

CareerSMARTZ (CS33)

A highly effective career success strategy built around “Find a need and fill it.”



Task 7: Interview for Employment

Note: All underlined words are hyperlinks to Internet websites and will only function when viewing this document on your computer.

The key to successful interviews is proper preparation!

In your search for employment, you will eventually have to sit down with employers and discuss why they should hire you. This is often a stressful conversation as it requires you to “sell” yourself to strangers (which is a task that is uncomfortable for most people), and, if not done properly, there’s a good possibility of being rejected. Coupled together, these two factors can produce a high level of anxiety. Fortunately, with proper preparation much of the anxiety can be removed from the interview process bringing about higher levels of success and more job offers!

Objectives

The objectives of this guide are to:

1. Direct you in successfully preparing for, conducting, and following-up job interviews.
2. Instruct you in how to present yourself as a valuable candidate – the one person that is best positioned to successfully carry out the duties and responsibilities of the position for which you have applied.
3. Improve your chances of being offered employment.

Avoid miscommunication!

If any conversation is to be effective, both parties must, “be on the same page.” This requires that both parties correctly anticipate what the other party needs to hear and then delivers the needed information.

In the case of a job interview, the employer is hoping to hear how the candidate can be of value to the company and why he or she is the best person to hire. To deliver the right message, the job applicant must then be ready to address how his or her talent can meet the needs of the employer, show examples of how said talent has been used previously to bring about success, and demonstrate a commitment to the company and a proper fit for the company culture.

Making sure this conversation occurs properly is the responsibility of both parties! However, if the employer fails to address this topic (remember, not every interviewer is good at their job), then you as the applicant must steer the conversation to make this discussion happen.

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Caution

Do not engage in an employment interview if you have NOT yet developed a:

- Basic understanding of the company’s mission, objectives, operational strategies, and clients (customers).
- Solid understanding of the goal, objectives and strategies typically used to carry out the duties of the position for which you have applied.
- Basic understanding of how you would fit into the culture of the company.

And most importantly a **clear** description of your talent and how it can be used to achieve success at the employer’s place of business.

Materials needed

To complete this guide, you will need the following materials:

- CS33 (the document that you are reading now)
- Blank copies of CS34 (My Employment Interviews Logbook) - one for each employer interview

Sections and Tasks

This guide is divided into three sections: BEFORE, DURING and AFTER the interview.

1. When preparing for an interview, complete Section 1 below.
2. When in the actual interview, complete Section 2 below.
3. After leaving an interview, complete Section 3 below.

Follow the steps below to complete this guide:

SECTION 1: TASKS TO COMPLETE BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

1. Obtain a blank copy of CS34 (My Employment Interviews Logbook).
2. On Page 1 of CS34, enter the name of an employer for which you have a scheduled interview, and from your research of the employer, complete as many of the “Profile information” items as possible.
3. On Page 2 of CS34, complete as many of the tasks listed as possible – the more tasks you complete, the more prepared you are for the interview. Check off each task on CS34 as it is completed. Use the blank spaces on CS34 to record notes and comments.

See the information below for instructions regarding how to complete each task.

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- **Call to confirm the interview date, time, location, parking, and (if appropriate) expense reimbursement.** Also, ask who will be at the interview, how will the interview be conducted (in person, by phone, via video chat, etc.), what materials should you bring, how many and how long will the interview take to complete, and what, if any, pre-interview tests or exams are required.
- **If appropriate, arrange for transportation, lodging and meals.** First, contact the employer to inquire if these expenses are reimbursable. If these expenses are your responsibility, keep receipts for tax purposes.
- **Determine the proper dress style.** If necessary call the employer to determine. It’s recommended that you dress in the same style as the people who will conduct the interview.
- **Learn as much as you can about the company. Consider using services like:**

[GoinGlobal](#)

Review their marketing materials, website, blog, and social media accounts. Become familiar with the company’s mission, corporate culture, products and services, clients or customers, and key personnel (including, if possible, the individuals who will conduct the interviewer). Memorize the details of the job description (if known).

- **Understand your employment value.** Refer to the information that you produced on the company earlier in this program - see CS28 (My Employment Value). Based upon your understanding of the needs of the employer and your talent, be ready to discuss how you can be of value to the employer. ***Make sure you have an answer to why the employer should hire you!***
- **Practice answering typical interview questions.** Use [Google.com](#) to find examples of interview questions and answers, such as those found at [CareerOneStop.org](#). Also, understand which questions are illegal and how to handle these questions – again, use [Google.com](#) to find illegal questions and how to respond when asked.
- **Review the do’s and don’ts of an interview.** Check the list found at [CareerOneStop.org](#).
- **Know your salary range.** Conduct research to know what the average salary is for your position. Visit the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) for information on salaries for hundreds of occupations. Also, use the [Salary Finder](#) to find salaries by geographical location. Add 20% to the average salary as your asking salary and ***defend your higher request by emphasizing your employment value.***

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- **Confirm your references.** Call all references and make sure they’re willing to give you a positive reference. Inform them of the position that you are applying for and discuss what skills and experiences might be appropriate for them to share if they are contacted for a reference.
- **Prepare copies of relevant documents.** Examples typically include:
 - Resume
 - Letters of reference
 - Education and training certificates
 - Diplomas and degrees
 - Citizenship papers
 - Military discharge papers
 - Awards
 - Professional articles and publications
- **Complete any pre-interview tests as required by the employer.** Examples include Drug tests, Aptitude tests and Personality profiles. Call employer for details.
- **Bring notetaking materials.** Bring paper and pen, an iPad or tablet to view your own notes and to take notes during the interview. Note, smartphones are not good for taking notes.
- **Prepare a list of questions to ask of interviewers.** Prepare a printed list and be ready to ask questions that will help you understand the true nature of the position and employer. Specifically, ask the interviewer to explain the objective of the position, what type of talent they are looking for, and be ready to cite examples of why you are qualified for the position. See the list of suggested questions at CareerOneStop.org. Attached your list to CS34.
- **Prepare comments regarding how you plan to handle possible barriers to employment.** Be prepared to discuss how you plan to deal with any barriers that the interviewer suggests may occur in the job – both obstacles related to the job itself and those related to you. ***Don’t mention your personal obstacles unless asked about them.***
- **Ask for suggestions from your family, friends, and acquaintances.** Survey your contacts to learn about interview tips and techniques, and possible knowledge about the company conducting the interview.
- **Prepare business cards.** Include the following information:
 - Name
 - Address
 - Email

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- Phone
- LinkedIn address
- Online portfolio address
- Description of talent

Check out services like [VistaPrint](#).

- **Remember your 2nd objective!** After demonstrating your value to the company, your second objective is to receive an offer of employment. Be ready to ask for the position if it hasn't been offered by the end of the interview.
 - **Bring cash and/or credit card.** For parking, food and unexpected expenses.
 - **Conduct a practice run.** If possible, go to the interview site a day or two before the interview to familiarize yourself with the route and time required to get to the interview.
4. As you collect information about the employer and relevant documents about yourself, staple copies of this information to CS34 to keep it in one convenient place. **Take this information with you to the interview.**

SECTION 2: TASKS TO BE COMPLETED DURING THE INTERVIEW:

1. Bring a printed copy of this list with you to the interview and refer to it often.
2. Review the tasks below before your interview and be prepared to complete them during the interview.
 - **Be early**, not just on time. 15 minutes early is ideal.
 - **Turn off** your cell phone. If you bring a tablet or laptop, turn off all notifications.
 - **Bring copies** of your resume and other documents. Provide each interviewer with a copy of your resume.
 - **Relax.** Remember, the interview is as much about you interviewing the employer as it is about the employer interviewing you. Use the interview to determine if this employer is right for you.
 - **Greet everyone** with a firm handshake and a smile. Provide your name and ask for the name of each person that you meet. Exchange business cards.
 - **Take notes**, especially regarding what the employer wants accomplished, obstacles and needed talent and resources. Try to address these during the interview or in a follow-up letter or email.
 - **Show enthusiasm** for the job. Be positive and confident. Don't speak negatively about people or criticize past employers. Avoid conversations regarding religion, politics and other controversial issues as your opinions may offend others.

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- **Ask questions.** Don't say you have no questions! This shows poor preparation and/or low interest in the position. Ask questions about the position's goals and objectives, obstacles, and what criteria the employer would use to judge success of the person holding the position. Ask questions about the position. What does the employer want to see occur? What are the main obstacles and how have they been addressed previously? State how you will use your talent to achieve success in the job.
- **Follow the lead of the interviewer** - be ready to respond to his or her questions.
- **State your talent and how it can be of value to the employer.** Give examples of how it was used with other employers. Demonstrate the benefits gained from hiring you!
- **Don't ask about salary and benefits** unless an offer of a job has been made.
- **Ask about the company culture.** What's it like to work at the company? Ask for a tour.
- **Ask for the job!** If by the end of the interview an offer of employment has not been made, ask for the job. If informed that they can't make an offer at this time, ask what the next steps will be.
- **If offered a job,** ask for 24 hours! Avoid accepting a job offer on the spot. Ask for 24 hours to reflect and discuss with family. Call back the next day with your answer.
- **Thank everyone** for the opportunity to be interviewed. Show genuine appreciation for the interview, restate your contribution, and leave on a positive note.

SECTION 3: TASKS TO BE COMPLETED AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

1. Review and complete the tasks below appropriate for your situation.
2. If necessary, continue your job search and requests for interviews.
 - **If you were offered a job and you want the position.** Search [Google.com](https://www.google.com) for tips on how to negotiate a job offer. If necessary, call to discuss salary, benefits, and other terms of employment. If acceptable, confirm acceptance via the phone and follow-up with written confirmation. Ask for a copy of the terms in writing. If not acceptable, ask to renegotiate terms. If still not acceptable, call to decline offer and follow-up with written confirmation in the form of a “Thank you” letter. **If necessary, continue your job search.**
 - **If you were not offered a job and still want the position.** Within 48 hours, forward a letter or email indicating your continued interest in the position, state clearly why you would be successful, and ask for the job. **If necessary, continue your job search.**

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- **If no job offer was made and you don’t want the position.** Within 48 hours, forward a letter or email asking that your application be removed from consideration, wish them well, and thank them for the opportunity to be interviewed. **If necessary, continue your job search.**
- **If five business days have passed and you’ve heard nothing.** Call the company and ask about the status of your application. Restate your interest in the position and your confidence that you will be successful in the position. Ask when an answer may be provided. Indicate your willingness to participate in a second interview. **If necessary, continue your job search.**
- **Forward any data or information that was requested at the interview (such as references, documents, etc.) as quickly as possible.** **If necessary, continue your job search.**
- **Thank all the people who helped you get the interview.** **If necessary, continue your job search.**
- **Notify your family, friends, and acquaintances as to the status of your job search.** **If necessary, continue your job search.**

What’s your next step?

If you have accepted a position, move on to Task 8: CS35 (Start Your New Job Professionally) to learn how to start your new job on the right foot!

Need more help? Visit the [Contact US](#) page at www.CareerSMARTZ.com.