



“The Successful Interview”

**Federally Employed Women
Training Officer’s Conference
April 16-18, 2007
Ocean City, MD**

**Presented by Ms. Arlena Fitch-Gordon
VP for Training**



Major Aspects of an Interview

Experts Agree on Three Major Aspects:

- **PREPARATION**
- **PRESENTATION**
- **EVALUATION**

I would add a fourth: MEDITATION



Why an Interview?

Because it is Information Giving and Information Seeking.

Primary –

- **To find out what kind of person you are.**
- **To determine personal qualifications.**
- **To determine whether YOU want the position.**
- **To determine whether the selecting official wants YOU.**



Why an Interview?

I work here! He/She knows me already! Isn't the interview unnecessary?

Quite the contrary – the interview will give insight into your attributes, weaknesses, and strengths.

You will gain insight into the interviewer's expectations, attitudes, and abilities.



Why an Interview?

Is this position for YOU? Do you even want to work for HIM/HER?

I “NEVER” do well on a test! I’m so nervous I can’t even think straight! Shouldn’t I just forget about this interview?

FACE YOUR FEAR!



Preparation

Don't be complacent.

Nervousness to a degree is good! It keeps the blood pumping through your veins to your brain! It allows you to RECEIVE and INTERPRET information and RESPOND.

Think of the Interview as Information - Receiving (it will seem less threatening).



Preparation

YOU will have the opportunity to tell your personal qualifications.

YOU will have the opportunity to sell YOURSELF!

REMEMBER – YOU ARE IN CONTROL. YOU WILL SEEK AND GIVE INFORMATION!



What is a Successful Interview?

“Lay to rest the myth that you must be the selectee in order for your interview to have been successful.”

- **If YOU portrayed YOURSELF the way YOU perceive yourself to be...**
- **If YOU responded to all questions to YOUR satisfaction...**
- **If you feel TOTALLY happy with your APPEARANCE, MANNERISMS, CONDUCT...**

IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW – Whether or not you were selected for the position.

Quite the contrary – the interview will give insight into your attributes, weaknesses, and strengths.

You will gain insight into the interviewer’s expectations, attitudes, and abilities.



MEDITATION – “Looking within yourself.”

- The first critical phase of the process.
- So often this factor is overlooked! Too many people look **ONLY** at the position. Promotions, obviously are critical to career progression.
- **NOT** all promotions will lead to your career goals.
- Be Careful – lest you find yourself...
 - In a job you don't like and don't even want.
 - One that you cannot do well.
 - One that leads you **AWAY** from or **STIFLES** your progress toward your **LONG** or **SHORT** term goals.
- Find out about the job, work area, supervisor, and organization.



MEDITATION – “Looking within yourself.”

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I want the Job?
- Can I do the Job WELL?
- Do I want to work THERE?
- Do I want to work for HIM/HER?
- Will this position advance my career?
- Does it fit into my Individual Development Plan?
- If not, do I want to change my Individual Development Plan?

NOTE: If you change your Individual Development Plan – Do a draft to see if **THIS POSITION** fits your **NEW** Individual Development Plan.

- Are YOU willing to alter your career goals?
- Why do I want this job?

CAREFULLY MEDITATE AND REFLECT UPON YOUR ANSWERS!!!



PREPARATION

- **When do I start this phase?**
 - **Question others as soon as you decide to apply!**
- **Being prepared physically, emotionally, and intellectually is critical.**



PREPARATION

RIGOUROUS MENTAL AGILITY PROGRAM

- Ask yourself questions you think the interviewer might ask: (100-150 questions would not be too many).
- Cover a wide range of topics: Professional, Personal Attributes, Technical, Management, and Career-Planning are a few.
- Tape record your responses – evaluate them. Do it again, and again. IMPROVE EACH TIME.
- Have someone critique you. BE Selective. Choose Somebody Who Will Be Tough.
- Practice in front of a mirror! Look for NEGATIVE signals. Frowns, furrowed brows, etc. may communicate a host of negative reactions: Self-Doubt, Displeasure, Discomfort, and Uncertainty.
- This process will keep your brain ready to RECEIVE, INTERPRET, and RESPOND to the questions.



PREPARATION

**We cannot always control our Physical Health,
BUT we can MAXIMIZE OUR Physical Fitness.**

- **Avoid foods that cause discomfort.**
- **Be rested and alert.**



PREPARATION

Be **EMOTIONALLY READY** and **IN CONTROL**:

- **ATTITUDE** – Winning is 90% attitude and 10% effort.
- **SELF-CONFIDENCE** – You are prepared and you are ready!
- Use **FEAR** for **FUEL-POWER**. Fear is the single, strongest motivating force in our lives. **USE IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE.**
- **THINK POSITIVE** – I am prepared! I am a winner! I will do **WELL!**

**POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY
AND POSITIVE SELF-MOTIVATION**



PREPARATION

- Dress for Success!
- **LOOK LIKE a WINNER. FEEL LIKE a WINNER.** Be ready for the call without any warning.
- **NO** chewing gum or wearing jeans (unless the position calls for that attire), or gaudy jewelry.
- Avoid any clothing that detracts from your professional image.

REMEMBER – YOU ARE A WINNER SO DRESS LIKE A WINNER

- Learn all you can about the position, supervisor, organization, corporation, or firm.

NOW YOU ARE READY! LOOK OUT WORLD – HERE I COME 15



PRESENTATION

Nervousness – Good – Use It!

- **Control your voice. Don't let your voice quaver.**
- **DON'T:**
 - **Fidget in your chair.**
 - **Get a death grip on the arm of your chair.**
 - **Wring your hands.**
 - **Continuously wipe your forehead.**
 - **VERBALIZE YOUR NERVOUSNESS.**



PREPARATION

LOOK CALM, COOL, AND COLLECTED.
If you aren't don't tell them. They'll never know.

BEING NERVOUS IS NORMAL.

SIT CALMLY and RESTFULLY!

YOU ARE READY. YOU ARE IN CONTROL.



PREPARATION

CONCENTRATE:

- Listen INTENTLY to the question **NOW** being asked. ONCE YOU ANSWER, forget it FOR NOW. Don't let your mind dwell on how you COULD have answered better.
- Don't let your mind wander. Keep your attention focused on the NOW!
- Don't be distracted by what YOU PERCEIVE to be negative reactions by the interviewer, such as a furrowed brow, shaking head, pencil tapping, etc. **FOCUS ON THE NOW!**
- Don't be distracted by outside noises or outer forces. Focus on the HERE and NOW!



PREPARATION

THINK before your answer:

- **Pause to let your brain process the question. If YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION – SAY SO! Don't try to bluff yourself through it.**
- **Do NOT second-guess the interviewer. Give honest and straightforward answers. Short and precise.**
- **Remember why you are there.**



PREPARATION

Non-Verbal Communication may give the interviewer mixed signals:

- **Use APPROPRIATE hand gestures, but don't flail your arms like an NFL referee.**
- **Don't nod your head – then SAY “No.”**
- **Don't BE bored. Certainly don't LOOK bored.**
- **Don't BE angry. Certainly don't LOOK angry.**



PREPARATION

BE:

- **Natural**
- **Courteous**
- **Honest**
- **Yourself!**
- **Happy – not giggling but demonstrate joyfulness**
- **Most important – BE ENTHUSIASTIC**



PREPARATION

DO's:

- **Maintain eye contact, but don't stare.**
- **Remember interviewer's name, USE it and PRONOUNCE it CORRECTLY.**
- **Remember this is YOUR ONLY opportunity to convince the interviewer that YOU are a winner, YOU are a professional, YOU are the best candidate.**
- **Convey Self-Confidence.**
- **Convey High Self-Worth.**



PREPARATION

DON'T:

- **Be unrealistic in your responses.**
- **Be dishonest regarding experience, aspirations, and skills.**
- **Be NEGATIVE.**
- **Give up as soon as you miff a question. Pick yourself up – GO ON!**
- **Be afraid to ask PERTINENT questions.**
- **Be argumentative. Certainly you do not have to provide information you feel is inappropriate. How YOU handle the situation, however, may well decide your future with that official/agency.**

For example, Do you plan to have children?

Response: I did not realize you had a policy, which prohibited hiring or promoting men, or women who planned to have children. Is this position OPEN ONLY to persons, unmarried who will not have children? The job announcement made no mention of this!



PREPARATION

SUMMATION:

- **If given the opportunity, make a short, to the point, enthusiastic, optimistic closing statement.**
- **Thank the interviewer or panel member and MEAN IT!**
- **Thank them by NAME.**
- **Let them know you want the job, believe in your ability to do it very well, and that you are looking forward to the opportunity to work with them.**



EVALUATION

- **When? IMMEDIATELY after the interview. During quiet time – without distractions.**
- **How? Write a short story of how you think you did.**
- **Why? Determine how you will do it better next time. DEFEATIST? No, learn from mistakes made during the interview.**
- **Immediately build on your strong points and strengthen your weaknesses.**

WHAT DID I DO RIGHT? WHY?

WHAT DID I DO WRONG? WHY?

Do something about IT or THEM!



EVALUATION

- **If you have questions about how you fared in the opinion of the interviewer, ask for an audience. Particularly true if you were not selected.**
- **Do NOT approach the person with a “You better have a good reason for not selecting me, OR ELSE” attitude.**
- **Use a positive approach. “I need your help. I want to enhance my career potential. Can you tell me how I can improve my interview?”**
 - **CONSIDER** their viewpoints.
 - **EVALUATE** them.
 - **RETAIN** what you believe is good and do something about it.
 - **DISCARD** what you believe is invalid.
 - **LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES.**
- **BUILD ON YOUR STRENGTHS – USE THEM MORE NEXT TIME.**



EVALUATION

- Consider whether you want the job and whether it wants you.
- Prepare yourself to be interviewed at any time.
- Go to the interview with a positive attitude. I AM READY! I AM WHAT THIS JOB NEEDS! I WILL DO WELL!
- Concentrate – Keep your mind on the HERE and NOW.
- Present yourself favorably and in control.
- Convince the interviewer that you are as good as you appear to be.
- Evaluate yourself OBJECTIVELY.



EVALUATION

- **REMEMBER THAT THERE IS NO MAGIC FORMULA - NO GUARANTEE THAT THIS METHODOLOGY ASSURES SUCCESS.**
- **DON'T DO IT AND YOUR PROBABILITY OF BEING SELECTED IS GREATLY DIMINISHED.**
- **YOU RARELY GET OUT OF LIFE WHAT YOU DESERVE, BUT YOU USUALLY GET WHAT YOU EXPECT.**

GOOD LUCK AND GOOD INTERVIEWING