

INTERVIEWING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

by Craig D. Wise

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AUTHOR
Craig D. Wise

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For additional information or distribution, contact:

Publisher
Clinton, Charles, Wise & Company
Executive Search, Placement & Consulting
931 SR 434, Suite 1201-319
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714
www.recruitersofccwc.com

CONTACT NumberS
Phone (407) 682-6790
Fax (407) 682-1697
cwise1@cfl.rr.com

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PREFACE

This book was written to include the full scope of interviewing from the planning stage, to interview preparation, and finally to the actual interview. Some candidates may already know definitively what they want and therefore, can skip right to Chapters III through V that cover preparing for interviews. The book also takes into account some strategies on negotiating and accepting job offers as well as advice on keeping the right job and planning for career adjustments. There is some apparent redundancy in this book because I wanted to emphasize the same concepts during different stages of the interviewing process. This book, INTERVIEWING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM, was written primarily from a salesperson's perspective in interviewing. However, since the primary purpose of interviewing is for candidates to successfully sell themselves to the hiring manager, I believe the concepts and techniques put forth in this book would be helpful for any career professional.

INTRODUCTION

In my ten years as a recruiter, I never charged a candidate a fee to prepare them for an interview; but I always felt good after it helped the candidate land a job. Of course I was helping myself to make a sale, but the thanks I got after every interview really made me feel that preparing candidates for interviewing was one of my major strengths as a recruiter. When I first started in the recruiting business, I would carefully observe the preparation and actions of individuals that interviewed successfully. The most successful candidates would present incontrovertible evidence of their performance and accomplishments that would completely convince the hiring managers. I became convinced that this presentation of evidence allowed the hiring manager to visualize the candidate in the position, doing the job successfully and performing at a high level. I learned from their results and after a few years, I became very adept at preparing candidates for interviews. I coached candidates to focus on the concepts of providing evidence of their accomplishments and getting the hiring manager to visualize them doing the job successfully. I frequently got comments like, "that's the best interview preparation I ever had", "I still use your ideas and techniques from our conversation several years ago" or "you should write a book about interviewing". So I did, and this is the product. Although there are many books written on getting a job, there are very few that focus exclusively on interviewing. I chose to write this book in a concise form so it could be easily and frequently referred to as necessary. Because of the success I have had preparing individuals for interviewing, I am confident that this book will help more candidates and hiring authorities find success. If this book helps you to interview successfully, I would like to hear about it. Please send an email and let me know at cwise1@cfl.rr.com.

CHAPTER IV FIRST INTERVIEWS

It has been frequently said that you only get one chance to make a good first impression, so first interviews are paramount. If you can't impress the company on the first interview, you will never get a chance to get to the second and third interviews where the "hiring decision" is made.

Key areas to evaluate during the first interview include:

1. Does the company have a good product? Do you feel comfortable representing it? Can you make the money you're looking for?
2. Is the company financially sound; have a good position in the industry; and growing in the marketplace?
3. Will you learn more on the job and will there be growth potential for you?
4. Can you work with the supervisor and the other people on the team? Will you fit into the company culture?

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Remember: First interviews are a two-way information gathering meeting and your primary objective is to assess whether you can do the work; would enjoy the work; and could work well with the employees.

Working with Human Resource Departments

Many times the first interview is with the human resource department. Usually this is a screening interview to see if the candidate has the basic qualifications for the position; is dressed properly; and has good communication skills. If the basic qualifications are met, the candidate will be asked to fill out an application. Sometimes the company will allow you to take the application home with you to fill it out, but most often you will have to complete it before you leave. So be prepared to have all the information with you that is normally requested i.e. address and telephone numbers of past employers, references and educational information.

It is imperative that you fill out the application completely and do not leave any blank spaces. If a space on the application does not apply, put N. A. in the space. Failure to do this demonstrates a candidate is not meticulous and cannot follow instructions. If you don't complete the application properly, you will never get past the human resource department. When interviewing the Human Resource Department, candidates should ask pertinent questions to gain more information about the position and about the background of the hiring manager. Ask for a job description of the position you are interviewing for. It is also a good time to get information on the company's benefits. If not offered, ask the Human Resource representative for a package of the company's benefits and get clarification about key ones that are important to you. Other pertinent information to find out from the human resource department includes:

- How long has the position been open?
- How many people have interviewed for the position?

- Why haven't they found someone yet?
- What is the remainder of the interview process?
- Find out at what point they will be checking references.

Telephone Interviews

Although human resources may sometimes conduct the phone interview, the person who will be your supervisor usually conducts it. Telephone interviews are frequently the first interview and are used as initial screening by the hiring authority. Some companies may conduct several phone interviews before meeting the candidate in person. Phone interviews can be advantageous for the candidate since it allows them to impress the hiring authority without their personal appearance influencing the decision. It also allows the candidate to have notes in front of them while interviewing the hiring authority so they won't forget to mention significant accomplishments and get answers to major questions.

While interviewing on the phone, candidates should stand up and smile while talking to convey energy and a positive attitude. It is also beneficial for the candidate to use visual imagery (or a mirror) while talking on the phone to visualize himself or herself in front of the hiring authority being impressive. At the end of the interview, the candidate should close by asking for an appointment for the second interview.

Interviewing Face to Face

When interviewing in person with the hiring authority always be five to ten minutes early for the interview so you can check out and study the mood of the office and room you will be meeting in. If driving from far away, leave early enough to anticipate a possible accident or traffic jam. If you are not familiar with the area or don't thoroughly understand the directions, conduct a dry run the day before the interview. If something does happen to delay you, always call and alert the interviewer you will be late. It is beneficial to find a park or coffee shop near the interviewing site to review your presentation 20 to 30 minutes before the interview. It is also a good idea to go to the restroom somewhere else instead of waiting until you get to the interviewing site.

When meeting the hiring authority use a firm handshake and then immediately ask them how long the interview will be so you can make sure you get your critical questions answered. You need your critical questions answered so you can determine if you are truly interested in the position and want to go on to the next interview. Always talk about your present or former employers in a positive light (i.e. don't bad mouth past employers) and be careful about disclosing your present company's business strategy, customer information, and proprietary product information. If the interview is interrupted several times, don't let that frustrate you. After each interruption, get the interview back on track by reminding the interviewer what was being discussed.

Nonverbal communication can be a major factor when interviewing face-to-face. For that reason, you should make body language work for you. A limp handshake, not making eye contact, and bad posture all send negative nonverbal cues to the interviewer. Crossing your arms and/or legs during the interview can make an interviewer think you are not being truthful or forthcoming with all the facts. There are several books published that can give you tips on how to posture yourself properly and how to read people that are interviewing you.

The first interview is also an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions of the hiring authority about their management style and work experience. Candidates need to make sure they feel they will have a good comfort level working for a potential supervisor. Always be attentive for an opportunity to answer a question that will allow you to reiterate your skills or provide evidence of specific accomplishments. Be aware that many interviews today are behavioral or situational based. Interviewers are asking questions based on both hypothetical and real events to see how you respond to different situations. One process-driven technique requires candidates to respond to questions after they are presented with a situation or task and then are asked what action they would take and what would be the result. Try to focus your answers on your actual experience instead of hypothetical situations. Provide evidence or relate a mini-story of how you handled a particular situation and describe the positive results of your actions.

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Remember: Never say it is a job change-it's a career move!

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