

## The Application

At some stage in the interview process, you may be asked to fill out the company's standard job application. Even though you have provided your resume, complete the application. Unless instructed to do so, do not write on the application "See Resume." Answer all information requested. False or incomplete information could ruin your chance of an offer or could be grounds for termination at a later time.

When an employer wants to extend a job offer, the company's personnel/human resources department will conduct a background check. They will contact your references, schools, former employers and the military to verify information on your resume and job application.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

#### EDUCATION

DO NOT exaggerate educational accomplishments. DO NOT inflate your GPA. Educational references and information are checked thoroughly.

#### NO WORK HISTORY

There are over a million people looking for their first job, so don't panic. Be sure to list any volunteer or community service work, leadership positions in student organizations, as well as any self-employment work, such as consulting.

#### REFERENCES

Potential employers will contact your references. Be sure to talk with each of your references to inform them of the positions for which you are applying, so that they are prepared to give a good and thoughtful recommendation. Always ask permission to list them as references.

#### POOR REFERENCE

If you know that your current or former supervisor/manager will not give you a strong reference, list another previous supervisor's name on the job application. Remember to get permission.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT GAPS

You should offer some type of explanation if you have gaps of unemployment between jobs. "Job-hunting" is a legitimate reason, as is education.

#### TERMINATION

DO NOT omit this information from your application. It will leave a noticeable gap in your employment history. During the interview you can briefly explain the circumstances.

#### LAY-OFF

If you were "down-sized", "rightsized" or laid off due to a merger or any other reason beyond your control, don't be embarrassed. There are thousands of people in the same situation. Fill-in the appropriate section of the application and give the reason for the lay-off.

#### COMPENSATION (OR SALARY)

When the application asks what wage or salary you expect, write "Open." If you specify a dollar amount, you may price yourself out of the job or be underpaid.

If you find any of the following on your application, ignore them:

- Marital Status
- Arrests (but you must list convictions, if asked)
- Height, weight
- Age, sex
- Religion, politics
- Military discharge
- Disability
- Race or national origin
- Birthplace
- Size of your family

*Note: As with all laws and rules, there are exceptions.*

#### TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATION

Some employers require on-line applications. Be careful when completing these to check for accuracy before submitting and print a copy for your records if possible.

#### CHECKLIST

- Print, don't write.
- Use a pen, not a pencil.
- Neatness counts.
- Answer every question. If a question doesn't apply to you write NA (Not Applicable).
- Don't give an expected salary.
- Be accurate.
- Make sure your reason for leaving each job is objective, not subjective.
- Make sure you have permission from all your references.
- Be honest.
- Don't forget to sign and date the application.

## The Interview

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Interviews are usually very predictable. Many interviewers are just as nervous or uncomfortable as the interviewee. The first step in preparing for an interview is understanding the company's purpose for meeting with you. There are many reasons why a company likes to meet face-to-face with its applicants:

- Companies are looking for people who can communicate.
- The employer wants to find out how you think and process, both critically and analytically.
- An employer wants to know how knowledgeable and experienced you are.
- The interview is a prospective employer's opportunity to make sure that the "personality" of the company and that of the individual are compatible.
- The interviewer wants to be sure that the candidate has an interest in the job.
- The interviewer wants to be sure that the candidate can do the job.
- The interviewer wants to be sure that the candidate will do the job.

### INTERVIEW TYPES

The interview should be a two-way conversational exchange to obtain enough information to make an employment decision. It is a conversation intended to help both parties learn as much as possible about each other within a limited amount of time. Before preparing for the interview, however, it is helpful to be aware of the various types of interviews.

#### THE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is that your past behavior is the best predictor of your future behavior. In essence, if you are asked behavioral-oriented questions, you're no longer asking questions that are hypothetical, but are now asking questions that must be answered based upon fact.

With a behavioral question, the interviewer is looking for results. They are not just looking for an activity list. So they are listening for things like names, dates, places, the outcome and especially what the individual's role was in achieving the outcome.

Candidates can prepare for behavioral interviews by identifying specific examples for each of these probes: Assertiveness, Clarification, Initiative, Commitment to Task, Dealing with Ambiguity, Decision Making, Interaction, Leadership, Management Skills, Communication Skills, Analytical Skills, Organizational Skills, Problem Solving, and Team Building.

Prepare short descriptions of each situation by using the STAR method.

#### SITUATION TASK ACTION RESULTS

You should spend approximately 25% of your answer on Situation and Task, 50% on your actions and thought processes and 25% on results or the outcome. Be ready to give details if asked.

When preparing, identify an unsuccessful example for each probe because you will probably be asked to give an example of a time when things didn't work out as planned. One way to end an answer to a negative probe is to say something like, "the mistake caused me to delay the project, but it helped me to develop a project tracking system which would minimize the chance of that happening again." Remember, mistakes are what help us learn.

#### THE SCREENING INTERVIEW

The screening or preliminary interview's purpose is to assess the skills and personality traits of the potential candidate. The intent is to determine whether those skills and traits meet the criteria for the position. It is a broad-based meeting, generally conducted by a human resources department representative. The objective is to "screen-out" those applicants who do not fit, and "screen-in" those who are judged appropriate to move on to the next level of interview. Your purpose is to convince the interviewer that you have what the company wants.

#### THE GENERAL OR STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The next step is often the general or structured interview, although in the interest of time, this interview may be combined with the screening interview. The general interview is a one-to-one discussion that aims to determine whether your being hired is in the best interest of both parties. Be ready to talk about specifics of the position, company and industry and how your skills and experience fit the position/company.

#### THE CASE INTERVIEW

This is a problem-solving or case scenario that tests your investigative, analytical and integrative skills. Typically used by management consulting firms and investment banking firms, but also used by other organizations.

The Career Services Center has books in the Career Library and Vault Guide online that will help prepare for case interviews. Many firms have interactive cases on their company's website. A good way to practice!