

The Career Coach

Title: **How to Prepare for a Winning Job Interview** by Elaine Voci, Ph.D.

Congratulations! Your well crafted resume and cover letter have landed you an interview for a job you would truly enjoy. Everything you've done so far has prepared you for this meeting: you are someone with solid knowledge in a certain area, you have a good education, beneficial experience, transferrable skills, and passion. You are about to have a marketing conversation that will enable you to provide information that shows how serious you are about this new career, and explain why you are interested in *them* and *their* company. Now that you've got their attention, make it worth their time:

1. **Make it interesting and engaging.** A job interview is not a sales call, so don't sell yourself. Instead, *influence* the outcome by showing the interviewer how you can make a difference. In preparation, develop an outline with talking points and chunks of information that you can add or subtract; keep your answers to questions short, between 90 seconds to 3-minutes. Tailor your responses, pack them with relevant information and express them with passion. Be prepared for the question, "Why do you want to work here?" Rehearse by asking yourself anticipated questions and giving the answers to anchor them in your mind because when you really know your material you will come across sounding more spontaneous.
2. **Do your homework on the company you hope to join;** visit their website, read their news releases, get on the Internet and pull every article you can find about them; if you know someone who works there, contact them to ask about the culture. Based on what you learn, prepare 3-4 intelligent questions to ask that are of genuine interest to you, such as "Where do you see the company going in the next five years?" and "What qualities are the most important for doing well and advancing in this organization?" and "What kind of training do you offer?"
3. **Make a good first impression:** Arrive early; dress in neat, clean and unwrinkled business attire that is appropriate for a level *above* the position for which you are interviewing; leave off any fragrance or aftershave; carry a roll of breath mints just in case. While you wait, turn off your cell phone, breathe deeply to relax, and then, when the interviewer appears, stand up, make good eye contact, smile, give a firm handshake, and be friendly.

In a conversation about interviewing with Sandy Clidence, Area Executive Vice President, Administration at Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc., (publically traded and recently named to Ethisphere Institute's list of the World's Most Ethical Companies), she described the top three

qualities her organization looks for in candidates: (1) People skills and a team mentality that respects diversity and collaboration; (2) Shared passion for the company's values (known as "the Gallagher Way") such as 'Loyalty and respect are earned, not dictated'; and (3) A commitment to lifelong learning as an integral part of building a successful personal and professional life.

Sandy noted, "One of the questions I often ask in interviews is 'How do you react to change?' and I find the answers tell me a lot about the person's flexibility, and attitudes toward learning."

If you want to perform at your best in a job interview, there's no substitute for solid preparation because that is what leads to poise, and in job interviews, never underestimate the power of poise. For more tips on interviewing, go to <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/careers.aspx> ; and you can also visit <http://www.interviewing.com/>

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