

### *Precall Plan Every Job Interview*

**B**ecause a job interview is a sales call where you are the salesperson selling yourself, the meeting must be preplanned. All great salespeople plan every sales call. So must you. Ninety percent of all sales calls are won or lost in precall. You must precall every interview—every person—you are going to see at the target company. If your interview schedule has five meetings, you will need five precall plans. If you are asked back for follow-up interviews, those too must be preplanned.

In addition to the background homework and research you must conduct before contacting the company—and certainly before visiting the company—you should invest at least five to fifteen hours in precall planning for your first interview. Precall planning is done in writing. It is not done in your head or while jogging or in the shower. Precall planning is not done on the way to the interview. It is done with a pad and pencil or mouse and keyboard or hammer and chisel. Start your precall planning with your answer to the question, “Why should this company hire me?” The answer is the basis for why it makes economic sense for the company to hire you. The answer is your value proposition to your customer, the company. To effectively answer this question you must do as much pre-interview homework as possible, and you must listen with care to the answers to your interview questions.

Be absolutely sure you know how to pronounce everybody’s name. America is a stew of new and old ethnicities. There are many difficult names to manage, but pronouncing someone’s name correctly is a sign of respect. Correct name pronunciation, especially in a first meeting, delights the customer and instantly gives you a

positive edge. If you were interviewing Sam Hamam or Umesh Cooduvalli or Beverly Ng, how much precall practice would you require? Think through exactly what next-step commitment you need from the hiring person that will lead to your job. This commitment is your job interview objective.

Craft and write out the needs analysis questions you intend to ask during each interview. Practice asking the questions. It is appropriate to refer to your written list of questions during your interviews. Do not take notes when the interviewer is asking you questions, which usually occurs at the beginning of the interview. Such note taking may make people uneasy. You can take notes as the interviewer answers your questions. Do take careful notes of the interviewers' answers. Taking notes is always appropriate. But you are not taking notes in History 101. You are only capturing what you will later review or use in follow-up communications. Maintain some eye contact. Stay in the discussion. And please, please, please don't pull out a laptop and start key pounding (use the laptop later, after you get the job).

Anticipate being asked questions related to your experience, to your qualifications, personal goals, personal interests, and the underlying reasons for your interest in the company. Most interviewers will have concerns—your age, your ability, your health, your character, your work history, or your background. Interviewers will ask you directly about some issues, but not about others. If concerns exist, you must handle them in order to get hired. Properly handling these concerns starts with anticipation and starts in precall. Plan and practice how you intend to ask for the job or for a commitment to an action that will directly lead to getting the job.

Hiring companies like candidates who have done their homework and prepared for interviews. They infer that good work to get a job signals good work on the job.