

INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE FOR BOTH SIDES OF THE TABLE

by Carolann Philips

With all the recent talk of recessions and depressions, successful job interviews have become more important than ever before! A job interview is a conversation which occurs between a potential employer and a job applicant. The applicant is trying to prove that he is the best candidate for the position while the organization's representative is not only evaluating the applicant but is also hoping to present a terrific workplace. Proper etiquette therefore plays an extremely important role for both the candidate and an employer in helping them to achieve their goals.

For candidates, the ground rule is to be well groomed and punctual. This means practicing good hygiene, dressing appropriately, and arriving five to ten minutes before the appointed time. Arriving earlier than that may inconvenience the interviewers and arriving after that is considered late! Turn off the cell phone and never take along an uninvited guest such as a spouse, friend or child. The interview starts and ends with the receptionist. So be courteous and fill out any paperwork graciously. Follow the interviewer's lead. Smile when greeted and wait to be told to take a seat. Then say, 'Thank you'. Be pleasant and confident when responding to all interview questions. The key to being confident is to prepare. Before the interview, evaluate your assets and features, consider which of them will be most beneficial to the potential employer, anticipate questions and research the company. If asked to say something about yourself, remember the interviewer is not interested in you personally at this time. Tell the interviewer who you are professionally, cite the results of three or four most significant

accomplishments and then ask which of them would he or she wish to know more about. Sit with a good posture; maintain eye contact and give the interviewer full attention. Do not place a handbag or folder on the interviewer's table. Rather, place it on the floor or in your lap. It is acceptable to ask questions on important matters such as job duties but wait until the interviewer asks if you have any. Thank the interviewer and do not forget to greet the receptionist on your way out. Send a thank you letter or e-mail the next day.

For interviewers, job interview etiquette consists of respecting the candidate's time and energy. Unemployment disrupts a person's sense of stability and for those people whose work is a source of personal pride and value, losing a job and having to look for another can be disorienting. Begin the interview on time and try to put the candidate at ease instead of testing how well he or she can handle the pressure of an interview. Let the applicant know how long the process will take and the steps that will be involved. Be familiar with the candidate's resume and during the interview show you know a little about his or her background. This indicates that the resume was given true consideration. Do not take calls, answer e-mails, or allow subordinates to interrupt the interview unless it is an emergency. Listen attentively and probe or comment on the candidate's statements rather than plow through a pre determined set of questions. When the interview draws to a close, thank the applicant and convey the approximate date of the hiring decision and the way in which it will be communicated. If an applicant is qualified enough to warrant an interview, he or she is worthy of a call once a decision has been made, even if not chosen for the position.

For both interviewer and interviewee, successful interviewing like driving requires practice. The more the practice, the better one gets!

Carolann Philips is an etiquette & protocol consultant, behavioral skills coach and professional enrichment trainer. Her educational qualifications include a Post graduate diploma in Instructional Design, a Bachelor's degree in French and English Literature, and an International Diploma in Travel and Tourism Management. Her professional credentials include being certified by Etiquette Survival LLC, Los Gatos , California, certified for training design & delivery by the American Society for Training & Development, and she also holds a certification in personality assessment by Psytech International, UK besides a host of other certifications.

Carolann has had the pleasure of delivering programs to a diverse clientele; from major airlines, leading banks, embassies, and reputed business houses to the modeling & fashion industry and royalty within the GCC. She is also a columnist for the 'Thursday' magazine, a local publication.