BizBlog: Exceed Interview Expectations

So, you've heard back from one or more of the companies you applied to and are super excited! All the hard work paid off in your research and application phase. Now you are setting up an interview. An interview is a great opportunity for the employer to learn more about you and provides an equal chance for you to learn more about the company. You should be asking them almost as many question as they ask you. Make sure that the questions are informed and well researched ahead of time; this helps a lot when you are put on the spot in the interview--What questions do you have? Come prepared with a few questions at the ready!

I've had several interview experiences, including in-person interviews, phone interviews, and informational interviews. Interview types are not limited to these three, but they are the most common. I'm going to talk more about each type in the following paragraphs. Going into an interview, I like to think of it as just a conversation. Just a conversation, a getting-to-know-you, a friendly exchange of information. I find that this has made a big difference in my anxiety levels going in, because, hey, it's just a conversation--how bad could it be?

One of my first ever official in-person interviews was with Old Sturbridge Village. I applied to be a 4-H Summer Intern the first year of the program. I was really nervous, yet drummed up enough courage to go inside the office building and met with the two people that were interviewing me. Both were very nice individuals, and the questions they asked me were about my experience with agriculture and teaching others. I handed them my resume and ended up talking about my experience growing up more than anything else. I grew up on a small dairy goat farm, with several goats, chickens, cats and a garden. This unique background in agriculture and leadership involvement
in 4-H was what propelled me forward in the pool of applicants. Long story short, I was accepted into the 4-H internship program and interned at Old Sturbridge Village for two years during high school. I later applied for their college internship program and was a Marketing Intern last summer. I'm a big fan of OSV!

On to phone interviews! Phone interviews are nice because you can literally lay out your resume, research information, and questions in front of you while you are talking on the phone with the interviewer. I used this technique when I was interviewed by my soon-to-be-supervisors at Jumpstart DC for my summer internship freshman year. It worked well for me to lay out my materials because it reminded me of key points I wanted to touch on during the interview, and when they asked me for my questions I was ready!

In my opinion, informational interviews are one of the greatest secrets for getting ahead and networking with other people in a less forced atmosphere. When I go to career fairs on campus, I often feel overwhelmed and pressured to say the right things in a very limited amount of time. Informational interviews are more my speed, because I am in control of the process. My most recent informational interview experience was during winter break. I met up with a woman who worked at a digital media company in NYC. It was an incredible experience to learn more about the company and her career path. Don't be afraid to send an introductory email to a family friend or a professional you admire. People like to help others reach their goals, and if you have a particular interest in common, that's a great place to start.

Lastly, don't forget to follow up. Be sure to email your interviewer(s) the same day of the interview and mention something that stood out to you in the conversation. This personalizes the message and will trigger their memory of you. Thank them for their time and consideration. Once that is all complete, you wait for the moment of truth!

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