

Management Recruiters Of Wausau, WI Interview Handbook

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Interview Confirmation

This booklet will provide you with valuable interviewing tips that can give you a winning edge over other, less prepared, candidates. Review it thoroughly and prepare your responses and questions from the suggestions contained in this packet. As always, feel free to call us if you have any questions or concerns.

Good Luck!

Objective of the Interview

An interviewer has just one objective: to decide whether or not to make you a job offer. While the interviewer will examine your work history and educational background, your strengths and accomplishments will also be important criterion. He or she is also interested in evaluating your level of motivation, values, attitude and personality. In other words, to find out if you're the right person for the job, what your potential is for promotion and whether or not you will fit into the company environment.

While it's true that an interview is an important screening tool for companies, it also allows you to learn those things you need to know about the position and the company so that you can make an intelligent decision about the job. Always approach an interview focused on your objective: getting a job offer.

As with many situations, preparation is the key to success. The job market is very competitive and you probably will not be the only qualified candidate for a position. The deciding factor may simply be the way you present your skills and qualifications relevant to the position and how well you conduct yourself during the interview. This booklet has been made available for your use by your executive recruiter. It will help you prepare for and succeed at the interview. Take the time to review the material in this booklet. The tips and techniques outlined herein have been tested, and they work. They will improve your chances of receiving a job offer. Should you have any questions about your upcoming interview, the company, the opportunity, or the suggestions printed in this booklet, consult your MRI Executive Recruiter.

Overview: Preparation

I. Know Yourself

- Can you honestly visualize resigning from your current position? (See "Dealing With Counteroffers")
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What are your short and long-term goals?
- Evaluate yourself in terms of the position you seek?
- Formulate responses by asking the question: "Why should they hire me?"
- Remember that you're there to sell yourself and secure a job offer.

II. Research the Company

- Utilize the library to review annual reports, trade magazines and newspaper articles.
- The Internet offers a wealth of company information and industry statistics
- Know the company's products and services.
- Be prepared to tell the interviewer why their company is attractive to you.

Typical Interview Questions & Responses

You should give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way.

- Describe jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions.
- Include short stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved (see FAB worksheet on pages 17-19).

A. Exploring your Background Questions

Tell me about yourself.

- Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position.
- Keep responses concise and brief and avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs and bosses.
- "Tell-me-about-yourself" means, "Tell me about your qualifications." Prepare a one to two minute discussion of your qualifications Start with education and discuss your experiences. Describe your performance (in raises, promotions, innovative designs, sales volume, increased profits, etc.)

What are your greatest strengths?

- Interviewers like to hear abstract qualities. Loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, fast learner, technical skills, politeness, and promptness, expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid the simple generalization "I like people". It's not a good answer.

What are your greatest weaknesses?

- Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all of your imperfections. (Do not state "not being able to go to work on Mondays". or "coming in late", etc.). Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, i.e., "Sometimes work too hard to make sure things are done accurately").

B. Personality Questions

What do you do in your spare time?

- Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.

C. Motive Questions

Answer motive questions enthusiastically. Show the interviewer that you are interested in the position and that you really want the job. Remember to maintain eye contact and be sincere.

How can you contribute to this company?

- Be positive and sell! Bringing strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.

Why should I hire you for this position?

- Explain your qualifications and how they "fit" the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why it's work that you enjoy. Emphasize your ability to successfully perform the duties required.

Why do you want to work for our firm?

- Make a compliment about what the company does, its' location, or its' people. Other positive remarks might be about the company's product or service, content of the position or possibilities for growth or advancement. Research about the company is important here.

Where do you hope to be in five years?

- Use conservative growth positions that clearly show you plan to be there in five years and that their investment in you will pay. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in the position. Never tell the interviewer that you feel you'll be more successful than they are. But do show a strong desire for promotions.

What interests you most about this position?

- Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two-word answer such as, "the challenge" or "the opportunity", will force them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

How long do you plan to be with this company?

- As with marriage, most employers expect a till-death-do-us-part attitude, but they can be equally attracted to the candidate with ambition and candor. "As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field", is a reasonable response.

What are your career goals?

Your answer should depend on a specific time frame:

- Short term - "I want to be the best in my current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This, in itself, will assure my commitment to the firm and raise me to the next level of responsibility and promotion. I see myself wanting to stay technical but learn the necessary skills to lead people and projects."
- Long term - "After proving my abilities, I see myself in a firm with the possibility of moving into level of management that allows me to keep my skills sharp"

What are you doing to achieve your goals?

- "I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you see from my resume, by taking company educational courses, when offered, and college courses. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep me informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations in my field."

D. Job Satisfaction Questions

Why did you leave your previous employer?

- NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition.

What did you like most about your previous job?

What did you like least about at your previous job?

- An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position

Why are you looking for another job?

- Again, be positive. I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at _____ Corporation. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth, and recognition. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career.'

What do you think your employers' obligations are to you?

- Interviewers listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic, company atmosphere, with the opportunity to advance. Such a person, they surmise, has motivation and staying power.

Are you applying for any other jobs?

- In your answer, show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a well-defined, focused objective. Make it known that your talents are applicable to other businesses and that you have explored ways to maximize your potential and are serious about finding the perfect opportunity. Don't give an indication that you are just shopping.

E. Past Performance Questions

(To determine behavior based on past examples)

What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?

- Again, be truthful and admit not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice as you can to make the best decision possible.

What causes you to lose your temper?

- Everybody has a low boiling point on some particular issue. Pick one of yours; something safe and reasonable. People who are late to meetings, blame shifting, broken appointments and office "back-stabbing" are suitable responses. Don't say that you never fly off the handle. You won't be believed.

What are your greatest accomplishments?

- Be ready to recant one or two stories that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A special project that you pioneered at your previous job, cutting department expenses, increasing productivity or receiving frequent promotions are a few examples.

How do you feel about a younger male/female boss?

- A question like this usually means that your boss will either be younger or of the opposite sex or both. Be certain that if you register any concern, you will probably not be hired. Explain that their age or sex is of no importance to you. You are only interested in their capability and what you can learn from them.

What kind of worker are you?

- Again, no one is perfect. Showing that you tackle every assignment with all of your energy and talents is admirable but mention that you also learn from your mistakes.

F. Salary Questions

Salary discussions should be avoided, if possible.

What type of salary do you have in mind?

- Do not state a starting figure. A suitable reply: I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me the best candidate for this position, you will extend me your best and most fair offer.

What is your current salary?

- Answer truthfully. Remember that "salary" includes base, bonuses, commissions, benefits, and vacations as well as sick days and personal days. Also, if you are due a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect.

G. Other questions you should be prepared to answer truthfully:

- Are you willing to relocate?
- May we check your references?
- May we verify your income?

Answer a question to the best of your ability and then relax. If there is a period of silence before the interviewer asks the next question, stay calm. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and maintain poise.

Questions for You to Ask

Your interviews, however, should be a two-way conversation. You must ask questions and take an active role in the interview. This demonstrates the importance you place on your work and career. Asking

questions gives you a chance to demonstrate your depth of Knowledge in the field as well as to establish an easy flow of conversation and relaxed atmosphere between you and the interviewer Building this kind of rapport is always a plus in a interview.

Remember, you are not just there for the interviewer to determine if you are right for the position but your questions can help you determine if this job is right for you. Some of your questions should evolve from research you've done on the company in preparing for the interview. Following are some guidelines for your questions as well as some examples.

- Don't cross-examine the employer.
- Ask questions requiring an explanation. Questions that can be answered with a yes or no are conversation stoppers.
- Don't interrupt when the employer is answering YOUR question.
- Ask job-relevant questions. Focus on the job, the company, products, services, people.
- Prior to the interview, write your list of Interest Questions and take them with you.
- Ask about your potential peers, subordinates, and superiors. Take notes.
- Ask the employer how he/she got where they are today.

A. Interest Questions

Why do you want someone for this job?

- Force the interviewer to explain why this job can't be done by one of his current employees. The answer may give you a valuable job description.

B. Job Satisfaction Questions

Ask questions that relate to the responsibilities, importance and authority of the position as well as those investigating the rewards for a job well done and the long-range career opportunities.

C. Past Performance Questions

Why isn't this position being filled from within the company?

- You may discover that nobody in this organization would accept it or that your future fellow employees are a weak lot.

How many people have held this job in the last five years?

Were they promoted or did they leave the company?

- If the turnover has been high, you have a right to suspect that the job may leave something to be desired. Or it could mean that you could expect to be promoted quickly.

How did you get started in the company?

- A good way to get to know the interviewer better and gain insight into the promotional path the company follows.

What are examples of the best results produced by people in this job?

- Here you may discover you are overqualified or in a position to ask for considerably more money

D. Additional Questions

- What would my responsibilities and duties be?
- What are the most difficult aspects of the position?

- Describe a typical day on the job?
- Describe the department's/company's growth in the next 2 years?
- What is the philosophy on training and development here?
- Has there been downsizing within the company? How is it handled?
- How do you think I'd fit into the job and into your organization?
- What projects would I be Involved in now? In the future?
- Who would I be working for and with?
- What is the person doing who used to hold this position?
- When would you need me to start?
- May I see my work area?
- May I meet some of my future co-workers?

Telephone Interviewing Tips

How to pass a screening interview when it's conducted over the phone.

By Calvin E. Bruce & Paula W Moore

Perhaps you're a pro at selling yourself face-to-face. How comfortable, though, are you at interviewing over the phone?

Telephone screening interviews are becoming more commonplace as companies seek to cut hiring costs and streamline the selection process. A hiring manager can spend an hour and half screening three candidates over the phone, then invite the most impressive one to the company for a lengthier interview.

John Young, president of First American Rehab, a health care company based in Athens, Georgia, personally interviews as many as 50 candidates a week over the phone, "Telephone prescreening is extremely cost effective," he says, "because 75% to 80% of the people you talk to can be easily eliminated." Mr. Young believes more companies will make use of phone interviewing for this reason

Given this trend, your job search may involve more telephone interviewing. Whether you are talking to headhunters or company recruiters, the more convincingly you make your case over the phone will determine further interest in you as a job candidate.

Phone interviewing is unique. You can't count on visual stimuli such as good looks or power suits, eye contact or body language, to aid your presentation. Neither can you rely on visual signals to interpret the interviewers' response. In this context, faceless conversation takes on an added dimension of importance. Both strengths and weaknesses, as conveyed by voice, are magnified through the phone. Your voice personifies everything about you.

Headhunters, in particular, listen for a relaxed style that communicates confidence, enthusiasm and intelligence. This is reflected in a smooth conversation flow devoid of cliches or verbal catchalls to stall for time as well as other negatives.

The following techniques will help you prepare for and handle any phone interview situations, especially with company officials:

Preparation Is Key

The success of a telephone interview begins with mental preparation and setting the stage with the interviewer. The first order of business is to establish a clear time frame for the conversation. By mutual agreement, this should be at least thirty minutes when both parties can be free of interruptions and distractions.

If you're currently employed, arrange for a phone interview in the evening rather than during the workday. Confidentiality and discretion may be at risk if you interview during working hours; you never know who might barge into your office unannounced or overhear something by accident. In the privacy of your home, you can be more at ease and in control of your surroundings.

Being clear on the interview format gives you an edge in preparation. Before the actual interview, it will help to know the topics to be covered, objectives to attain and the basic information regarding the position to be discussed. It also helps to rehearse: Try to think as the employer, what key information is the interviewer looking for? What questions is he likely to ask? What things do you hope he doesn't ask?

George Waliher, president of TelExcel in Seattle, Washington, is a consultant and speaker on the subject of improving telephone-interviewing effectiveness. "From my experience, I would say that 98% of business executives can assess the candidate's personality after thirteen seconds, with no visual information," he says. "Furthermore, initial voice impression tends to be reinforced by the content of continued conversation." In other words, you need to sound like a winner quickly to sustain the listeners' interest in you.

It's also advisable to prepare for possible scenarios that might unfold. Hypothesize a bit; suppose the interviewer asks questions that make you feel uncomfortable. How do you handle that? Suppose he rambles, is easily sidetracked and doesn't allow you to sell yourself. How do you subtly take control of the conversation and target pertinent issues? As a worst-case scenario; suppose the interviewer doesn't call at the agreed time. If it's an evening interview, and you have other engagements, how long should you wait by the phone? If it's a daytime interview, should you assume the interviewer "forgot" and call him directly? Or do you await his call at some other, unspecified time?

Solution: don't panic. The employer will call to set up a new time if he had some crisis. If you are working with a recruiter, he will handle the problem and schedule an alternate time.

Finally, clear a work area near the phone and keep the following tools handy to aid your fact gathering and information sharing:

- A copy of the version of the resume sent to the interviewer.
- A note pad and pen.
- Five or six carefully worded questions you'll want to ask.
- Company literature with pertinent sections highlighted.
- A calendar.

Preparation will increase your confidence level and ability to focus on the conversation during the interview as well as enabling you to make a favorable impression.

Phone Personality

The need to make a good impression on the phone cannot be overemphasized. The telephone screening interview is a make-or-break proposition, your one chance to convince the interviewer that you are worth serious consideration. The interviewer will be listening carefully to determine three factors: your sincere interest in the job, how you verbalize your qualifications and how aggressively you pursue the position.

Voice reflects personality. A well-modulated, controlled voice communicates authority and heightens the verbal impact you want to make. The quality, pitch and tempo of your speech convey a certain attitude, energy level and enthusiasm. "Enthusiasm and excitement are the biggest selling points of candidates talking on the phone," says Mr. Young of First American Rehab. "This translates directly over to their performance and work ethic."

Here are some practical tips to enhance your phone "personality" and overall presentation:

Talk directly into the mouthpiece. Hold the receiver approximately three inches from the mouth, not below your chin or above your nose. Speak in a relaxed, conversational style as though the other person was in the same room, not on the other side of the planet.

Avoid sitting in a hunched position, grasping the phone in a vise-like grip. This will add a note of stress, and your voice will communicate that uneasiness. Try standing, it opens your diaphragm to a smoother airflow and imparts a feeling of liveliness. Getting up and moving around introduces an element of action, which instills a relaxed, conversational manner and reduces fatigue. A longer cord or cordless phone will allow maximum mobility.

Pay attention to the interviewer's voice patterns; does he speak slowly or rapidly? Try to match the cadence so that the conversation flows smoothly. According to Mr. Walther, at TelExcel, the average person speaks at a rate of 160 words per minute. Adjust your speaking rate, voice volume and phrasing to be more in rhythm with the interviewer.

Sound upbeat. If you had a lousy day and came home to find your spouse and kids arguing, put it out of your mind. Genuine enthusiasm is contagious, smile to show a sense of humor. After all, the interviewer may have had a bad day too.

Be a conversationalist. Listen carefully to get the big picture and to avoid saying something that indicates any momentary mental distraction. Allow the interviewer to complete questions without you finishing his train of thought or blurting out answers prematurely.

Handle any trick questions in stride. The interviewer may throw in several to test your alertness or mental keenness, showing verbal adeptness is a sign of how quickly you can "think on your feet" Be cautious: the interviewer may say something that puzzles you or that you firmly disagree with. Show enough respect to voice your thoughts in a professional manner, a defensive posture or argumentative tone is the surest way to alienate the interviewer and eliminate your candidacy.

The Telephone Interview

Establishing rapport at the beginning of the phone conversation sets a favorable tone. During the first few minutes, mention something that shows commonality of interest or similarity in background. This helps both parties feel more comfortable as the conversation progresses.

Get to know the person behind the voice, Does he show a sense of humor? Is she direct and forthright in supplying information? Does his speech sound "canned", or does it exhibit freshness of thought and expression? Just as importantly, does she actively listen to you, or merely wait for the chance to ask her next question? The interviewer may be a personnel official or a hiring manager, If the individual is someone with whom you will be working, pay all the more attention to her explanation of the job and what potential it offers.

Your prepared list of questions will indicate that you have given careful thought to the prospect of joining the firm. Even though you don't know everything about the position at this point, convey the impression that it's something you are interested in and competent at handling,

Only in a face-to-face interview can you totally sell yourself, The purpose of the phone interview is to identify areas of mutual interest that warrant further investigation. In other words, whet their curiosity and give them good reasons for wanting to invite you to the company location,

Basically, what the interviewer needs to hear and conclude is that you can get the job done. Mentally, he is making the connection between the company's problems and you as a problem solver. Don't overwhelm him with facts and figures; he's only going to remember so much.

You can best make your point by reciting memorable stories that document your ability to analyze a dilemma, weigh alternative responses and choose the appropriate action. By selectively highlighting

turnaround situations you spearheaded, you are communicating a willingness to tackle similar problems for his company.

As you glance over your notes and keep an eye on the clock, there may be additional important points cover in the pre-allotted time frame. Tactfully take control and introduce the subject matter that needs to be discussed or further elaborated, Example: "That's a good point. Can we come back to it a little later? I have some additional thoughts on the subject we were discussing a moment ago."

As the conversation winds down, become less talkative and give more thought to what you say. Your final words will generally have greater impact and be remembered longer. Careful word choice and voice inflection will under-score the significance of your remarks. By contrast, a machine-gun volley of words will likely put the listener on the defensive or turn him off altogether.

The Home Stretch

After 30 minutes, both parties should know how much of a "fit" there is. Provided the job interests you, express your desire to proceed to the next step: a company visit.

The interviewer may extend an invitation at that point. With calendar nearby, suggest several available days and times that agree with your agenda. Should the phone interview go well but end without a specific invitation to visit the company, state your desire to investigate the opportunity further.

Example: "I'd be very interested in such a challenging position. I would be available to come in for a personal interview and discuss my abilities in greater detail on (day)."

He may then mention the likelihood of an onsite interview once he confers with other officials. Your assertiveness will be remembered. If you hear nothing within 48 hours, follow up with a call.

A final concern: the interviewer may ask a salary range that you're expecting (don't introduce the issue yourself). It's best to mention that at this point you are not altogether certain what the job is really worth Example: "I would feel more comfortable discussing a salary figure after meeting the key people I would be working with and knowing more about the position." If the interviewer continues to pressure you for a figure, specifically ask, "What salary range are you working within?" Chances are 50/50 that he will tell you.

Respond by indicating that your desired salary is in that range (if that is correct). If the dollars are a little low, don't despair or defend what you feel you are worth. For an absolutely sterling candidate, most companies can flex the purse strings and make a very attractive offer.

On the phone, your job is to entice a buyer, not to close a sale. Salary negotiation will fall into place at the right time.

End the conversation on a positive note. Thank the interviewer for the information shared. Let her know again that you look forward to visiting the company. After all, if the position discussed is not the ideal job for you, something else might be.

Improved telephone interviewing techniques can really give you a competitive edge.

Interview Conclusion

If you are sincerely interested in the position and are satisfied with the answers given, you should ask the interviewer if he/she feels that you are qualified for the position. This gives you another chance to review points that may need clarification. Illustrate confidence in your abilities and convince the interviewer that you are capable of handling the position successfully.

Ask for the job. Make a positive statement about the position. Emphasize that this is exactly the type of opportunity you've been looking for and would like to be offered the position. Ask when you should expect an answer. A typical conclusion might be:

"Thank you for this meeting, _____. I like what I've heard today and I'd like to join your team I know I'd be an asset to you/your department because you need someone who can _____, _____ and _____. As you know, I have (match your qualifications with the employer's "hot buttons"). Before I leave, do you have any more questions about my background or qualifications or can I supply you with any more information? On a scale of 1 to 5, how do I compare to the other candidates you've interviewed? I can start as soon as you need me." The farewell should also include a smile, direct eye contact, a firm but gentle handshake.

Follow-Up and Thank You Letter

Immediately following the interview, call your employment recruiter, It is very important to convey your impressions of the position and the company. Let the recruiter know whether you are interested in the position or not and if there were questions you forgot to ask at the interview, express them at this time. Only after we get your feedback about the interview and the company do we contact the employer for theirs, And finally, we follow-up with you regarding the employer's thoughts.

It is always a good idea to send a short note of appreciation to thank the employer or interviewer for their time. Reiterate your interest in the position and the company as well as your ability to do the job. Be sure to mail your correspondence the following day. This is a good way to keep your name current in the interviewer's mind. Following is a sample thank-you letter that you can adapt to fit your specifics:

1. ADDRESS LINE

The full company name and address (no abbreviations) as well as the full name of the interviewer and his/her complete title.

2. SUBJECT LINE

"Re: Interview for the Position of (title) on (date). This illustrates the content of the letter.

3. GREETING

"Dear Mr./Ms. (last name):

"Miss" or "Mrs." should not be used unless you are sure that person does so. Do not use a first name in the greeting unless you have established a strong rapport.

4. OPENING

"It was a pleasure meeting with you (day) to discuss the opening in (department) with (company).

"I appreciated meeting with (name) and yourself in your office on (day) to discuss the (title) position with (company)."

Again, comment or add something discussed during the interview that will allow you to restate your qualifications and confidence in performing the job.

5. BODY

a.) "From our discussion, and the fine reputation of your organization, it appears that the (title) position would enable me to fully use my background in _____.

b.) "I was particularly impressed with the professionalism evident throughout my visit. (Company) appears to have the kind of environment I have been seeking."

c.) "The atmosphere at (company) seems to strongly favor individual involvement, and I would undoubtedly be able to contribute significantly to its goals."

6. CLOSING

a.) "While I have been considering other opportunities. I have deferred a decision until I hear from you. Therefore, your prompt reply would be greatly appreciated."

- b.) "It's an exciting opportunity, and I look forward to hearing your decision very soon."
- c.) "The (title) position and (company) are exactly what I have been seeking, and I hope to hear from you within the next week,"

7. SALUTATION

- a.) "Sincerely,"
- b.) "Very truly yours,"
- c.) "Best regards,"