

Second Interviews

The Second Interview

The second interview is usually the final step in obtaining a job offer. You probably have a 50% chance of receiving an offer, although this of course can vary according to industry.

- The employer's first goal for the second interview is to identify specific qualities – unlike a first interview where employers are trying to identify many general qualities important to their organization, in the second interview employers will try to determine if you have the specific qualities they are looking for in a new employee. Employers also want to identify organizational fit by seeing how others in the organization respond to you and if you fit their culture.

- You as an interviewee should have your own goals for this interview as well. You will be deciding if this is the organization for which you want to work. It is important to remember that the second interview allows you the opportunity to view the facilities, meet the employees of the organization, and possibly see the community.

Types of Second Interviews

There are several types of interviews but the majority of second interviews will usually fall into two categories:

Structured Interviews: A second interview is considered structured if the interviewers have specific criteria they use to assess you. The key to doing well in this type of an interview is to identify the specific quality or skill that is being assessed and direct all your answers to information about that area.

Example: One person may ask questions to determine your work ethic, computer skills, or your sales ability. Another person may only ask you about your educational background or your work experience.

Unstructured Interviews: In an unstructured interview, the interviewer has to make a broad evaluation. You may get similar questions from all the interviewers. Treat each interviewer with equal importance. Answering the same question over and over again can become boring, but try not to let it show. The key to doing well in this type of an interview is to identify the interviewer's goals and answer your questions accordingly.

Example: Why should I hire you? This question should be answered differently to different people. To your immediate supervisor you would want to express the confidence that you have the necessary skills to get the job done, as this person's goals would be focused on how efficiently you can do the job. The president of an organization may be looking at the retention and advancement possibilities of a potential candidate.

A Typical Interview Day

Some on-site interview visits begin with a dinner or reception the night prior to the interviews. Interviews usually begin the following morning. Most interview visits will end at 5:00PM.

Organizations typically pick candidates up before 8:00am. Little if any free time can be expected as even lunch may be reserved for interviews. (If offered breaks to freshen up, take advantage of this time to go to the restroom if for no other reason than to mentally take a break from this intensive process.) Upon arrival you will usually meet with someone from the Human Resources Department or, in some cases, someone on the Search Committee. They will likely discuss the following:

1. The outline of the day's activities
2. Answer any questions you have about the organization or what will occur during your visit

During the interview day, they may also discuss the following:

1. Salary and benefits
2. Employment guidelines
3. Reimbursement of expenses

You may have private interviews with four or more individuals, including managers, department heads, alumni from your school, and new trainees. You will probably be given a tour of the facilities. If a tour is not scheduled, be sure to ask for one if time permits.

Preparing for the Interview

When an appointment is made for an interview, it is imperative for you to be fully prepared.

- Obtain an itinerary in advance. It is important to know the schedule of the day's activities, including names and titles of the interviewers. If possible, obtain biographical information about the person who will be interviewing you. For large organizations, brief biographical sketches are available in Who's Who in Business or Who's Who in Government. Some organizations post staff profiles on their web site. This will give you the opportunity to think about the goals of the interviewers in relationship to their responsibilities and allow you to respond accordingly to their questions.

- Research the employer for relevant information. Ask the first round interviewer to send you any additional information that you should know about the job, the organization, the department you would work for, or anything else they think is important to review before your visit.

- Check periodicals and the web for timely articles or information about the organization or field. Several databases, including ABI/Inform, Business Index, Business NewsBank, Investext Plus, Lexis-Nexis, Standard & Poor's Net Advantage, and Wilson Business Abstracts, can help you identify articles and other employer information from varied sources. Some databases contain full-text information, while others provide abstracts or a mix of full-text and abstracts. Strozier Library's Business Reference section contains many types of directories with private and public, profit and not-for-profit employer data. Use articles and other information to review the organization's operations, products or services, and management structure.
- Interviewees who are prepared for the upcoming schedule, who understand what to expect, and have knowledge of the workings of the organization and its industry, stand a greater chance of success than candidates who do not care enough to do the necessary research.

Prepare Questions to Ask Your Interviewers

Your questions will show enthusiasm about working for the employer. Remember you are also interviewing to see if this is the position you want. What would you like to learn about the organization? Below are some topics you may want to cover:

- Ask to see a job description.
- Find out who will supervise you.
- Ask about the organization's orientation program and what you will be expected to accomplish in the first six-months.
- Ask about support for professional development.
- Ask about the performance appraisal system.
- Ask about the philanthropy and/or management style of the organization.
- Ask about employee turnover and/or how economic conditions have affected the organization.

Interview Trip Logistics

- **Travel arrangements:** Your travel plans can be handled in a number of ways. You may be asked to make your own arrangements or the organization may coordinate your travel arrangements.
- **Lodging:** If you are arriving the day before your interview and staying at a hotel, ask if the organization will be making arrangements for your lodging. Ask the Human Resources representative what expenses are prepaid and what expenses will be reimbursed. Make sure you have clear direction from your place of lodging to the organization. Check on parking options if you are driving to the interview.
- **Car Rental:** If you rent a car, you will need your driver's license and a major credit card. Some agencies require you be at least 21; others set the minimum age at 25. Call in advance to obtain this information.
- **Miscellaneous Expenses:** Take a major credit card to handle unexpected expenses and cash for incidentals (tips, cab, etc.)

- **Reimbursement for Expenses:** Large employers will reimburse you by mailing you a check. Smaller employers and government agencies often do not pay travel expenses. If the organization has not stated whether they will be paying for expenses, ask them in advance so you know what to expect. On your trip, be sure to maintain a complete and accurate record of all expenses, including meals, tips, hotels, taxis, buses, etc. Obtain receipts to turn in to the employer for hotel, car rental, bus, and related expenses.

After the Interview

After the visit, send letters, separate from the expense voucher, to the Human Resources manager, the person for whom you would work, and/or the head of the search committee. Reiterate your interest in the job and stress positive qualities that you have to offer the organization.

The Job Offer

If a verbal offer is extended, you can typically expect to receive a phone call within two days to three weeks. In non-business settings, it may be longer. This verbal offer should be followed by written communication restating the terms of the offer.

Remember...

- Get an itinerary
- Research the organization
- Go prepared
- Follow through

Information gathered from; Hoover, M., Leierer, S., & Lenz, J. (2007). *Second interviews: A preparation guide*. Tallahassee: Florida State University.