

The 6 Steps to Your Ideal Career or Business!



Other Career Options:

- Be Your Own Boss: Turning Experience into Free-Lance or Contracted Opportunities
- Education & Training for a New Career

Step 6:

Interviewing and Negotiating Tips to Land the Job!

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Step 6: Interviewing & Negotiating Tips to Land the Job!

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Interviewing and Negotiating Skills

The interview is one of the most important components of the job change process because a successful interview may lead to a job offer. However, since most people do not interview for a job on a regular basis, they rarely have the opportunity to practice the skill of interviewing effectively. This skill takes a tremendous amount of practice since it requires the ability to think quickly and formulate accomplishment statements about prior work experience in a high stress situation when there is a lot at stake.

Preparing for the Interview:

Prior to the interview, conducting comprehensive research about the job and the company is an invaluable strategy for you to be able to present the ways in which your background matches what the employer needs.

Types of Interviews:

Being aware of the types and styles of interviews and learning some tips to manage each type effectively can help you feel less intimidated and more confident during the process.

Practice Questions:

You can never get too much practice answering typical interview questions.

Negotiating Salary and Benefits:

The most difficult aspect of the interview process for many individuals is the negotiation of salary and benefits. Although it isn't always possible to negotiate salary and benefits, being prepared for the discussion is critical.

In "**Step 6: Interviewing and Negotiating Tips to Land the Job!**", you will have the opportunity to learn tips and strategies to effectively prepare for an interview and handle salary and benefits discussions.

Questions to Consider About Interviewing and Negotiating:

Questions	Yes	No
1. Are you comfortable using effective shameless self promotion strategies in an interview?		
2. Do you know the most critical things to do prior to an interview?		
3. Can you respond to an interview question with an answer formatted as a "SAR" statement (i.e., "Situation, Action, Result")?		
4. Do you know what the interviewer wants to know about you during the interview?		
5. Are you clear about what you want to know about the company with whom you are interviewing?		
6. Are you familiar with the four types of interviews and how to prepare for each type?		
7. Are you comfortable knowing that you could make a positive (or negative) impression in the first 60 seconds of the interview?		
8. Do you know how to answer the "Tell Me About Yourself" question effectively?		
9. Have you practiced answering difficult or challenging questions?		
10. Are you comfortable with handling questions about your past salary history or your salary requirements?		

Preparing for the Interview

Research the Company:

Find out as much as you possibly can about the job and the company.

- **Internet:**
 - Review the company website
 - Read articles about the company in the local online newspapers.
 - Scan the blogs to see what people are saying about the company.
- **Networking Contacts:** Talk to contacts in your network to identify people who work at the company who may be willing to talk to you about the company, job, industry, etc.
- **Linked In:** Be an active member of Linked In, the online professional networking site (<http://www.linkedin.com>), to find company information or contacts to talk to in the company.

Research the Job:

- **Accomplishments:** Review the job description and develop a list of accomplishments that you have achieved related to each requirement listed in the job description.
- **SAR Format:** Format your accomplishments for the interview:
 - **Situation:** How would you describe the situation?
 - **Action:** What action did you take to resolve the situation?
 - **Result:** What was the benefit or result achieved?

Practice Answering Sample Interview Questions:

- **Practice, practice, practice!**
 - **Friend:** Have a friend randomly ask you questions (samples included on pages 7 to 11) to get used to answering questions out of context.

Bring to the Interview:

- **Resume:** Extra copies of your resume.
- **References:** Copies of your reference list with contact information.
- **Reference Letters:** Copies of reference letters, if available.
- **Business cards:** Provide a business card with your contact information, if you can.
- **Paper & Pen:** A pad of paper and pen (make sure it writes!) to take notes.
- **Your Questions:** Questions that you may want to ask them, if there is an opportunity to do so.

Goals of a Good Interview

What Do Interviewers Want to Know about You?

1. **Can you do the job?**
How well do your skills, training, experience, and previous accomplishments match the job requirements?
2. **Do you want to do the job?**
Does this job provide the type of opportunity that will offer ongoing job satisfaction for you so that you will continue to be a productive, contributing member of the organization?
3. **Can you and the direct supervisor work together?**
Does your personality style and work style complement the supervisor's style?
4. **Are you a good fit with the team?**
Will you be able to work well with your co-workers, internal departments, and/or external customers?
5. **Can we afford you?**
Will the salary and benefit package match your requirements?

What Do You Want to Know about Them?

1. **Do you feel enthusiastic about this job?**
Are the job requirements a good match with your skills, strengths, experience, and accomplishments?
2. **Will this position help you to achieve your short or long-term career goals?**
Does this job give you the opportunity to enhance your experience, use your skills in new or innovative ways, broaden or deepen the scope of your accomplishments, or provide training which will help you achieve your short or long-term career goals?
3. **Would you enjoy working with the direct supervisor?**
Are your style preferences a good fit with what this supervisor desires in an employee?
4. **Would you enjoy working with the team?**
Would you be able to work well with the co-workers and other employees?
5. **Can they afford you?**
Will the salary and benefit package offered meet your needs?

Types & Styles of Interviews

Types of Interviews:

- **Informational Meeting:** You may be involved in an informational meeting with a networking contact as you are researching areas of interest in your job search or career transition. This meeting could turn into an informal interview if the contact recognizes that their company has a need which you might be able to fill.
- **Screening Interview:** This type of interview is often conducted with a recruiter or Human Resources representative from the company by phone, in person, with a group of candidates, or at a job fair. The goal of this type of interview is to eliminate candidates by comparing them to specific job requirements. The interviewer may have no functional knowledge of the job itself.
- **Employment Interview:** The Hiring Manager (or direct supervisor of the position) will often conduct the actual employment interview to determine which candidate will be the best fit with the job requirements and the company. However, see below for various other ways that employment interviews are conducted.
- **Follow-up Interview:** This interview is often held with other higher level employees of the organization to confirm the decision to hire a particular candidate.

Employment Interview Styles:

- **Standard:** One candidate, one interviewer.
- **Multiple:** Several interviews set up with different members of the company.
- **Panel or Team:** One candidate, several interviewers (could be team members).
- **Group:** Many candidates, one interviewer.

10 Tips to a Successful Interview:

1. **Practice, practice, practice**..... responding to sample questions.
2. **Research** the company.
3. Prepare your own **questions**.
4. Review your **resume, accomplishments**.
5. **Dress** appropriately (even for informational meetings).
6. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes **early**.
7. Initiate strong **handshake**.
8. Convey **confidence, credibility, and enthusiasm**.
9. Present yourself, your experience, your previous bosses, and previous employers in the **best possible light**.
10. Ask for the **business card** of the interviewer and write a **thank you note** to every person with whom you interview.

Practice Typical Interview Questions

“Tell Me About Yourself”

The first question often asked in an interview is some variation on:

“Tell me about yourself”.

Variations include: “Tell us about your background”, “Tell us about your previous employment or experience”. “How does your background match the position?”, “How would you describe yourself?” etc.

First Impressions:

Some research suggests that the first 60 seconds of the interview are the most critical in making a positive or negative impression on the interviewer. Some variation of the “Tell me about yourself” question is often the opening to the interview. Since most people are nervous for the first few minutes of the interview, successful candidates prepare a response in advance to this question and practice saying it until it flows naturally.

Link Accomplishments to the Job:

To answer this question effectively, do your research on the job and company. Then, think about your accomplishments and experience that are related to this particular job and/or company.

Two to Three Minute Response:

Create a short (two to three minutes or so) response that indicates why your background is an excellent fit with this particular job.

Write Your Response:

Write your response out and practice it prior to the interview. By creating a concise statement of how your background fits with the job, you will feel confident and prepared going into the interview even if the first question is not a variation on “Tell me about yourself”.

Draft “Tell Me About Yourself” Response: Think about a job that you are considering and draft a response to the “Tell me about yourself” question below:

Answering Questions about Yourself and Your Background

These are common questions that you should be prepared to answer in an interview. A suggestion to consider on how you might want to respond to each type of question is included.

1. How would you describe yourself: positive aspects?

- a. How would you describe your strengths?
- b. What are your major assets?
- c. How do you rate yourself as a professional?
- d. How would you describe yourself?
- e. What else do you think I should know about you?

Answer these types of questions by focusing on your top 3 strengths. Give a specific accomplishment example for each strength.

2. How would you describe yourself: negative aspects?

- a. How would you describe your weaknesses?
- b. How would you describe your greatest failure?
- c. If you could relive your last 10 years, what changes would you make?

Provide one example of something that you have overcome in the past and focus on what specific actions you took to overcome and resolve the situation. Be careful not to pick something directly related to the job for which you are interviewing.

3. How would others describe you?

- a. Friends:
- b. Co-Workers:
- c. Previous Boss:

Again, focus on your strengths and provide an example of each.

4. What is important to you?

- a. What does success mean to you?
- b. What are you passionate about....or what inspires you?
- c. What is the most important thing that you have learned about life so far?
- d. What are your hobbies?

Focus on the job for which you are interviewing. Answer these questions based upon how the job could assist you in feeling successful, passionate, or inspired. Only talk about hobbies that are directly related to the job.

Answering Questions about Yourself and Your Background (continued)

5. **Who has influenced you?**

- a. Who has had the greatest positive influence on your life? Why?
- b. What one individual (living or deceased) do you admire the most? Why?

Select someone who demonstrates the traits that you feel are your strengths which support you in being a good employee.

6. **How did you feel about your previous job(s)/employer(s)?**

- a. What did you think of your last boss, co-workers, company, etc.?
- b. How would you describe the best/worst boss you ever had?
- c. How did you get your past jobs?
- d. What did you like most/least about your last job?
- e. Which of your jobs did you like the best?

Always present yourself, your experience, your previous employers, co-workers, and companies in the best possible light. Tell the truth, but choose to tell the positive part of the story. Focus on the positive aspects of each situation. For example, if you and your boss had different approaches or styles, talk about how you adapted your approach to meet his/her expectations and achieved good performance evaluations. When talking about what you enjoyed least about a job, select something from your past work that is not relevant to the job for which you are interviewing.

7. **Why are you looking for a new job?**

- a. Why did you leave your previous employer?
- b. Why has it taken you so long to find a job?
- c. Isn't this a career switch?

Again, be as positive as possible. Examples: "My company went through a reorganization and my position was eliminated." "I have been using this transition time to explore opportunities which will be a good fit with my strengths." "I'm interested in transitioning my skills from the x industry to the y industry because this industry is more closely aligned with my long-term career goals."

8. **Why are you interested in our company?**

This is where your research will come in handy. "Based upon the research that I have done online, it seems like your company is..... This would be an excellent fit with my background because...."

9. **How would you describe your work style preferences?**

- a. Can you work under pressure and meet deadlines?
- b. Do you like working by yourself or with a team of co-workers?
- c. Do you prefer staff or line work? Why?
- d. Why do you feel you have management potential?
- e. What is your philosophy of management?
- f. What is your leadership style?

This is where the results from your Career Transition Plan (from Step 2) and your skills and interest assessments from IHaveaPlanIowa.org can come in handy. Focus on the style preferences that are relevant to the job for which you are interviewing.

Answering Questions about Yourself and Your Background (continued)

10. **How did you act in specific situations?**

- a. How have you helped increase sales or profits or reduced costs?
- b. Describe a situation where you had to resolve a conflict with a coworker or customer?
- c. Describe a situation in which you used creativity to solve a problem?
- d. How would you work effectively with a boss who had a work style that was the opposite of yours?

*Use the “SAR” approach to describe: 1) the **Situation** (in the most positive terms possible); 2) the **Actions** that you took to resolve the situation; and 3) the **Results** you achieved.*

11. **What are your goals?**

- a. What are your short and long-range goals?
- b. If you are hired, what do you see in your future?
- c. What position do you expect to have in five years?
- d. What new goals have you established recently?
- e. If you had complete freedom, what job would you choose?

*Once again, this is where the results from your Career Transition Plan (from Step 2) and your skills and interest assessments from IHaveaPlanIowa.org can come in handy. Focus on the strengths you want to cultivate, the contribution you would like to make, the skills you hope to enhance, the education and training that you would like to pursue **which are directly related to the position for which you are interviewing.***

12. **Will there be a problem if we hire you?**

- a. Aren't you overqualified for this position?
- b. Will you be out to take your boss's job?
- c. How long would it take you to become productive in this position?

Focus on the contribution that you can make to the organization's current and future success. Though there is always a learning curve in any new job, emphasize that you will be able to contribute quickly based upon your past experience.

13. **What business, character, and credit references can you give us?**

Provide a copy of your reference list with contact information. You can include previous bosses, co-workers, team members, customers, professional associates, members of community groups with whom you have worked, etc.

Handling Illegal Questions in the Interview

Employers are legally allowed to ask questions related to your ability to do the job based on the job requirements. If asked any of the following questions, prior to answering, you may want to ask the interviewer: ***“Can you give me an idea of the specific functions included in the job which would require this information?”*** If the question is specific to the job functions, answer the question in the most positive way possible.

1. Health:

- a. How is your health?
- b. Do you smoke, drink, or take drugs?
- c. How tall are you or how much do you weigh?
- d. How many sick days did you take last year?
- e. Do you have any disabilities?
- f. Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations?

2. Citizenship:

- a. What country are you from?
- b. What is your native tongue?
- c. How long have you lived here?

3. Religion or Group Affiliation:

- a. What religion do you practice?
- b. Which religious holidays do you observe?
- c. Do you belong to a club or social organization?

4. Age:

- a. How old are you?
- b. How much longer do you plan to work before you retire?

5. Marital and Family Status:

- a. Is this your maiden name?
- b. Do you have or plan to have children?
- c. Can you get a babysitter on short notice for overtime or travel?
- d. What do your parents do for a living?
- e. If you get pregnant, will you continue to work, and will you come back after maternity leave?

6. Gender:

- a. We've always had a man/woman do this job. Do you think you can handle it?
- b. How do you feel about supervising men/women?

What Questions Do You Want to Ask in the Interview?

Types of Questions Which May be of Interest to You

You want to be prepared with questions to ask in the interview. Do your research on the company in advance and form questions to help you determine if this position and company are a good fit for you. As thought provokers, here are a few examples of what other interviewees have asked.

Job Responsibilities & Expectations:

1. What are the main responsibilities of the position? Who would be my key associates? To whom would I report? Who would I supervise? What would be the extent of my authority in carrying out these responsibilities?
2. What are the main problem areas that need attention in this new position?
3. What are you personally looking for in a successful candidate? What capabilities do you feel are most important?
4. What objectives would I be expected to meet or surpass? How would I learn the practices, policies, and corporate expectations that will enable me to function effectively?
5. How will job performance be evaluated for this position?
6. What are the opportunities to expand my responsibilities within this position?
7. How are performance reviews conducted? What type of salary review system is in place?

Department & Company:

8. How would you describe the management style of the organization?
9. How would you describe the management style of my supervisor?
10. What are the major strengths of the department?
11. What qualities of employees are most valued in this company and this department?
12. What are the major strengths of the company?
13. What are the company's primary goals or objectives in the coming year?
14. How much has the company grown, or decreased in size, in the last five years and what are the projections for the next five years?
15. What is the primary challenge the company faces in the coming year?
16. How is the company perceived in the marketplace?
17. What makes this a good company to work for?

Benefits:

18. What types of incentives, bonus programs, or motivation systems exist?
19. What are the benefits of working for this type of company, both tangibly and intangibly (i.e., tangible: health, dental, life, investments, stocks, profit sharing, etc.; intangible: professional growth, job satisfaction, sense of community with co-workers, cooperative atmosphere, aesthetic environment, focus on employee growth and development, etc.)?
20. What types of employee training programs exist and how do you qualify to participate?
21. Is tuition reimbursement provided and if so, what are the requirements?

Closing the Deal! Negotiating Salary and Benefit Packages

Interviewers often ask about salary information early in the process (including requiring you to state your salary history or requirements in the cover letter) as a means to screen people out and narrow the list of candidates. Often, that “screening out” process is based upon the invalid assumption that you are either too experienced or inexperienced. Use your best judgment on whether or not there is an opportunity to negotiate salary and benefits in a particular situation. Typically, the higher the level of position in the organization that you are seeking, the greater the opportunity to negotiate salary and benefits. However, regardless of the level of position that you are seeking, keep the following tips in mind.

Talk salary requirements rather than salary history:

1. ***Salary Ranges Not Comparable:*** Most employers establish salary ranges for positions in their company based upon the contribution that a particular job makes to the organization. This salary range may or may not be comparable to the range established for a similar position at a different company. This is particularly true if you are transitioning to a different type of job, organization, or industry.
2. ***Unique benefit package:*** No two companies, even those within the same industry, offer the same package of benefits (i.e., health, life, dental, vision insurance; paid vacation, holiday, and sick days; matching 401k contributions; tuition reimbursement; etc.). Each benefit that is offered has a dollar value which contributes to the employee’s lifestyle or, in some cases, requires a contribution from the employee (i.e., health benefits offered with a monthly contribution by the employee for self and/or dependents).

Analyze your previous benefits package (if you had one with your last employer):

Calculate how much each benefit was worth to you in dollars (i.e., How much would it cost you to purchase that benefit if you had to at another company? If you are being offered an hourly wage and you want to calculate the value of your previous salary plus benefits on an hourly basis, simply calculate the following:

1. ***Annual Salary ÷ 2,080 = \$x (salary per hour)***
2. ***Total Value of Benefits Offered ÷ 2,080 = \$x (benefits per hour)***
3. ***Total Salary plus Benefits per hour = #1 + #2 = \$x***

By calculating the value of your total package, you will be prepared to have an intelligent conversation about salary and benefits at the appropriate time. Even if you determine that there isn’t any room to negotiate, you still need to know how the proposed salary and benefits package compares to your previous combined package. Often, people accept a new position thinking they will be making the same or more money, only to discover after they start work and meet with the Human Resources Department, that the benefits offered are less than those at their previous employment or require an “employee contribution” or payroll deduction. Before you accept a position, always know the value of the entire salary and benefit package.

Research typical salary ranges:

Career One Stop (<http://careeronestop.org>): If you are transitioning to a new job, career, or industry, you can conduct research online to determine typical salary ranges. Go to the Career One Stop to research a specific occupation. The Occupational Profile for each occupation includes a section called “Wage and Employment Trends”. This will allow you to compare national, state, and local wage information, typical of a particular job, occupation, or career.

Six Tips to Get What You Want:

The goal of an effective salary discussion is to ensure that both you and the employer end up in a win/win position. The employer wants to feel that they are hiring a great employee for a fair price (salary plus benefits, if any) and you want to feel like you are being offered a package (salary plus benefits, if any) that will meet your needs.

The salary range for a position, established by the company, typically is dependent upon the scope of responsibility of the position. What you “deserve to make” or what you have made in the past isn’t relevant. Your goal is to determine if the amount being offered (or the salary range for the position), plus the benefits will meet your needs.

1. **Monthly budget:** Based upon your budget for monthly living expenses, determine how much money you need each month so that you can determine your minimum salary requirements.
2. **Analyze and prioritize benefits:** If you had a benefits package with your last employer, calculate what the package was worth in dollars. Prioritize the benefits (i.e., health/dental/vision insurance, disability/life insurance, vacation time, etc.) based upon their importance to you.
3. **Salary requirements:** Talk about salary requirements (plus benefits package) **NOT** salary history. What you made in the past is not relevant to what you require for the future and what they are offering for the position.
4. **Salary range plus benefits:** Focus on a salary range (plus benefits), rather than a fixed dollar amount.
5. **Job Requirements:** Talk about the job requirements first! Find out if this position is a good fit for you. Try not to discuss salary until after they know they want you and you know you want them.
6. **“What salary range do you have in mind?”** If possible, ask them what salary range they have in mind for the job or what typical salary ranges are for this type of position in their company.

Salary Negotiation Priorities:

When preparing for a discussion with an employer about salary, use your best judgment, depending upon the circumstances in each situation. Remember that typically, the higher the level of position in the organization that you are seeking and the higher the salary, the greater the opportunity to negotiate various aspects of the salary process. When planning your approach, keep the following priorities in mind.

First Priority: Job Responsibilities

The most important thing to do first is to ensure that the job is a good fit for you and you are a good fit for the job. Often, it is easier to create a win/win situation when both parties are interested. So, the first priority is to focus on the responsibilities of the position.

Second Priority: Their Benefits

Have a clear picture of the value of the benefits you have received in the past so that you can make a good comparison to the package of benefits being offered by the prospective company. The types of benefits offered (or not offered) may influence what you need to make in order to cover your living expenses.

Third Priority: Their Salary Range

Ideally, it would be great if you can find out what the established salary range is for the job being offered or for comparable jobs in the company so that you can determine if your salary requirements fit within their range. If you are unable to find out what their salary range is, you can research typical salary ranges for comparable jobs in the industry to get a general idea.

Fourth Priority: Intangible Benefits

Explore other intangible benefits that may be possible.

Salary Negotiation Discussion:

First Priority: Job Responsibilities

- Before we talk about salary, can you tell me something about the major duties and responsibilities of the position?
- My compensation and package of benefits at (ABC Company) probably do not match what your company offers and therefore, wouldn't be a good comparison. So, before we talk about salary and benefits, can you tell me more about the responsibilities of the position?

Second Priority: Their Benefits

- Before discussing salary requirements, it would be helpful for me to understand the package of benefits offered by your company. Is this information I can get from you or should I talk with Human Resources before we continue our salary discussions?

Salary Negotiation Discussion (continued):

Third Priority: Their Salary Range

Their Range:

- Can you tell me what range you have in mind for this position or the range you have established for positions of a comparable level at this company?
- From the research that I have conducted for this industry, I have learned that comparable positions are paid from \$_____ to \$_____. What range do you have in mind?

Your Range (If all else fails!):

- In my present (last) position, I was making between \$_____ and \$_____ and had a benefits package valued at \$_____. How does this compare with the range you had in mind?
- I'm looking for a salary in the range of \$_____ and \$_____ because...(briefly review your experience and how it matches the position). What range do you have in mind?
- I would be concerned about starting at the minimum of the salary range, since I have _____ years of experience (briefly review your experience and how it matches the position). Is there any flexibility in hiring a new employee at a salary that is higher in the range?

Fourth Priority: Intangible Benefits

- **Virtually anything can be negotiated, depending upon the situation:** Job sharing, telecommuting, computer for home, company vehicle, car allowance, flex time/hours, office location (to match your work style preferences and increase productivity), relocation expenses, business expenses, company credit card, travel requirements, vacation schedule, immediate eligibility on insurance, cash bonus to compensate for COBRA expenses, 3/6/9 month performance review with salary increase potential, incentive bonus, sign on bonus, profit sharing plan, commissions, temporary living costs, stock options, pension and retirement programs, club memberships, training/educational courses, Board/Committee/Professional Association memberships, tax-estate/financial planning assistance, termination/severance/outplacement, matching investment programs, etc.

NOTES: