LESSON 31

JOB INQUIRY LETTER AND INTERVIEW

Outline:

Application Follow-Ups

The typical Sequence of Interviews Types of Interviews

Some organizations require you to fill out and submit an application form before considering you for a position. It is a standardized data sheet that simplifies comparison of applicant’s qualifications. To request such a form, send a job-enquiry letter. You can also go to the organization and pick up the form.

Organizations use this form for information about your qualification so try to be accurate when filing it out. Your care in filling out application form suggests to the employer that you will be thorough and careful in your work. When writing a job-Inquiry letter, plan for direct requests: main idea, necessary details, and specific request.

Application Follow-Ups

Even if you’ve received a letter acknowledging your application and saying that it will be kept on file, don’t hesitate to send a follow-up letter three months later to show that you are still interested. Look at the following.

Three months have elapsed since I applied to you for an accountant position, but I want to let you know that I am still very interested in joining your company.

Please keep my application in your active file, and let me know when a position opens for a capable accountant.

Unless you state otherwise, the human resources office is likely to assume that you’ve
already found a job and are no longer interested in the organization. Moreover,
requirements change. A follow-up letter can demonstrate that you’re sincerely interested
in working for the organization, that you’re persistent in pursuing your goals, and that
you’re upgrading your skills to make yourself a better employee. And it might just get
you an interview.

If your application letter and resume fail to bring a response within a month or so, follow
up with a second letter to keep your file active. This follow-up letter also gives you a
chance to update your original application with any recent job-related information.

Since applying to you on May 3 for an executive secretary position, I have completed a
course in office management at ABC College. I received straight A’s in the course. Now,
I am a proficient user of MS Word, including macros and other complex functions.

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Please keep my application in your active file, and let me know when you need a skilled executive secretary.

Understanding the Interview Process

It is very important to understand the interviewing process as well as the hiring practices of the big and small organizations. For this purpose study the following.

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|  | Big Companies | Small Companies |
| Number and typeof applicantssought | Consistently hire thousands ofnew employees each year; haverelatively specific hiringcriteria, depending on theposition; tend to be highlyselective. | Hiring requirementfluctuate, often lookingfor flexibility, versatility;often somewhat moreopen-minded. |
| Person ordepartment incharge ofrecruiting | Handled by human resource orpersonnel department | In really smallcompanies, thefounder/top managermakes all hiringdecisions. |
| General recruitingand interviewingstyle | Governed by formal policiesand procedures; typicallyinvolves series of severalinterviews; approach isgenerally systematic, wellplanned, and well financed. | Conducted informally onan as-needed basiswithout a standardprocedure; hiringdecision may be madeafter first interview ormay drag on for severalmonths. |
| Where/how theyadvertise | Use national and localnewspapers, trade journals,campus placement offices,word of mouth, online jobbanks, company websites. | Rely heavily on word ofmouth and localnewspapers |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Use ofemploymentagencies, searchfirms | Roughly 60 percent useemployment agencies; whereas40 percent use executive searchfirms. | Agency use varieswidely among smallcompanies; cost may bea factor. |
| Responsiveness tounsolicitedresumes | Received hundreds ofunsolicited resumes, whichtypically get less attention thanresumes obtained throughdepartments’ own plannedrecruiting program; mostcompanies will scan unsolicitedresumes into a database if theymaintain one; best to sendresume directly to line manageror potential co-worker indepartment where you want towork. | Receive relatively fewunsolicited resumes, sothey pay close attentionto them; however, givenlimited hiring needs,chances are slim thatyour resume will arrivewhen company has acorresponding opening. |
| Reliance oncampus recruiting | On campus recruitingprograms, relatively small innumber | The smaller thecompany, the less likelyit is to recruit in thismanner. |
| Best way forcandidate toapproach company | Use campus placement office toschedule interviews withcompanies that recruit on yourcampus. If company does notrecruit on your campus, call theperson in charge of collegerecruiting, explain yoursituation, and ask for advice onbest way to get an interview. | Check with campusplacement office; try tomake direct personalcontact withowner/manager ordepartment head; getnames and addressesfrom chamber ofcommerce, businessdirectories, send resumeand application letter. |

Understanding the Interview Process

An employment interview is a formal meeting in which both employer and applicant ask questions and exchange information to learn more about each other.

Dual Purpose

1. The organization’s main objective is to find the best person.

2. The applicant’s main objective is to find the job best suited to his or her goals and capabilities.

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Organizations hiring hundreds of new employees every year take a more systematic approach to the recruiting and interviewing process. Adjust your job search according to the company’s size and hiring practices. Start seeking jobs well in advance of the date you want to start work. Begin job search as much as nine months before. During downturns in the economy, early planning is even more crucial.

The Typical Sequence of Interviews

In a typical job search, you can expect to have many interviews before you accept a job offer. A candidate undergoes a rigorous interview process. Most organizations interview an applicant several times before extending a job offer. These are the stages that normally take place in the interview process.

• Screening stage

• Selection stage

• Final stage

Interviews at the screening stages are fairly structured, so applicants are often asked roughly the same questions. Many companies use standardized evaluation sheets to “grade”. Technology has transformed the initial, get-to-know-you interview, allowing employers to screen candidates by phone, video interview, or computer.

During the screening stage of interviews, try to differentiate yourself from other candidates. You might face a panel of several interviewers who ask you questions during a single session. By noting how you listen, think, and express yourself, they can decide how likely you are to get along with colleagues.

Best approach during the selection stage is to show interest in the job, relate your skills and experience to the organization’s needs, listen attentively, ask insightful questions, and display enthusiasm.

You may be invited back for a final evaluation by a higher-ranking executive who has the authority to make the hiring decision and to decide to your compensation.

Organizations use various types of interviews to discover your potentials .These interview are of the following types.

Structured Interview

Open-ended Interview Group Interview

Stress Interview

Video Interview

Situational Interview

Structured Interviews

A structured interview is generally used in the screening stage. A Structured Interview is
controlled by the interviewer to gather facts. Here the employer controls the interview by
asking a series of prepared questions in a set order. Working from a checklist, the
interviewer asks candidates each question, staying within an allotted time period. All
answers are noted. Although useful in gathering facts, the structured interview is
generally regarded as a poor measure of an applicant’s personal qualities. Some
companies use structured interviews to create uniformity in their hiring process.

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Open-ended Interviews

Opening-ended interview is less formal and unstructured. In an open-ended interview, the
recruiter encourages the candidate to speak freely. The interviewer poses broad, open-
ended question and encourages the applicant to talk freely. It is good for bringing out an
applicant’s personality and is used to test professional judgment. However, some
candidates reveal too much, rambling on about personal or family problems that have
nothing to do with their qualifications for employment, their ability to get along with co-
workers, or any personal interests that could benefit their performance on the job. So be
careful. To strike a delicate balance between being friendly, remember that you’re in a
business situation.

Group Interviews:

In them recruiters meet several candidates simultaneously. Group interviews help
recruiters see how candidate interact. These types of interview are useful for judging
interpersonal communication. They tell them how candidates relate to one another. Do
they smile? Are they supportive of one another’s comments? Do they try to score points
at each other’s expense?

Stress Interviews

Perhaps the most unnerving types of interview are the stress interview. Stress interviews
help recruiters see how you handle yourself under pressure. They see how well a
candidate handles stressful situations. During a stress interview, you might be asked
pointed questions designed to unsettle you. You might be subjected to long periods of
silence, criticisms of your appearance, deliberate interruptions, abrupt or even hostile
reactions by the interviewer.

Video Interviews

Video interviews require some special preparation. As employers try to cut travel costs, the video interview is becoming more popular. Companies use videoconferencing systems to screen middle-management candidates or to interview new recruits at universities. Experts recommend that candidates prepare a bit differently for a video interview than for an in-person meeting. Follow are the guidelines.

• Ask for a preliminary phone conversation to establish rapport with the
 interviewer.

• Arrive early enough to get used to the equipment and setting.

• During the interview, speak clearly but not more slowly than normal.

• Sit straight.

• Look up but not down.

• Try to show some animation, but not too much (since it will appear blurry to the
 interviewer).

Situational Interviews

In situational interviews candidates must explain how they would handle a specific set of
circumstances. “How would you handle this?” Proponents of this approach claim that
interview is about the job, not about a candidate’s five-year goals, weaknesses or
strengths, challenging experiences, or greatest accomplishment. So the situational

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interview is a hands-on, at-work meeting between an employer, who needs a job done, and a worker who must be fully prepared to do the work.

Regardless of the type of interview you may face, a personal interview is vital because
your resume can’t show whether you’re lively and outgoing or subdued and low key, able
to take direction or able to take charge. Each job requires a different mix of personality
traits. The interview’s task is to find out whether you will be effective on the job.

What Employers Look For

Having the right personality traits for the job is important in today’s workplace. A sense of humor tops the list because they believe that people who don’t take themselves too seriously are better able to cope with the stress. Employers look for the people who are self-motivated, enthusiastic, not afraid to make decisions, willing to take risks, intelligent, good communicators, and considerate of others.

Current research shows that employees with certain personality traits tend to be more
successful at their job. As a result, many employers today seek candidates with a high
“emotional intelligence,” or EQ (emotional quotient). People with a high EQ generally
possess these desirable attributes: self-awareness, good impulse control, persistence,
confidence, self-motivation, and empathy, as well as the ability to persuade, articulate a
mission, interpret the mood of a group, and communicate with people in terms they
understand.

What’s your EQ?

• Think clearly and stay focused on the task at hand while under pressure.

• Admit your own mistakes.

• Meeting commitments and keep promises.

• Hold yourself accountable for meeting your goals.

• Seek new ideas for a variety of sources.

• Handle multiple demands and changing priorities.

• Make sacrifices to meet an important organizational goal.

• Cut through red tape and bend outdated rules when necessary.

• Seek fresh perspectives, even if that means trying something totally new.

• Separate from an expectation of success rather than a fear of failure.

• Try to learn how to improve your performance.

• Set challenging goals and take calculated risks to reach them.

When it comes down to it, every job has basic qualifications. Employers first look for two things: evidence that a candidate will fit in with the organization and proof that the person can handle a specific job.

Compatibility

Interviewers try to decide whether a candidate will be compatible with the other people in the organization. Compatibility with the organization is judge on the basis of personal background attitudes, and style. Some interviewers believe that personal background is an indication of how well the candidate will fit in, so they might ask about your interests, hobbies, awareness of world events, and so forth. You can expand your potential along these lines by reading widely, making an effort to meet new people, and participating in discussion groups, seminars, and workshops.

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