

Boost Your Confidence Level for the Interview

by Roger Manning

If you find yourself normally nervous, fidgety, dry-mouthed or sweaty from prior experiences in the interview process, then it is very worthwhile to address this as part of your preparation process.

Being nervous and anxious is not an abnormal thing. Most everyone will a little nervous prior to that big interview. Most actors/actresses will admit that they have the last minute butterflies prior to their big performance. If you are not able to control the nervousness, however, then that will definitely affect your performance adversely. I would like to offer some of the following tips to help control pre-interview nervousness and anxiety and build confidence for a stronger interview.

♦ **Advanced Preparation for the Interview**

One of the reasons for pre-interview anxiety and jitters is not knowing what the interviewer is going to ask. Will they be cordial and personable or will they be a tough, close-to-the-vest type of person. Will they accept you based on your answers or will they be judgmental? The only way to stack the odds in your favor is to prepare for the interview as if this is the most important meeting of your life.

1. Review your resume thoroughly before the interview so that you are confident about dates of employment, accomplishments, numbers and hard facts.
2. Practice in front of a mirror in pretending to answer questions from an employer about these objective facts. For instance, can you confidently respond to your dates of employment with your past 2 employers? Can you confidently discuss major accomplishments including objective measurable performance parameters? As an alternative, practice with a friend or loved one who will be helpful and constructive. Pay special attention to your body language. What do you see? Is your posture sending a positive and confident message or do you look nervous and anxious?
3. Use a tape recorder so that you can play back your responses. Evaluate your voice inflection. Do you sound enthusiastic or do you sound boring? How about the use of proper grammar and enunciation? Perhaps you should have your friend or "significant other" listen and give some constructive criticism.
4. Review a list of most asked questions and prepare written answers in advance. Such lists can be obtained through books such as Ron Fry's, "101 Most Asked Questions" or through a little research on the internet. Write down your answer and read over them several times. Does your answer sound logical and well thought out? Are you being truthful or do you tend to mislead the facts?
5. Be prepared with an understanding of how "behavioral interview questions" are different in case your interviewer uses this style of interview process. See my articles of behavioral interview questions.
6. Write down an inventory list of your most positive traits and attributes. How do your past employers see you in terms of these traits and attributes? What things have been written about you in past performance appraisals?

- Focusing on these traits will help build your confidence as well as have you mentally prepared to demonstrate these traits in the interview.
7. This is an interesting idea especially if you see yourself in applying for a sales position or any position where you will be presenting to groups or committees. Executives would especially benefit from this idea. Prepare a Power Point slide presentation and the subject will be: "Why XYZ COMPANY Should Hire ME". This exercise challenges you to put together all the compelling evidence about your background, accomplishments, skills, knowledge, traits and abilities. You are then testing your ability to sell YOU just as you may someday have to sell a program or service for your employer. This is a great exercise and very worthwhile your time. This same concept is done today by some candidates by creating their own website presentation complete with slide show, video stream or audio presentations. Obviously, this kind of preparation is a strong confidence builder!
 8. Avoid any situations of misleading your interviewer about questionable areas of your background. Fabricating stories only increases your level of anxiety and this will come out in today's interview or in future interviews. Questionable areas like gaps in employment, terminations, poor career decisions are best answered with giving the honest facts. The best way, however, to convert a negative into a positive is to immediately explain how the decision or incident was a valuable learning situation and how you have benefited from that lesson or how you will utilize this learning situation on your future career opportunity.
 9. Research your potential new employer. In today's world of abundant access to the internet, there is no excuse for not researching the new employer prior to the interview. Knowledge builds confidence. Print out as much information as possible. Take a highlighter pen and focus on key pieces of information that can be part of good questions to ask the interviewer. Highlight exciting pieces of information that you use to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job and the company. Use this information to get the interviewer to talk more about the company and the opportunity. It is always perceived as a strong sign of taking initiative when the interviewer sees evidence of the candidate's attempt to research the company.
 10. Make a list of career-focused questions to ask during the interview. Questions as to compensation, benefits, and perks are usually best left to the second or third interviews. Strong career-focused questions will cause your interviewer to respond more favorably thus building your confidence.

♦ Turn Jitters into Enthusiasm

1. Greet your interviewer with a strong handshake, warm smile and eye contact.
2. As you seat yourself take a long deep breath. Bringing oxygen to the brain is relaxing for the whole body. Seat yourself with special attention to good posture. Good posture is defined as facing your interviewer with good eye contact; sitting erect without slouching and both feet planted on the floor. If you are jittery, make sure that you gently hold your hands or place them on the arm chair or upon your legs. By doing this, you will not be wringing your hands, shaking, or excessively moving your hands around.
3. Smile, smile, smile. Make sure that you always take time to interject a smile into your conversations and answers. Practicing in front of a mirror is excellent for checking this out. Smiling takes away anxiety and

nervousness. Smiling causes the interviewer to relax as well. Smiling demonstrates that you are a happy and a content person.

4. If you still feel that you are uncontrollably nervous, begin your introduction to the interviewer by telling them how excited you are to be meeting them today. Tell them how your research has been so positive and you are anxious to learn much more about this great opportunity. In essence, you want to turn those jitters into enthusiasm and create an air of excitement. A candidate with high enthusiasm scores very high in most interviewers' minds as compared to those candidates without it. Body language also signals enthusiasm. Does a person slouching in a chair show enthusiasm? Of course not. Maintaining eye contact demonstrates confidence, ability to communicate well one-on-one and shows high interest. If you are placed in a situation where you are asked to sit where you cannot directly face your interviewer for good eye contact, make a point of shifting your body so that you can. If needed, ask the interviewer's permission to move the chair for better eye contact.

Sometimes this technique places the employer in the situation of doing much more talking on the front end of the interview. This allows you to quiet yourself, relax and listen to some exciting news about the company. Your attention and focus changes from nervousness to responding enthusiastically about the news you are hearing.

Remember most employers will be very skilled at getting you to talk 75% of the time. It is their job to ask questions and you are taking most of the time in answering the questions. No matter how nervous you may feel, don't ramble after you have successfully answered the question. Be specific and give the precise information that is asked for.

Overall, your goal should be to effectively display the following qualities: capability, confidence, dependability, enthusiasm, flexibility, resourcefulness and strong work ethic."

◆ WIN OR LOSE!

- ◆ No matter what happens during the interview, end the interview in the same strong fashion that you opened the interview....strong handshake, smiling face, enthusiastic interest in the job and ask for the opportunity.
- ◆ Ask the interviewer for feedback as to their interest in you. Ask them if there is anything more that they need to know from you for a successful completion of this interview.
- ◆ Never end an interview by telling the employer when asked that you have no more questions. Always keep back one really good career-oriented question that you ask when the interview allows that one final question. Then close the interview by asking for the next interview, the job or summarize why this job is good for both you and them.
- ◆ Talk to someone close to you as soon as you can about the interview experience. If you are working with a recruiter/Search Consultant, then you should be calling them as soon as possible. This helps you conduct an analysis of the interview and replay some of your responses to interview questions. Perhaps your friend can encourage you with better responses to bumbled answers. Bottom-line your friend or recruiter can be supportive and

this will eliminate future interview anxiety. Based upon this analysis, you may want to clarify a point or two in your follow-up "thank you" letter.

If you have further needs for advice in this area or just have a specific concern that you need advice, contact a Search Consultant at the Manning Search Group LLC. Be confident and best wishes on your next interview!