

## **Introduction**

When we 3 authors decided to write our book, “Finding Power, Passion and Joy Being At Work” our goal was to share our coaching knowledge with a wider audience and support more individuals in achieving “joy in work”. We know our coaching process and book works and that it generates a series of discoveries for anyone who works through it. In writing the book we found the biggest challenge was deciding where to stop. We know that while the process works for everyone, each of you are unique in your situation and the areas of support you need.

The solution was to develop a series of “interventions”, highly focused exercises, to get at specific issues. One of the interventions I developed is now available to you in this e-Guide.

## **Make It or Break It – The Job Interview**

The job interview is when all your work and effort to find a new position begin to pay off. The great work you do on your job search began with understanding what you want in a new job, then to preparing your resume, networking and finally your application for this position has gotten you to this point. Now it is time to further ramp up your efforts. You are rounding third base and to score a run, you need to do your finally push: you need to PREPARE!

It is natural to feel anxious or scared going into a job interview. This is because you will be putting yourself out there and the result will be a job or no job. By putting time and effort into preparation, you will help to calm down your anxieties and do the best job possible. Most interviewers expect you to be nervous and won't hold it against you. But they do expect you to be interested enough in the position and show respect for their time by being knowledgeable about the position, their company and their industry.

The hiring for most positions will be done through a series of interviews, and could include phone interviews. You will likely be interviewed by a variety of people including job recruiters, company human resource professionals, the hiring manager, the work team, and possibly a senior manager. While there are nuances to each of these interviews the key is still preparation. If you work through the following suggestions, called PREPARE, I feel confident that if you want the job because it is right for you and you for it, it will be yours!

## **P – R – E – P – A – R – E**

### **P - Plan**

I have always liked the adage, “fail to plan, plan to fail.” It is no different for job interviews. Planning for your interview is about knowing what you want the potential employer to know about you and what you want to know about them. It requires you to “manage” your interview in such a way that your key “selling points” are brought out in the interview. Planning has an added value in that physical nervousness is increased by fear of the unknown. Your plan will include completing all aspects of P R E P A R E.

Begin with creating a list of 4-6 points that support and summarize your candidacy and answer the question, what value will you bring to the company and why should they hire you? Then identify the skills, experience and talents you have that support these points. What have you accomplished that provides evidence of this? You will want to prepare a talking paper to take with you to the interview so that you can easily cover your key points.

One last planning point, know where you are going for the interview. This is not the time to get lost or be late. Do a dry run if you have to!

### **R - Research**

One of the biggest complaints of interviewers is that the candidate knew nothing about the company. They are not expecting you to have intimate details but they do expect you to have done your homework. Start by gathering as much information about the position, not only the description by the hiring company but also what is stated for similar positions at other companies.

Next research the company itself. With all the information available on the Internet, it would be a major mistake not to be aware of current issues for the company. You might also want to understand the company structure and depending on the level of position you are applying for, the names of key leaders. This way when references to individuals are made during the interview you will be in a better position to track with the conversation.

Lastly, take time to understand the industry and the company’s position in it. Not only will it help you in the interview, you can begin to have an understanding of the health and potential wealth of the organization you may be joining.

You should then prepare 3-4 questions to use during the interview that reflect your knowledge of the company and your interest in knowing more.

### **E - Engage**

You have an opportunity to improve the connection you make with the interviewer and reduce some of your anxiety if you can approach the interview as a conversation and thus engage the interviewer. This supports the interview as being two-way conversation with you asking some of the questions. The added value is that with the right questions you can demonstrate interest and knowledge about the company or industry and ensure that you are covering your key selling points. You are engaged in the interview and not just a participant.

*Example – I was excited to read that your company was working on Malcolm Baldrige certification. I was on the team that helped my current organization receive our certification last year.*

In most interviews you will be asked if you have any questions. This is not the time to say NO or to ask questions about salary and benefits. The salary and benefits question should be dealt with in a later interview when you are being made an offer. To bring it up too soon can send a message that you are more concerned about yourself than about the company.

If you have planned for the interview and done your research you will come prepared with questions. Another good source for meaningful questions can come from the interview itself. Listen to what the interviewer is telling you and use that information to frame a question.

*Example – You mentioned that because of the new industry standards your department was being increased. Will you be providing training in these new standards?*

Another value of having questions is that you have the opportunity to find out if you really want to work for this company. We all have work styles and values that can make the difference as to whether the work environment is a fit. This is in fact your interview of a potential employer.

### **P - Practice**

Practice is key to reducing your nervousness and having a successful interview. While you can use either a professional coach or a friend to practice your interview, what is important is that you get concrete feedback. You are looking for not only how you answer a question but your speech and grammar and the image you project. For instance, do you use speech pauses such as “um” or “ah” repeatedly? Do you talk too much or too little? How is your eye contact? Are your answers tight and to the point or rambling and unfocused? Walking through an interview practice gives you the opportunity to speak the answers to the questions you might expect.

Prior to an actual interview, you can practice your interviewing skills by setting up informational interviews. An informational interview not only provides practice but also can be a great tool for networking and identifying job opportunities. Meeting with a professional in a field you are interested in, to better understand what they do can give you insight into what works well in an interview. And may also provide leads to a job.

### **A - Appearance**

Non-verbal messages are critical in any communication and should not be forgotten in an interview. Impressions are formed as soon as we meet someone based on what they see and the “story” they create about it. Impressions begin with your physical appearance and continue on through your body language and eye contact.

Deciding what to wear to an interview has gotten more complex with the relaxation of dress standards. Ideally you want to dress in a style that presents a professional image and is appropriate for that company. One way to determine that is to ask when you are setting up the interview. Another way would be to determine the dress style of the interviewing company through your research.

In the past I would have recommended, when in doubt, default to a business suit. However, I recently read a story about hiring at a high tech company known for their casual and playful environment. To dress in a suit would have positioned a candidate well outside the style. You need to understand the work environment to avoid mistakes in your dress.

Body language and eye contact are also important. When you practice your interview, be sure to ask for feedback in these areas. I would also recommend practicing your handshake. You do not want to stand out because of an overly tight, vise like handshake or a limp mushy handshake. Your handshake and initial eye contact represent your greeting so practice so they are a strong indicator of your interest.

I strongly recommend carrying a portfolio and notebook with you to an interview. You can put your resume and reference folder, as well as your leave-behinds in the portfolio. The notebook is for taking notes, which demonstrates your interest in what the interviewer is saying and your organization. The notebook can also have an outline of your plan as to what you want to cover during the interview.

There are other areas of appearance that need to be looked at. If you have a website, blog or are on Facebook, MySpace or any other online site, be sure you have cleaned up your space. Employers do check the Internet. And don't forget to turn off your cell phone during the interview!

## R - Responses

During the interview you will be asked a variety of questions? Most are very predictable such as:

- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What are your proudest achievements or greatest accomplishments?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What kind of experience do you have to perform this job?
- How has your education prepared you for this position?
- What are you looking for in your next position?

You hope they will ask you the above questions because this is just the information you want them to have about you. But then there are the more challenging questions, the ones that can trip you up if you are not prepared. The key is to turn them around and use them as an opportunity to further highlight your accomplishments and talents through preparation and practice.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your current job situation.
- Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?
- What is something negative your last boss would say about you?
- What was your biggest failure?
- Describe the most difficult problem you've had to deal with.
- Describe yourself in 3 words.
- What did you dislike about your last job?
- How do you deal with pressure?

- If you got to live your life over again, what one thing would you change?

If you are stuck for a good answer you can find help on the Internet by search for tough interview questions and to understand the purpose of the questions and get some examples of responses.

### **E - Ending**

Planning for the “ending” of the interview is making sure you are going to stay active in the mind of the interviewer among all the other candidates for this position. You should come prepared with another copy of your resume, preferably in a folder along with another copy of your references. You will also want to have “leave-behinds”. Like in marketing and sale, leave-behinds are examples that highlight your talent and remind the “buyer” why they should hire you. In my book, *Find Power, Passion and Joy Being At Work*, there are a number of chapters on the information you should gather up for your leave-behinds. Just be sure you have introduced yhem during your interview and that they are relevant to the position.

The next day following the interview your first order of business is writing your thank you notes. So many job candidates forget this important step and never know that this is why they were dropped as a candidate. There are a variety of thoughts on how to handle the thank you note. Sending a note by email is generally ok as long as you follow it up with a written note. Thank you notes go to every person who participated in the interview. While you want to keep them brief and to the point, you can interject some new information you may have thought of regarding what you learned about the company or position and how your experience and skills would be of help.

**Good luck in your interview but you won't need luck if your have PREPARED!**