiter will know the salary range.

WORKING WITHOUT A RECRUITER

When the salary question is asked and you are not sure, and you have some true flexibility, try putting it back in the employer's court with an answer like: "I know from my research you will be more than fair, so I am not concerned about the money at this point, I am however really excited about the opportunity".

Obviously, this is a simple suggestion and every circumstance is different. But have your options ready so you can avoid the deer-in-the-headlights look. The best thing you can do is find out upfront what the true salary range is and make sure that you fit within that range. Knowing the salary range will allow you to answer this question more directly with an exact salary range (overall package) you are looking for.

DON'T OVERSTATE EXPECTATIONS

Some people think it is part of the negotiation game to shoot way too high on salary expectations. But shooting too high can make you appear silly and cost you the job. You know what you want, so ask for it. Just make sure your research shows this is realistic.

CLOSING REMARKS

We would like to close by saying True Find Staffing all started with the vision of our CEO, Glenn Pack, to not only help companies exceed performance expectations and reduce time to hire, but also to impact the lives of people. In our eyes, TFS recruiting is all about getting personal, changing peoples lives by finding them an opportunity worth having. It is a privilege and honor to transform and impact lives and company performance across the US.

Please know that you deserve the best! **SO DO WHAT IT TAKES!**

Have a great day!

Glenn Pack & the True Find Staffing team



If you have any questions feel free to give us a call directly: (214) 929-9436

