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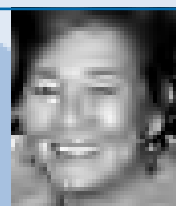
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WORKINGMATTERS

by JACKIE DAVID, Public Information Director, Public Safety Division, Personnel



Interview Do's: Stop, Look, Listen

The sun is shining, the flowers are in bloom, and you are ready to spring into that new job, new career path or promotion. Your shoes are polished, you're in a terrific mood and traffic is moving along better than expected. As you drive to your interview appointment, you mull over how you're going to ace the interview. You have a good feeling about it. You've got the basics covered:

- Dress appropriately.
- Arrive on time.
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner.
- Give a firm handshake.
- Look your interviewer in the eye.
- Smile, nod and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
- Don't ever chew gum or speak negatively about your previous job or supervisor.
- Don't forget to say "thank you."

What may not be so obvious is all that in-between stuff that defines the interview including how to answer both traditional interview questions as well as behavioral interview questions.

Whoa! Wait a minute. What?

I know. That came up pretty fast. It got me, too.

I believe they are called tricks of the trade. Traditional interview questions are those that evaluate skills, capabilities and levels of experience. You know, stuff that's on your résumé. They are questions you are probably familiar with, such as:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What in your education, training or work history has prepared you for this job?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- And, the always-asked-at-end-of-interview question: "Do you have anything else to add?"

Piece of cake? Think about it. You've been asked these same traditional questions at just about every interview since you landed your first job. There's that great urge to just respond with your stock answers. After all, it's worked before. Of course, you could always wing it or maybe even spice things up a little with a dash of embellishment or a sprig of imagination. Whatever you decide, be prudent and (as both the Railroad Crossing sign and the Motown song goes): Stop, look and listen.

Pause. Take a moment. Think. How should you answer the question(s)?

You might consider doing some advance work to help you prepare:

Draw up a list of all the traditional questions you've ever been asked and then write your answers down to each question. Be concise and be ready to provide examples to support your statements. It's pretty amazing how things can jump out at you from a fresh page of answers that you have written.

Remember that all questions are asked as it relates to the job or promotion you want. What that means is that you do need to do some research about where you want to go. Find out all you can about the Department or section such as: goods, services, programs, culture, values and even challenges. Having this historical and factual framework will give you the confidence to rework and polish your answers to fit the Department, section or job class you are interviewing for.

Practice with a mock interview. Enlist a family member, friend or career counselor. If you can, videotape your mock interview so that you can hear what you are saying and how you are saying. It will also give you the opportunity to see what you are saying with your body language. Stay away from both ends of the interview spectrum: don't be dull and don't be overly enthusiastic; don't say too little or talk too much.

Once you've got the traditional questions out of the way, you can then focus on preparing for the behavioral interview questions – a little more difficult, far more involved and even a little tricky.

However, that will have to wait until the next issue. In the meantime, keep an open mind, keep good thoughts and believe in yourself.



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