“Many are called, but few are chosen” is not the slogan of a professional employment interviewer, but it could be. No matter whether the news is expected by the applicant or not, it still hits hard. Whether it’s the first or fiftieth time that the applicant has heard, “Although you were among the highly qualified to be chosen for an interview, you were not selected for the position,” there is a feeling of failure, of points not made, of a selling job uncompleted, of communication missed. And then the applicant’s thoughts usually turn to questions like, “Was I judged on my qualification for the job or on how well I performed in the interview?” Many experts agree that the answer is both. As competition for jobs increases, how well an applicant comes across during the interview is becoming more and more important.

Some tips on interviews were also given in "Campaigning for Jobs in the College Labor Market" in the Fall 1977 issue of the Occupational Outlook Quarterly, OOQ, which you may also want to consult. Careful preparation and effective communication could give the applicant an edge over the competition and help the applicant get that job. This article is intended for anyone, anywhere who wants to be “chosen” in a job interview.

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Ready, Get Set...
Your part in the job interview should begin long before you step across the threshold to the inner office. It should begin with careful and methodical preparation some time before the actual event. Getting prepared in advance has several advantages. If you know what you want to say ahead of time, you can usually articulate it better. If you know something about the company to which you are applying, you will have a better idea as to how to frame questions and answers. Finally, being prepared will give you more confidence and boost your overall performance.

This preparation need not take days. A little preparation goes a long way, if it’s the right kind. The first step in preparing is researching the company or organization that is interviewing you. One occupational counselor suggests keeping a separate sheet on each company and position, noting the date, time, and place of the interview on the top, followed by your research notes on the company, and finally the questions you will compose about the company and position on the bottom. A fact sheet like this for each company is useful.

Start by asking people you know who might have information on the company in question. Personal contacts can sometimes yield details not available in a library-like facts about the working atmosphere of a company, the stability of an organization, or the turnover rate of personnel.

Next comes library research. Some useful volumes are city directories, Moody's Manuals, Thomas Register of American Manufacturers, College Placement Annual, Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives, and the annual reports of the companies themselves. Depending on the organization, the librarian should be able to recommend the other places to look.

Some specific facts to look for are the age of the company or organization; products or services it offers; past and anticipated growth; current problems or needs; and location of plants; offices and stores. Also, find out if organization has either a parent company or any subsidiaries.

In researching the company, you should consider how you can relate the information on the company to your own experience. Some questions you may be asked in an interview that are useful to keep in mind while researching are
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What interests you about the products or services the company offers?
- What do you know about the company?
- Why do you think you would like this job?

A list of other questions frequently asked in job interviews, compiled by Northwestern University in a Frank Endicott survey of companies and industries, accompanies this article. Also included is a list of the negative factors which most often lead to rejection as cited by 186 companies in a Frank Endicott survey.

Further facts, figures, and information may be obtained from the organization itself-through promotional material, advertisements or press releases. Look for this material in the library or request it from the company. Pay particular attention to information which coincides with your education, interests, or experiences and remember to use this information during the interview. For example, an applicant who is fluent in Spanish may want to emphasize that point to a company that employs a large number of Spanish speaking employees.
Find out as much as you can ahead of item about the particular position for which you are applying. You should think about salary expectations and come up with a range after researching current salaries for workers in your field. Government studies, professional associations and, sometimes, want ads give these figures; a librarian may be able to help you find other sources of salary data. You can also get information from persons employed. Investigate the nature of the position fits into the overall structure of the organization. Also, find out all you can about your interviewer: His or her title, name—including the pronunciation and position in the organization. It helps immeasurably to know whom you are speaking to, in every sense of the word.

When you finish your research, draw up a list of questions on the company or position. One example: Why did the position become vacant? Was the last person fired? Did he/she quit? Why? You might find it helpful in composing your questions to look at the list of frequently asked questions from the Endicott survey. Questions 39 to 48 in particular may help you to think of questions about the company which remain unanswered in your mind even after your research efforts. Be sure to ask these questions at the interview.

Your preparations should also include a review of your work experience and skills. Sit down with your resume and think about what you want to highlight in the interview. Pick out the most relevant experiences and note these on a separate piece of paper, along with any applicable personal strengths or accomplishments not mentioned on the resume. Also, recall any positive work habits developed at work or in school and note these.

Review your portfolio and leave only the most relevant examples of your work in it. Add any pertinent materials. Finally, determine how these might best be presented during the interview.

These practical exercises may also help build your confidence in yourself as a good candidate for the job. Mental preparation, or "psyching yourself up," is just as important as library research. A self-confident applicant communicates to the interviewer by demeanor as well as words.

There are some other details you should attend to well before the day of the interview. Decide what you are going to wear. Avoid extremes and dress appropriately for the organization. In the business world, this generally means a conservative, dark suit and tie for men. Dresses are favored for women by business professionals. Although pants suits have been acceptable in the past, they are questionable in some circumstances now. Use your own judgment in choosing clothes but remember that first impressions are important.

Have the materials you plan to take along to the interview prepared and ready to go. These include your resume, portfolio, note pad, pen, notes, and list of questions. Also be sure to have the time and place of the interview, as well as the interviewer's name written down to take with you. Don't rely on your memory, which should be filled with other important details. On the way to the interview mentally review what you've prepared and convince yourself that you are the ideal applicant.

Schedule sufficient travel time on the day of the interview which allows you 5 or 10 extra minutes after you arrive to relax in the waiting room and read the company literature. Request some from the secretary if it's not readily available.

**Effective Verbal Communication**

The communication skills important at every step of the job campaign, are crucial in the job interview. Interviewer and interviewee communicate both with words and nonverbal means. Both are important in establishing good rapport.

To ensure good rapport applicants must speak clearly, listen closely, and show by gestures or facial expressions that they understand and are receptive to the interviewer's thoughts and questions. This section will focus on the verbal skills-effective speaking and listening-and how they can be used most advantageously in the interview.

In answering questions, pause to give yourself time to compose an answer which is concise but thoughtful. This requires careful listening to understand the question—not what you think is the question. Elaborate briefly on your applicable skills and experiences. Feel free to refer to your notes in answering questions. Answer each question directed to you as concisely as possible, but avoid giving one word or one line answers. If you feel that the interviewer hasn't understood you answer or you haven't articulated yourself clearly, try again; stay on the topic until you are sure that your message has been received.

Answer the question only after the interviewer is completely finished. If necessary, jot down a word or two of a thought as it flashes across your mind rather than interrupt. If you interrupt the interviewer, you risk not only making a bad impression but also never finding out the exact question or important information which may be added to the question.

Listening to your interviewer is as essential as speaking out honestly and forthrightly about your abilities. The ability to listen shows your attentiveness and reflects on your interest in the job. It also helps to understand both what is said and what is meant. For example, as an indication of your dependability, the interviewer may ask you the number or days you were out sick on your last job. Dependability may be of particular importance in companies with small staffs.

At times you may want to ask the interviewer the meaning of a particular word or phrase. Do so. You must understand a question before you can answer it.

Another essential principle of good listening is being fully prepared, both mentally and with adequate library research as recommended in the previous section. If you are hearing information for the first time, you will be expending extra energy in understanding and assimilating it. You cannot give your full concentration to answering if you enter the discussion cold and use interview time to catch up on neglected homework. A prepared, relaxed, and confident applicant makes for a good listener.
Good listening ability can be helpful in picking out patterns in the interviewer's questions. These may indicate certain requirements that the company is seeking. For example, the interviewer may ask you about your participation in community or civic organizations to find out about your leadership abilities. By careful listening, you may be able to detect the direction of a line of questioning-organizational skills, leadership qualities, or any number of other qualifications. You should focus your answers on these areas of interest.

**Sticky Issues**

There may come a time during an interview when you must respond to difficult questions or points. Having thought about these possible questions ahead of time can help a great deal. Rather than being caught off guard, you can respond honestly and intelligently with answers you have thought over carefully.

"Business Interviews: Frequent Questions Acceptable Answers," in the Fall 1977 issue of OQ, outlines some difficult interview questions and suggestions on how to answer them. The list of most frequently asked questions as determined by the Frank Endicott survey contains some questions which job applicants may find difficult to answer. Go through this list and note the difficult ones for you and mentally, or in writing, prepare answers to them.

Two open-ended questions designed to get applicants talking are "Tell me about yourself" and "What can I do for you?" These questions are difficult by their very nature since they are so broad. Your job is to narrow the focus and direct your answer to support your candidacy for the position. Bring up the most useful items from your background in your answer. In asking these questions, interviewers are seeking information that gives evidence that you're a well-oriented individual, have researched the career field and their company, and know why you are there.

Even the most basic preparation for the query, "Tell me about yourself" will help you to avoid rambling on. The same is true of "What can I do for you?" Think of the question as the interviewer really asking "What can you do for me?" Tell why you are interested in, and qualified for, a particular position with the organization. A description of your career goals may be a weak answer to both of these questions. The interviewer is not interested in your life plans. Don't rely on general answers, like "I'd like to utilize my education and ability" or "I'd like to work with people." Such statements are naive and don't sell you as a candidate. A more specific answer will gain points for you. Consider the following, for example: "I've always had an interest in wholesale sales in the electronics industry since I've worked in retail electronic sales during college. With my degree in marketing I'm interested in becoming involved with medium sized company in the middle Atlantic region. Your company attracts me because it meets these interests and is diversifying into an area which I also am drawn to -- mini-computer technology and application."

Some personal questions are illegal, but your interviewer may ask them anyhow. It may be to your advantage to deal with them as honestly and tactfully as possible. Questions about marital status, family planning, child care arrangements, and age-unless they are bonefide occupational qualifications-are illegal. Yet, if they are asked it's advisable to answer them as best as possible.

Other difficult questions which you may be wise to prepare for are probing type questions-such as, "What are your greatest strengths?" and "What are your greatest weaknesses?" or questions about your personal life. These questions are variations on "Tell me about yourself." Again, relevancy is the key. Disregard the general question and focus your answer on strengths-personal skills and abilities-which relate directly to the job available. As far as possible, try to match the company's needs with your abilities. And give examples to support your answers. You can use the question on your greatest weakness to your advantage also if you concentrate on the job being discussed. You might even be able to mention a weakness that is actually a strength.

For example, you might be very uncomfortable with disorder-a trait that indicates that you are well organized yourself-or you might be able to reach decisions only after you have a thorough grasp of the problem. At any rate, don't reveal a weakness that would actually disqualify you for the position.

You can use this type of answer with other difficult questions. You may be asked questions about personal problems you've had in the past, for instance questions about mental illness or imprisonment. You needn't dwell on your past problems, but do use the opportunity to your advantage by telling how you have changed since having the problem, how you overcame the problem, or how you learned to live with it so that it doesn't affect your work. If you're questioned about being hospitalized for mental illness or seeking psychological counseling, emphasize that you recognized that you needed help, sought it, and are fine now. In responding to these or other personal questions, keep your answers short and to the point. Avoid talking at great lengths about the past. Your interviewer wants to know about it but is more interested in how you are now.

Frequently, job candidates are asked whether they quit or were fired from their last job. In responding, avoid saying negative things about former employers. Most interviewers will identify with other employers and any disparaging remarks you make may be interpreted as indicating incompetence or uncooperativeness on your part. Again, use these questions to your advantage, by suggesting that having to move to another position is a blessing in disguise since it opens up new opportunities for you or allows you to branch out. Explain why you left your last job briefly, unemotionally, and without excuses. If you expect to receive a bad recommendation because of the incident, suggest to the interviewer other references who can attest to your abilities. Emphasize that the reason why you left your last job will not affect your performance on the new job.

Other questions concerning your work history may arise, particularly if it shows a series of short-term jobs. In answering questions about short-term employment, you can stress that you are looking for a long-term position now and show how your experience has prepared you for one. Gaps in your work history should be explained by what you accomplished in these periods, even though you weren't paid. Whether you took time off to travel, study, or restore an old house, let the interviewer know that you were engaged in constructive activity.
Questions are not the interviewer's only tool. Sometimes the interviewer makes statements that demand a response on your part. For example, a candidate may be told that he or she is under qualified for the job, often because of lack of appropriate experience. If this happens to you, find out why the interviewer thinks so and show why the objections don't apply to you. You can disagree—agreeably—and support your position through new evidence not given on your resume or application or by showing that you can learn on the job. Recent college grads can refute a contention that they lack experience by relating other facts which show industriousness on their part: the percentage of their tuition that they earned, high grades, or participation in volunteer or community activities. By suggesting some skills used in summer and part-time jobs are transferable to the new position, the candidate may also refute this allegation.

Difficulties in answering sticky questions or points can be overcome by preparation on your part. With some thought and planning ahead of time, you can use them to your advantage. A simple rule to remember in responding is to tell the truth and don't forget to bring out your good points. With this in mind, it's hard to go wrong.

**Speaking Without Words**

One of the first exchanges of communication between the interviewer and the applicant is the handshake. It is interesting to note that one fact leading to rejection cited by an employment survey was a "limp, fishy handshake." This may tell us two things: First impressions stick and beware of negative, nonverbal behavior.

Evaluate the interview location upon arrival. If your chair is in a awkward position, do something about it at the outset. Move the chair if necessary to allow you to look at your interviewer directly. Maintaining good eye contact is important, so it goes without saying you should never wear dark glasses to an interview.

You can use body language, a form of nonverbal communication, to develop good rapport with the interviewer just as you use words. In answering questions, the manner in which you speak, as well as your words, conveys messages to your interviewer. Pauses, silences, gestures, facial expressions, and stance may all indicate what you mean, understand, or would like to emphasize. For example, one's facial expression may affirm, question, or show confusion.

These responses belie certain attitudes you have towards yourself and your work. For example, your tone of voice, mannerisms and choice of words all may be saying something to your interviewer. Repetition and tone of voice are important indicators or attitudes and help to carry a message—whether it be enthusiasm (or lack of it) for work or anything else. During the interview, keep a pleasant expression on your face. Be attuned to the mood of the conversation and be ready with either a smile or a serious expression, depending on what's appropriate.

Some interviewers feel that certain body mannerisms transmit feelings of unreceptivity, hostility, or closed-mindedness. These mannerisms include crossing your legs or arms tightly, particularly folding your arms across your chest.

A good interviewer seeks to discover personal characteristics that do not show up on a resume or application form including such personality traits as temperament, mannerisms, and diction. Other traits the interviewer may look for are adaptability and a willingness to take on more than just the minimum amount of work required.

Besides your own nonverbal communication, you should also be aware of your interviewer's body language. To see if you're coming across effectively, watch for nonverbal clues. If your interviewer's body language conveys disinterest, inattention, or impatience, think about what you're saying. Make mental notes of the circumstance or comment that provoked this negative body language.

If the subject of nonverbal communication is one you feel you should know more about, ask your librarian to recommend some material for you to look at. There are any number of books and articles available on the subject.

**What You Don't Ask May Hurt You**

Besides seeking adequate answers, the interviewer will expect you to ask questions. The interviewer may also note the quality of the questions and the sequence in which they are asked.

A pause in the conversation once the interest is well underway may be the time for you to bring up your questions. By all means ask for an opportunity to ask your question before the interview ends if you haven't already been invited to do so.

Your questions should indicate a sincere interest in the organization and the position and an awareness of the employer's needs and how you can fill them. Questions having to do with these subjects should take precedence over those about salary and fringe benefits. It's not wrong to ask questions about salary, just don't ask them too soon.

What's a good question? It depends on the organization or company. In general, acceptable questions are those which are concrete but not so basic that they lead the interviewer to think that the applicant has not adequately prepared for the interview.

If you organize your questions in a list beforehand, you're more likely to ask them in order. Of course, if a subject comes up during the first part of the interview and there is opportunity, ask the question at that time. By asking your questions in proper sequence, you also make the job of the interviewer easier. And in reviewing your notes after the interview you will have a more realistic view of the job, its responsibilities, and other details.

Be careful of the timing of your questions also. Exercise good judgment in deciding how much time to take up with questions. Try
to sense whether or not the interviewer is on a tight schedule. If time seems pressing ask only our most important questions.

In your time to ask questions, also bring up any solutions you envision for the organization's problems or suggestions for their operations. You should also mention people who would be glad to give an evaluation of you as an employee. Even if you have listed these on your resume, mentioning their availability may prompt the interviewer call them. Finally, ask the interviewer if he or she has any additional question to ask you.

The Close
If by the close of the interview your interviewer has not mentioned when a decision will be made on the selection of a candidate, ask about it. Most interviewers will know, for either they themselves or their company has a target date by which they hope the position will be filled. Interviewers who do not have a timetable in mind may need some prodding. You might ask these interviewers if a second round of interview is being scheduled.

Try to get a feeling for when the interview has run its course. Your interviewer may stand and indicate the interview is over or say right out, "Well I think that I have enough information about your qualifications at this time." If signs from the interviewer are not this explicit, however, it may be more difficult to decide when the best time is to leave.

It may even by your responsibility to make the first move. If the conversation seems to be drifting, it may be to your advantage to make your exit while your strong points are still memorable. You can ask "Is there any additional information that I can supply in support of my application?" or you can ask the interviewer if he or she would like the names of additional references if you haven't already done so.

Follow-up
You can profit from every interview, no matter the outcome, if you take the time to evaluate the experience. Do this either on your own or with another person, but do it as soon after the interview as possible.

In this critique, review any mistakes that you think you made and think of ways that these could have been avoided. Ask yourself if a little more preparation and planning would have helped. Also, did you mention every pertinent point of accomplishment that could have gotten you the job? Review any effective techniques you used. Would these be applicable in other interviews? Also write down any job leads or helpful information which came out during the interview.

Be sure to write a thank you note promptly to your interviewer. The event should still be fresh in your mind so that you can refer to a particular point discussed. In your letter, mention this or some other fact that sets you apart from other candidates. The thank you letter is an opportunity to add any important information in support of your application that you may have neglected to mention or emphasize in the interview. Use it well.

After completing these steps, you have only to relax and wait. Pursue other applications and interests in the meantime. If you haven't hear from the organization in two weeks time, get in touch with them. You can do so sooner if the interviewer indicated that a decision would be made in less than this time. Don't worry if you find out that you are not among "the chosen." You will be eventually. It's just a matter of time when your equation will pay off-effective communication plus careful preparation plus and employer who recognized your talents and whom you want to work for, too. And that equals a good match.

Fifty Questions Asked by Employers During the Interview with College Seniors

1. What are your long range and short range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next 10 years?
3. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
4. What do you really want to do in life?
5. What are your long range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
15. How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?
16. Why should I hire you?
17. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in business?
18. How do you determine or evaluate success?
19. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
21. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
22. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
23. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
24. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?

Why did you select your college or university?

What led you to choose your field of major study?

What college subjects did you like best? Why?

What college subjects did you like least? Why?

If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?

What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?

Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?

Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?

What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?

In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?

How do you work under pressure?

In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?

How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?

Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?

What do you know about our company?

What two or three things are most important to you in your job?

Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?

What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?

Do you have a geographical preference? Why?

Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?

Are you willing to travel?

Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?

Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?

What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?

What have you learned from your mistakes?

Negative Factors Which Most Often Lead To Rejection As Listed by 186 Companies (Factors listed by 10 or more companies) (Number of companies listing factor in parentheses)

1. Poor scholastic record-Low grades without reasonable explanation-Low level of accomplishment (99).
2. Inadequate personality-Poor attitude-Lack of poise-Lack of self-confidence-Timid, hesitant approach-Too introverted (89).
3. Lack of goals/objectives-Poorly motivated-Does not know his interests-Indecision-Poor planning (80).
5. Lack of interest in our type of business-Lack of interest in our company-Not interested in the type of job we have to offer (48).
6. Inability to express himself-Poor speech-Inability to sell himself (45).
7. Unrealistic salary demands-More interested in salary than in opportunity-Unrealistic expectation-Over-emphasis on management positions-Unwilling to start at the bottom (39).
9. Lack of maturity-No evidence of leadership potential (35).
10. Lack of extracurricular activities-Inadequate reasons for not participating in activities (22).
11. Failure to get information about our company-Lack of preparation for the interview-Did not read the literature (22).
12. Objects to travel-Geographical preference-Unwilling to relocate (20).
13. Excessive interest in security and benefits-"What can you do for me?" (15).