



Follow-up Steps After the Interview

Strategies to Help You Get the Offer

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My clients often express frustration after they've completed their interviews for a position they want. The common complaints include, "Why doesn't the company call me back?" or "I feel like I have no power; all I can do is wait for an answer," or "Can't I do anything to make the employer say YES?"

After working as a top-level Career Consultant for many years, and helping thousands of clients through the "interview maze," here is what I can tell you: There is no "secret trick" or "magic bullet" that will get the employer to offer you the job! In fact, you're probably already doing most of the right things in this process.

You'll be happy to know, however, that there are some strategies you can use to INFLUENCE the employer's decision and FINESS the process. Changing many of your small actions and approaches can actually make a big difference in the outcome of your interviews.

Here are ten suggestions for navigating through the interview process and following-up:

- 1. Set the stage for effective follow-up.** The first strategy is to have a structured follow-up system in the first place (which most candidates do NOT). You should have a plan in place before you even get to the interview! This way, you'll be able to "put the wheels in motion" immediately, and you won't have to think about it! This step alone will relieve the pressure and decrease your anxiety. Plus, you'll feel prepared, pro-active and more in control. Developing your follow-up strategy BEFORE the interview will even enhance your behavior DURING the interview.
- 2. Act more like a consultant than an applicant.** When you're at the interview, don't spend all your time trying to "sell" yourself. Focus instead on asking intelligent, probing questions about the employer's business needs, problems and concerns (like a good consultant would). These questions should be based on the preparation and study you've done beforehand. Write-down the interviewer's answers, which will become the foundation for your follow-up steps. Whenever possible, give specific examples (Accomplishment Stories) from your work history that are directly relevant to the interviewer's stated challenges.
- 3. Don't rush toward an offer.** Offers for professional-level job offers are almost NEVER made at the first interview. So, don't rush the process! The purpose of your initial interview is not to get an offer, but to get invited back for a second meeting – most likely with a higher-level individual at the company. Use every interview to ask more questions and uncover the employer's primary needs and problems. The more of these challenges you uncover, the better prepared you will be to submit your "proposal for service" at the appropriate time.
- 4. Confirm next steps.** At the end of each meeting, be sure to plan and confirm next steps. Remember, an interview (or ANY meeting, for that matter) is only as good as the follow-up actions that it generates. Don't settle for "We'll let you know" or similar comments that place you in a passive position. Assume a more active role, and get a commitment from the employer for "what comes next!"
- 5. Follow-up promptly and compellingly.** Now that your interview is over, be sure to send your thank-you letters as soon as possible. These should be personalized to each individual (not generic), and must include specific references to each person with whom you met (something they said or contributed). Be sure your correspondence is as professional and clear as it can be, whether via e-mail or "snail mail." If you promised to send the employer additional documents or information, do so promptly.

6. Use every follow-up contact as a change to build your value. After the interview, carefully review your notes, which highlight the company's most pressing needs, problems and challenges. Identify specific areas where you have successfully addressed similar issues in your career. In your thank-you letter, include brief synopses of these accomplishments, tying them directly to the company's stated challenges (usually in a side-by-side chart format). You can even support your "claims" by sending the employer actual samples of your work. Most companies want employees who are true problem-solvers, so this will prove that "you have what it takes" and that you can bring your special value to this organization.

7. Be punctual and persistent. It shouldn't even be necessary to mention this "strategy," but some candidates sabotage their chances for the offer by arriving late to the interview, or by "dropping the ball" in the middle of the process. So, always call when you say you're going to call and do what you say you're going to do! Be meticulous in your business etiquette, which includes consistent, regular follow-ups by phone and e-mail. Be persistent in expressing your sincere interest in the opportunity, but don't be a pest.

8. Leverage outside resources. If you have contacts and connections with anyone who might influence the hiring decision, or who actually knows the interviewer, ask them to "put in a good word for you" after the initial interview. But do this advisedly – this can be a sensitive or highly-political matter at times. At the very least, send the employer some letters of recommendation, written by respected professionals in your business community.

9. Accept rejection gracefully. Assuming you've done everything you can reasonably do to win the offer, you must accept whatever decision the employer makes. If you get the message (directly or indirectly) that the company is not interested in you, or if they actually reject you, then all you can do is move on. You can't "force" the interviewer to make you an offer, no matter how "perfect" you may have thought the job was for you.

10. Turn defeat into victory. After being rejected, the first thing you should do (ironically) is to send a thank-you letter. You can really distinguish yourself from the other rejected applicants if you send this sort of polite, professional letter "after the fact." Express your sincere appreciation for having been considered for the position, and wish the new employee every success. State that you would be happy to be considered for the position again, should the selected candidate not work-out for any reason. (You would be surprised how many times the "new hire" does NOT work-out). When the employer needs to find a quick replacement, there will be a high likelihood that YOU will be at the top of their list. In some cases, the employer may even be so impressed with your grace and professionalism, that they will offer you a different position at the company as soon as a vacancy occurs! If you genuinely liked the company, stay in touch with them over the long-term. Other opportunities will open-up, so make it easy for the employer to contact and eventually hire you.

By employing these follow-up strategies after the interview, you will improve your chances of getting more offers, and you will also feel more empowered and effective throughout the hiring process!

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