



## **INTERVIEW TIPS**

Successful interviews, those that lead to job offers, primarily depend on three components: your skills/expertise, personality and appearance.

To present your expertise in the most favourable manner, prepare in advance. Rehearse what you want to say. This will also help you to be less nervous. You should be able to clearly and succinctly describe the scope of your responsibilities for each position you have had.

When considering what you will say, think back carefully for information that could set you apart from other candidates. Did you accomplish a department goal or initiate a special program or project that showed creativity, led to an increase in productivity or a better level of customer service or helped decrease cost? Have you served on any committees? Were you given extra responsibilities or a promotion?

Be ready to respond to questions about your strengths and weaknesses. Be honest. Remember, these same questions may be asked about you when your references are contacted. When describing any weakness, you should also include a comment directed at how you are eliminating or plan to overcome the weakness. For example, your plan might include taking a specific course to update your software skills.

You should also be prepared to answer queries about your short and long term goals. One PA I know gives this good response. "Short term, I want to gain experience in different areas of law to add to my experience. Long term, I'd like to be the senior PA in law/or paralegal."

Just as preparing and rehearsing responses to questions about your skills improves your presentation, there are additional steps you can take to increase the likelihood that the interviewer will have a positive impression of who you are. If you have never been to the site before, make sure you know how to get there. (If you have the time, go on a "dry run"). Inquire about parking availability if you plan to drive. (If you are working with Moser Legal Support we will take care of these details for you).

Try to get a good night's sleep before the interview because feeling rested improves your overall mood. Make sure you give yourself enough time to reach the interview site early. Rushing promotes anxiety and being late makes for a poor first impression. It is also a good idea to have a nutritious snack before the interview.

Certain original documents are generally asked for on a first interview. Bring a current curriculum vitae (even though Moser Legal Support may already have a copy), your education and secretarial certificates and any certification you have attained such as software training. Be prepared to complete an employment application, including names, titles, addresses and telephone numbers of references.

Be friendly to everyone you come into contact with. Remember to smile. When you meet the interviewer offer a firm (but don't squeeze) handshake. Concentrate on making eye contact. Listen with your full attention. It is acceptable to jot down a few notes on a small pad.



An interview is an opportunity for an employer to determine your suitability and it is also an opportunity for you to explore the possibility of working for a new employer. Ask questions that show interest. The answers to your questions will provide the information you need to decide whether the opportunity is the right one for you. For example, what is the best reason to work at this practice? What goals or improvements are under consideration? Is there satisfaction with the overall quality?

It is NOT appropriate to inquire about salary or benefits. The interview should raise these issues. Generally, this is handled by us although sometimes the interviewer will ask you about salary requirements. Your response should **not** include a dollar figure. For example, you might say, "I don't have a particular salary in mind. What does the position pay for someone with my level of experience" or, "I don't have a particular salary in mind, I am negotiable, I will tell you that I currently earn a base salary of \$XXXX." Again, be honest. Verification is always possible and quite simple.

If an offer, good or bad, is extended to you, tell the interviewer you would like time to think it over. Since accepting a new job is a major decision, you should, consider all the aspects involved. Is it the right career move? How interesting

How challenging is the work? What will you learn? Is the commute comparable? If the opportunity is one you really like but the salary is not what you had hoped for, does the "fit" feel right. Answers to these and other questions should be carefully considered and even discussed with family or friends for objective opinions. Please feel free to ask Moser Legal Support for feedback regarding these questions.

If you receive an offer, it is acceptable to ask about the rest of the compensation package so you have complete information. You should receive information about holidays and sick pay.

Preparing to present yourself as the best person for the position includes advance attention to your appearance. Look over the clothing you plan to wear. If you wait for the day of the interview, you might overlook a stain or missing button.

Regardless of your gender or the season, a conservative business suit is the best attire for an interview. A tie is a must for men, stockings a must for women. Putting your best foot forward includes attention to small details which are often overlooked. For example, do your shoes need repair or a shine? (Sneakers are never acceptable). If you use nail polish, be sure it is fresh for the interview. Use a mint or spray to freshen your breath, especially if you eat or smoke before the interview.

In most instances, it is not enough to have appropriate or even excellent skills for a particular position. The right demeanour and appearance greatly increases your prospects of receiving an offer.