

Interviewing Protocols

Dress Code

Business culture is and has changed dramatically over the past years. Terms like business casual, casual Fridays, etc. are individual to each company and corporation. It is important to understand what they mean and how it will affect the way you dress for an interview. You need to dress at least to the level of position you are seeking, be it supervisor, manager, VP or CEO.

If you can determine in advance what will be expected of you an interviewee before your first interview you should ask your recruiter, human resource contact or network contact to what dress level you should comply. Women have it a bit easier since there is not such a sharp dividing line between formal, business casual and plain casual. Women can be overboard with jewelry or clothes, though. I once interviewed a woman for an assembler job who wore a dress she would likely wear to a wedding and had very high heeled shoes and lots of jewelry. I didn't hire her. If you over dress, you run the risk of showing you didn't research the company well enough to know their culture. Regardless, dressing for an interview should always lean toward upscale. Error by being over-dressed than under-dressed. Be well groomed with conservative hair. I recall not having this information and coming to a company overdressed by wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt and red tie. When I walked in I found everyone in jeans and tee shirts. Although my dress blew them away, I was able to interview well, show a professional attitude and ended up getting a good job offer. Interview wear should show professionalism. Conservative ties or shirts will not distract from you as a candidate. Black shoes with brown socks do not come off well.

If you are currently employed you have some potential problems to work out. You can take a day or part of a day off so your change in dress won't give you away and point to the conclusion, "hey, are you interviewing or going to a wedding?" Many don't want their current employer to know, at least now, that you are looking for a job. Other ways to solve this problem is to have a change of clothes in your car and change before arriving for you interview, or schedule your interview for early morning or later in the afternoon or evening.

Checklist

When I go on a trip I have a checklist that reminds me of what I need to bring. You should have a checklist to remind you what you need to bring to your interview. It may include:

- Two or more complete cover letters and resumes. It is likely you will be seeing several people and some may not be prepared. It's good to be able to provide a person with an extra copy. You will likely want to have one in front of you so the interviewer and you can stay on the same page.
- Business cards with you contact phone number and e-mail address.
- Wear a smile of confidence, but not arrogance.
- Be on time. Map out you route. Maybe drive there a day before so you don't get lost. It may also give you a clue of the company culture before your interview.

Preparation

Employers are interested in how you can solve their problem. The interview isn't all about you; it is "how can you solve their need." Get your attitude and attention focused before you meet anyone from the company, including the receptionist.

Answer all questions fully, but don't digress. Don't dominate the conversation, but emulate the interviewer's pace. When asked a question, answer the specific question and then ask if you answered the question. Ask questions of the interviewer. You need to give information about yourself and you need to find out what you need to know about the company and the job.

Be sure you have rehearsed you elevator speech, answers to potential questions and greetings in front of a mirror. Smile.

Be energetic and show interest in the job. Seek deeper understanding of all the aspects of the job. An inexperienced interviewer will tend to sell the company or job to you. You need to cause the company to see your real value and job fit.

Establish good eye contact. Sit up straight and lean slightly forward. Keep

your hands away from your face and in a position from which to properly gesture and express. Refrain from folding your arms in front of you, this signals resistance or defiance. Relax.

Memorize important facts, numbers, ratios, dates and other detail. You might have crib notes written in the margin of the resume you are holding.

Integrity is important. Don't lie or deceive.

Be respectful of your current and past employers by not being critical, sharing confidential information or customers.

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