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# THE 4 P'S OF INTERVIEWING

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Deloitte's Global Director of Recruitment Offers Advice for Job Seekers - by *Thad Peterson*

If you wanted to pick someone's brain about interviewing, Kent Kirch's would be a good brain to pick. He's been involved in recruitment and candidate selection for 25 years and reckons he's interviewed about 3,000 candidates. He's now the global director of recruitment for Deloitte, which hires thousands of people every year.

## Preparation

"It's really frustrating for an interviewer to have someone that they're talking to who really doesn't know the company or the position they're applying for," laments Kirch, who is confounded by candidates who don't do the barebones research before the interview. He estimates this is the case for roughly one out of five prospects.

Candidates should have "looked at the Web site, read the [company's] brochure, talked to people who've worked there -- that's kind of baseline homework," he says. "If you haven't done that, it can really make it uncomfortable in the interview, because either you're not going to understand what the interviewer's talking about or you're going to ask some dumb questions."

"Another thing is not really preparing for the interview itself," says Kirch. Applicants should "sit down and think, 'What are they going to ask me when I'm in that interview?' With a little bit of asking around, you can find out things like, do they use behavior-based questions, do they use case-based questions, do they use a really unstructured conversational interview."

Finding people to talk to within the organization can yield a lot of information. Kirch also says it's perfectly acceptable to ask some questions when setting the interview up, including:

- Who will I be talking to?
- Any suggestions on how to prepare?
- Should I expect a particular type of interview format?

"You have nothing to lose by asking," says Kirch. "It shows that a candidate is interested in what's going to happen. They're interested in you as an employer and they're inquisitive, and in most cases, that's going to be a very positive thing."

## Practice

Candidates can often anticipate the kinds of questions -- if not the exact questions -- they'll be asked during interviews, particularly if they've done their due diligence. Once you've determined the probable questions, Kirch advises practicing in front of someone.

"They always talk about preparing yourself -- looking in the mirror and answering the question," Kirch says. "It's much more difficult to give your answer to a live person and ask them what they thought of your answer than to look yourself in the mirror and do it."

## Personal Presentation

Dressing appropriately is sometimes lost on recent graduates, says Kirch. He says that many times young people will show up wearing a coat when a suit would really be more fitting. "Or even if they do come with the right tie or suit, sometimes it's that they're not well-presented. They're wrinkled, or they're wearing white pants in January. It could be a lot of different things that are easy to fix, but it just doesn't help them when they're up against a lot of competition for a position." Again, doing your homework should reveal the appropriate attire.

Be sure to cover all the standard points of interviewing etiquette as well. "Even the basics -- like a good handshake, not being nervous, smiling -- because they don't see the real you if you're uptight," he says. "And basic eye contact; a lot of people put a lot of weight into eye contact. Maintaining that is really important."

## Pertinent Questions

Kirch says it's profoundly disappointing in interviews to "get to the end and say, 'Do you have any questions I can answer for you?' and they say, 'Nope, I think you answered them all,' and that's the end of it. It's just really disappointing and reflects negatively on the candidate."

Include developing a tough question to finish things off in your preparation. "For me, I just love it when someone asks a really difficult question -- something that takes some guts to ask, asking really well-thought-out questions that show you know the business that that interviewer is in," says Kirch. "You know their company to some extent, and you've thought about your question. It all goes back to preparation, and it tells the interviewer you thought about this interview before you walked in the door."

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## Sending a Thank-You Letter

### Sample Thank-You Letter

After your interview, you can do wonders by composing a good thank-you letter. It's best to follow up by emailing the person or people you spoke with by the end of the next business day, so you're still somewhat fresh in their mind. Make sure to incorporate points the interviewer discussed. This shows you were intently listening to him and understand the company's needs. Of course, you'll need to customize your letter, but here's one example of what a thank-you note might look like:

March 15, 2XXX

Dear Ms. Sanchez:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday. It was great to learn more about Johnson Associates. The company has an exciting mission and, from what I saw, a great team of employees. I wanted to follow up on a few points from our discussion about the administrative assistant position.

You emphasized that the person in this job will need to be a good judge of character and be able to handle delicate interpersonal matters. I have extensive experience working with an array of strong personalities and nimbly handling touchy interpersonal matters. I also have a knack for putting people at ease, even when they are in the midst of tense situations, and I am highly organized. I realize how important these qualities can be in an Administrative Assistant.

After meeting with you and the Johnson Associates team, I walked away enthusiastic about the company and feeling that I'm an ideal match for the opening you're trying to fill. I hope you will not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns that need to be addressed. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Sincerely,

*Donna Merloni*