

Turning a Second Interview into a Job Offer

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Congratulations! You have been called for a second interview. That's a great sign that a potential employer is interested in you. But it doesn't mean you've secured the job, yet. You are likely one of two or more candidates asked to return for a follow-up interview, so don't let down your guard.

A second interview may involve the same people you met during the first interview, and will undoubtedly involve additional people – your boss's boss, the division president, potential coworkers, etc. You may meet with these people individually or in a panel. Each person will be assessing you on the following points:

- Can you do the job?
- Do you fit with our culture?
- Do we want to work with you?
- Are you someone I, the hiring manager, can manage?

Your goal is to inspire everyone you meet to answer these questions with a resounding, "Yes!" So, the more you invest in preparing for a second interview, the better positioned you will be to differentiate yourself from your competition and convince a prospective employer that YOU are the right person for the job.

Here's how to prepare:

ANTICIPATE MORE INTENSE QUESTIONING

Second interview questions will delve more deeply into your knowledge, skills, and experiences, and how qualified you are for the position. The interviewers will also be gauging your interest in the position and company, as well as assessing how much you learned during the first interview. Questions such as, "What have you learned about us so far?" and "How would you proceed if you were hired into this job?" are common second interview questions.

Review what you learned from your first interview about the position, the company, its products and services, and any challenges facing the person who gets the position. Study any business terms that were discussed – company product names, technologies they use, competitors' products/services, etc. Review the organization's website and any articles you can find on them. Consider how you would approach the job if hired.

Then, be prepared to share what you have learned and how your background and expertise relates to the company's challenges. Also, continue to prepare stories of your past accomplishments, making sure they relate specifically to the job for which you are interviewing. You want to encourage confidence in your skills and abilities and reaffirm how closely they match the position's and company's needs.

PREPARE FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

Behavioral interview questions are designed to assess your future performance based on how you handled specific past situations, and are common during second interviews. Questions that begin with, "Tell me about a time when..." or "Describe a situation in which..." may be asked. It will be important to familiarize yourself with this interview style and prepare your answers to these potential questions to ensure you do well on the second interview.

ASK INSIGHTFUL QUESTIONS

During the first interview, you asked questions that indicated your interest in the job and reflected your knowledge of the company and its products. In a second interview, it's imperative to build on this impression by asking more insightful questions, such as what you will be accountable for achieving in the first 3-6 months, how this position interacts with other departments in the company, and what the company's plans for the future are. It is not yet time to ask about salary or benefits, unless HR or the hiring manager has already broached these subjects. Instead, focus on issues relative to performing the job effectively.

DEMONSTRATE YOU'RE A TEAM PLAYER

Second interviews are often used to determine if you will "fit" into the organization or with other members of the team. Chemistry plays a crucial role in hiring decisions, so you'll want to be sure to put your best foot forward. Make sure you're conveying your success stories and expertise in an articulate and concise fashion – no rambling allowed! At the same time, be enthusiastic and easy to talk with. Maintain good eye contact with your interviewers and smile when appropriate. Be someone your potential manager and coworkers can imagine interacting with on a daily basis.

SHOW ENTHUSIASM FOR THE JOB

A second interview can be a long ordeal, sometimes lasting an entire day, and can be draining for even the most energetic of interviewers. Although you may find yourself tiring as the interview goes on, do everything you can to remain upbeat and interested in the job. If you're in need of a break, ask if you can use the restroom so you can take some deep breaths and rejuvenate. Be prepared to answer the question, "Why do you want to work for us?" and continue to convey your enthusiastic interest in the job.

SEND THANK YOU LETTERS

As after a first interview, it is imperative you send a thank you letter to each of the people you interviewed with within 24 hours of the second interview. A well written thank you letter gives you an additional opportunity to "sell" the company on your skills and expertise. To be impactful, each thank you letter must be customized to each person, summarizing your discussion with them and highlighting those assets that are most relevant to the position and that person's future interaction with you.

MAKE SURE THE JOB FITS YOU

Although your primary goal is to convince your interviewers that you are right for their company, another critical component of the second interview is your own evaluation of whether the job and company are right for you. Where your first interview introduced you to the job, the company, and some of the players, a second interview will allow you to better assess the job responsibilities, the hiring manager's style, the company's culture, and the dynamics between the people hiring you. This is the time to ask questions that will help you get a better sense of whether this is an opportunity that excites you and whether the job will make use of your greatest strengths and abilities.

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