

The Job Interview Is a Sales Call

The hiring interview is a sales call. You are the product you want the customer to buy. You are also the salesperson responsible for selling the product. The customer is the hiring decision maker in the organization.

It is the decision maker's job, the interviewer's job, to decide if his or her organization should invest some of their resources and buy you. There are usually other important people in the hiring/purchase process. These other decision influencers—people who have some “yes” or “no” veto power on the hire—may include the interviewer's boss, her colleagues, the president of the company. If any of the decision influencers are negative about buying you, your chances of making the sale are low. So, you must persuade everyone in the purchasing process that you are worth more than their investment in you.

Each decision influencer and decision maker has different needs and concerns. Your job is to determine those needs and prove you can satisfy those needs. There is only one reason people hire someone, and that reason is to solve a problem. You must uncover that problem, calculate the cost to the organization of not solving the problem, and demonstrate that you are the solution. There are six things you must do for every interview for every organization:

1. Precall plan each interview. Your precall is the plan you are going to follow during your interviews that will lead to a job. Before your visit, you review all your research on the company. You consider how you are going to present your story. You make a plan.

2. Have at least one written objective to achieve in each interview. For example, one objective is to demonstrate a particular skill or definitive experience critical to your target company.
3. Conduct a preplanned, practiced needs analysis, asking careful, thoughtful questions. Write out the questions you intend to ask and practice asking them.
4. Listen intently and take notes. Customers like sellers who take notes.
5. Show something. You may have the chance to show examples of past work. You may show a survey you did on the company's customers.
6. Ask for a commitment. Plan how you intend to ask for the job or for further interviews.

The job interview is the most important part of the job-getting process. This is when you sell the employer on you. Do not treat the job interview casually. You cannot over-prepare. You cannot over-practice.

Your questions, your answers, your demeanor, your attitude will sell you. If you can persuade the hirer that you are the solution to their problem, you will get the job.