



*Personalized recruitment for nurse executives and hospital leaders since 1989*

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## Candidate Preparation – Successful Interviewing

The manner in which you present and conduct yourself during the interview process has a larger impact on your ability to gain the position you seek than your resume, educational background and experience.

Keep in mind that you will be viewed by not only members of the interview team, but by the receptionist, administrative assistants and maintenance personnel you may encounter, and even the desk clerk at your hotel. Their opinion is very often sought out and given serious consideration.

You are your own best sales person. Your accomplishments, leadership skills and desire to make a change must be presented by you in a positive manner. Focus on your successes but do not be afraid to discuss some of those situations where you grew when success came from making a mistake.

Take advantage of the time they have granted you to learn as much as possible about the organization and its people. Keep focused on your environment and the people you encounter.

Here are a number of things to keep in mind before, during and after the interview.

### **A Professional Appearance**

Your professional appearance will set the tone for the interview. This is a critical step in the interview process and essential that you pay close attention to your appearance.

Green nail polish or cowboy boots might be fun

and accepted in some parts of the country, but elsewhere might prevent you from obtaining the position you want. Your apparel need not be expensive; but neat, clean and simple clothing of good quality will be most effective. You want to be comfortable and not tugging at something that is too tight or "just not you."

While business casual is widely accepted in the everyday workplace environment, dressing more conservatively for the interview is a necessity. Even at the end of a multi-day interview, avoid "letting your hair down" and maintain professional appearance. Set a tone of professional success; avoid fashion fads or styles that may not be widely accepted.

### **Women's Attire**

While women generally have more options in the range of acceptable dress than men, traditional and conservative is the best way to go. Wear a suit that resists wrinkling. The suit should have a hem-line just below the knees; best colors are charcoal gray, black or navy blue. Blouses should be white or pale blue. Long sleeves, solid colors are best. Shoe color should be dark, navy, black or burgundy in color and in good condition. Shoes should be shined. Flats are just fine and avoid too high of a heel. Stockings should be subdued, preferably skin toned. Bring an extra pair in your purse or briefcase.

Accessories like belts and jewelry should be subdued and complement your appearance. Try not to bring both a purse and a briefcase to the interview; it is better to place needed purse items in your briefcase. Makeup should be

natural with a subtle shade of lipstick. Nails should be neat and not too long. Use a clear or a subtle color of polish.

### **Men's Attire**

For men, a two piece business suit that resists wrinkling is recommended. The suit should be navy blue or charcoal gray; avoid brown or tan. The shirt should be white or pale blue with long sleeves. Pinstripes in the suit or shirt are acceptable if they are narrow. The tie and socks should be chosen to complement the suit, not match it. Shoes should be in good condition, conservative black leather and freshly shined. Shoes with leather soles have a more professional appearance.

### **Personal hygiene**

This should be a first priority. Hair should be neat, and if you needed a trim last week, take care of it prior to the interview. Finger nails should be clean and neatly trimmed. Shirts and blouses should be freshly pressed; most hotels can provide an iron for touch-up.

## **Other Comments on Interviewing**

### **Research**

Learn about the organization. A knowledgeable recruiter will be certain to provide you with a wealth of information about the organization and specifics of the opportunity.

Use any resources at your disposal to learn about the organization, its history, people, the community and future plans.

Visit the organization's web site paying particular attention to the current and past news items.

Ask good questions about the organization and leadership team. Good strategic questions indicate the depth of your grasp of the organization's goals, challenges and opportunities. Review companion Silver Oak Search documents "Interview Questions to

Anticipate" and "Interview Questions to Ask."

### **What's on the Internet?**

Check the Internet for what has been said about you. Realize that what is posted on the Internet, on the social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.) will probably be downloaded by your future employer and can play into your chances of being offered a job.

### **Packing**

Assume that your checked luggage will be lost and that coffee will be spilled on your clothes while traveling, and plan accordingly. Bring an additional change of clothing in case the interview continues to an extra day or if dinner is added to the schedule.

Bring extra copies of your resume.

### **Business Dining**

The opportunity to dine with your host is a good sign, but remember, it is still an interview! Ordering the highest priced meals, consuming alcohol or smoking is not recommended. Do not order extra cost items like an appetizer or dessert unless your host has already done so and thereby indicating that you may. Combine your best listening skills with your best table manners and make the most of this part of the interview process. Do not fall into your soup!

### **Courtesy**

Be nice to everyone on your interview. Everyone has input into the hiring decision when a team-oriented environment is considering a new member. Don't forget this may happen even prior to the interview, so begin with the people preparing your travel.

More than one person has lost an excellent opportunity by displaying an aloof or disrespectful attitude to a receptionist, administrative assistant or cleaning staff.

### **Viewing Real Estate**

When relocation is required, hospitals often

have a real estate agent tour you about your new community. Take every advantage of this situation to learn everything you can about your new community - its schools, churches, social activities and neighborhoods. Think about what employment, educational and recreational resources will be available to your family.

The agent is frequently a direct link to the hiring manager or human resources department. Assume that your conversations with the agent will become a part of the interview.

### **Scheduling**

Be on time, whether you are driving across town or flying across country. In fact, getting to your destination twenty minutes early will keep your stress level down. If you plan to eat or have a cup of coffee before the interview, do that near the destination and not at your departure point.

### **Body Language**

Watch your body language. Greet each of your hosts warmly and sincerely with a smile and firm handshake. Throughout your conversations maintain good eye contact. Use body language that shows you are open to opportunities and challenges.

Be yourself during the conversations and remember that all of your statements may be taken into consideration. This includes any "off-the-cuff" remarks or observations you make during tours or while being escorted between interviews.

### **Flexibility**

Be flexible. Sometimes the best laid plans go awry. If schedules change without prior notice or apparent reason, accept that your hosts are doing their best. This might even be a test of your flexibility. Terrible airline connections and very little sleep the night before the interview should be anticipated.

If you had difficult travel problems and feel a

little distracted, say so in passing, but don't complain or dwell on the issue. Focus on the reason you are there - your next career opportunity. Be alert, positive, inquisitive and maintain a high energy level.

### **Problem Solving - Behavioral-based Interviews**

During the interview you may be presented with a number of problem statements to which you are expected to respond. This is known as behavioral interviewing, a practice being used by a growing number of healthcare organizations.

Use this interview technique as an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to analyze problems, and make rational and well founded decisions. Avoid jumping to conclusions or embarrassing any of the interviewers. Discuss how you have seen similar issues addressed in the past, but keep in mind that every situation is different.

### **Personal Information**

Discuss family issues to the extent that they affect your current employment decisions or future work performance. Personal issues or family problems not related to the job are inappropriate topics during the interview.

### **Cell Phones**

The prospective employer is going to expect your full attention while you are on-site. So, turn off your cell phone, including vibrate mode, so that your time on-site is not interrupted. Texting or carrying on a cell phone conversation, even between interviews, will indicate that your priorities are elsewhere.

In the event of an absolutely critical situation, such as family illness, let your host know ahead of time that you may be interrupted. Otherwise your host must have your full, undivided attention.

### **Expenses**

Do not abuse your prospective employer's willingness to pay your interview expenses.

The bills you submit for reimbursement will be scrutinized for unnecessary or inappropriate expenditures. Watching pay-per-view programs in your room is not a good idea; the program names will show up on the bill.

Submit your expenses in a timely manner and keeping copies for your own records.

### **Be Yourself, Be Prepared**

Be enthusiastic and confident. Relax and enjoy the process - this is exciting! Let your words and actions reflect that you want the job. The last thing you want to hear from the recruiter is, "They said they don't know if you want the job." If you want the job ask for it.

### **A Few More Do Nots**

Here are a few things to avoid during your time with your prospective employer:

- Chewing gum
- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Wearing sun glasses indoors
- Heavy perfume or aftershave
- Asking about salary, benefits or vacation time

### **After the Interview - Closing the Loop**

#### **Feedback**

Get back to your recruiter immediately to let them know how things went and whether you are interested in the position. Avoid putting the recruiter in the awkward position of not knowing how to respond to the hospital if the recruiter has not heard from you.

After the interview the recruiter needs to know two things: 1) Do you think you are qualified? and 2) Do you want the job? Be honest with your feedback, your salary expectations and level of interest in the opportunity. Take advantage of the recruiters relationship with the organization to clear up any misunderstandings. If you are interested, ask

for the job.

### **Saying Thank You**

Send a neatly handwritten (*not typed*) thank you letter to the number one or two decision-makers within 24 hours! Emphasize that you can identify problems and successfully guide the organization to the outcomes they desire. Do this by relating your skills and experience to specific examples of their challenges as discussed during the interview.

Make the letter conversational, keep it a single page and close the letter by asking for the position. A letter is preferred over an e-mail message as a letter indicates a higher level of effort and consideration on your part.



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