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Interviewing for a new position appears to be very standard and routine exercise for some. Many people feel you put on some nice clothes, answer some questions and wait for an offer. If only it was that easy!

In reality, there is a lot of research and preparation that goes into a successful interview. If not executed properly, someone else will capitalize on that job opportunity.

Q- I've been laid off for 3 months and I finally have an interview. Please share the best way to handle it. Thank You. Marie, Coral Springs

A- In order to maximize an interview opportunity, preparation and attention to details are mandatory. Just remember you are being evaluated and judged on everything from your resume submittal to the final goodbye. The entire interview process is about perception, credibility and how to increase the probabilities of success.

Today, **employers have many more people competing for the few jobs available and have more candidate options.** Because of the amount of people applying, employers will look for reasons to disqualify someone if they don't follow basic interviewing techniques.

When you are asked in for an interview, now, more than ever, you must fine tune your interviewing skills, rehearse and anticipate questions and answers. Maximizing your interview opportunity is critical, and being well prepared, could be the deciding factor in whether or not you land your next opportunity.

Before an interview, research the company and person interviewing you by visiting their websites and by doing a Google search. Familiarize yourself thoroughly with all aspects of the company-compile enough information in order to ask informed questions. Also, based on your research, come in with suggestions/solutions and fresh ideas. The interviewer will perceive you as a prepared, efficient and an interested candidate.

Dress in a professional, neat and appropriate way. It's better to be overdressed than underdressed. Make sure your shoes are polished, hair, nails and everything else is done. Pay attention to details!

Arrive early, turn off your cell phones and enter the building. Greet the receptionist warmly and wait patiently. You may have to fill out an employment application, so have any relevant information available, including references.

When the hiring manager arrives, a firm handshake and eye contact is critical.

Body language is another decisive piece to the job-landing puzzle that many candidates overlook. A very high percentage of our communication is done through non-verbal communication. So you can have all the skills required for the job and if you shuffle into the interview with your hands in your pocket and eyes on the floor, you may as well consider yourself out of the running.

During the interview and when appropriate, ask questions (qualify them) such as what qualifications would the ideal person possess-utilizing your listening skills, you then can answer with specifics and examples about your background and why you are qualified. You can't "sell" if you don't know what you're selling! We are equally judged based on the questions we ask and the questions we answer.

Don't ask questions such as salary, benefits and hours during the first stages of interview! If you're fortunate enough to have a 2nd interview, or an offer, that would be the appropriate time, when there is confirmed interest, to ask those types of questions.

Don't "badmouth" former boss or employer, regardless of the circumstances!

One of the best pieces of advice I can provide is to just be **you!** Employers can usually tell when someone is trying to be someone they're not or exaggerating experience. If you don't know something or don't have a specific element of experience, the best way to handle it is to be truthful and simply say, "Unfortunately, I'm haven't had the opportunity to work on that program in my current role, however, I am willing and do have the foundation skills to pick it up quickly if given the opportunity".

At the end of the interview, close the deal! Let the hiring manager know you're interested, why you are a fit and that you want the job. Follow-up with an email (the next day) thanking them for their time, re-iterating your interest and ask when they will be making a decision. If you haven't heard from the company after this date, it is appropriate to send a warm follow-up email asking for a status update.

So, even if you think you've "aced" this interview, you must continue the process of uncovering other opportunities. In the best possible scenario, it would be great to have more than one employment option.

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