

BETTING ON YOURSELF: INTERVIEW LIKE A CONSULTANT

Congratulations!

After a very long, agonizing job search, your resume finally passes someone's sniff test. The next step is to set up an interview.

Naturally, you may feel inclined to rehearse answers to proverbial interview questions such as “*tell me a little about yourself*” and “*what are your greatest strengths?*”. You may also feel inclined to pick out your most impressive business wear. While you aren't wrong to think that those things are important, it might serve you better to redirect your focus.

The further I progress in my career, the more I begin to realize that *every* company has its fair share of problems. Whether it be financially, operationally and/or technologically, work-arounds and temporary-turned-permanent patches can be found everywhere. For this reason, among others, companies today require those they employ to be solution-based thinkers. *Remember: Those who are most helpful become the most valuable.* So, **bet on yourself**.

For every interview that I have ever been through, I have bet on myself to be the candidate of choice. I have approached every discussion as I did when I worked in consulting. The goal was to always leave the interviewer with the impression that I was the safe, steady pair of hands that the company was looking for.

Here is my not-so-secret and slick approach to interviewing:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

While having the ability to confidently detail your background and why you are interested in the position is great, making a connection, personally or professionally, will shift the tone of the interview in your favor.

Prior to your interview, request a list of the person or people you will be meeting with. Do some internet sleuthing to learn more about them. Research where they went to school, common colleagues or acquaintances, volunteer work and other points of interest. Looking up their social media profiles is a great way to find all or most of this information in one place. Relating to them on topics such as these can help you establish an immediate bond.

CHANGE THE SCRIPT

Let's face it: most hiring managers are terrible interviewers. But it's not their fault! Most of them don't receive proper training on how to interview potential hires. So, move past the corporate fluff and be engaging. This will help the interview agenda flow more naturally for all parties. Most people love to talk, especially about themselves. Use these points to get the conversation going:

- **Request A Walkthrough** – Ask to be walked through a typical day in the workplace. Given your prior experience, question why and how things are done within the company. Not only will it give the interviewer the impression that you get the gist of things, but it will also help you understand just what you’re getting yourself into. During the walkthrough, take mental notes about current issues for later use (see next section “Move Forward”).
- **Strengths and Weaknesses** – Inquire about the people you will be working with on a daily basis. Learn more about their strengths and their weaknesses as well as how they interact with one another and members of other departments. What you learn will surprise you.
- **Learn About IT Systems** – Working within the same system that your parents used in their day and that your grandparents designed may turn an excellent opportunity into a technological nightmare. Make sure to learn what you can about how up-to-date the company’s IT Systems are.
- **The Importance of Deliverables** – It is crucially important to NEVER leave a conversation without going through deliverables including how many, how often and how they are compiled. Piggybacking on the IT piece (above): crap comes in, crap comes out. Reports are no good if you spend all your time putting them together rather than analyzing them.
- **Countless Sleepless Nights** – Last but not least, make a point of asking the interviewer about both the good and the bad things that keep them up at night. Trust me; they will love it and you will benefit from their loose lips.

MOVE FORWARD

Although I am a firm believer that there is no substitute for an old fashioned, handwritten “thank you” note, an email follow-up is where you seal your fate. Do you recall those mental notes you were keeping about current company issues? The follow-up email is where you summarize them while also adding your thoughts, feelings and ideas on potential solutions. If you want to go the extra mile, throw in some helpful links or attach an industry briefing that is applicable to the situation. Remember: prove your worth.

The second you hit that “send” button, move forward and begin the search for your next job opportunity. Entertaining multiple offers and weighing different perspectives will help with the decision-making process which in turn will lead to a highly successful career.

You’ve got this! Bet on yourself.