

# **ALL ABOUT INTERVIEWS**

## **The Right "FIT"**

- For an employer, interviews help them determine if you are the right 'fit' for the job and organization. 'Fit' refers to how an individual fits into a company's culture (values, behaviour, social) plus the technical skills and attributes required to perform the job.

## **TWO BASIC TYPES OF INTERVIEWS**

### **Screening Interview**

Screening interviews assist the employer to narrow down the number of applicants by reviewing your qualifications to find reasons to accept or reject your candidacy. The format/questions are often structured, focusing on your experience, education and skills.

This type of interview is often conducted by human resources personnel. If the interviewer feels you are a qualified person of further interest, then you may go on to the selection interview.

### **Selection Interview**

Selection interviews assist the employer to determine from your answers, experience and attitudes if you are the right 'fit' for the organization and position. The format is less structured with more broadly based questions.

Selection interviews are usually conducted by the person ultimately responsible for making the hiring decision, usually the department head/manager. This interview usually ends in a hiring decision.

## **FORMS OF INTERVIEWS**

### **Directed/Structured Interview**

- This style is most often used for screening interviews and is highly organized from start to finish. The interviewer will ask a series of questions within a specific time frame, often working from a checklist or script. Your answers are noted and often scored. This type of interview can be conducted one-on-one, by a panel, in a group or quite often over the telephone.

### **Unstructured Interview**

- An unstructured interview is less formal and has an open and relaxed feeling to it. The interviewer encourages you to talk by posing broad questions. Be careful – you don't want to get too relaxed and say more than you should. This style is sometimes used in selection interviews to bring out your unique personality and demonstrate that you are the best person. Some selection interviews may include a combination of directed and unstructured formats.

### **Panel Interview**

- Panel interviews can seem daunting. They are usually conducted by two to five interviewers and all will ask questions. Regarding eye contact when answering questions, start with the person who asked the question, then look at the others while giving your answer and finally, return your focus to the person who asked the question.
- Benefit - while one interviewer may not feel you are qualified, the others may feel that you are.

### **Group Interview**

- Group interviews consist of two or more candidates interviewing with one interviewer at the same time. Both of you hear the interviewer's questions and each other's responses. Concentrate on yourself and don't get wrapped up in what the other applicants are saying.
- Sometimes this sort of interview is done in a group setting, where a number of candidates must solve problems by working together. Group interviews may be used in selecting staff to work in a team environment. Note that the employer may be looking for team players, not necessarily for leaders. Work with your team members accordingly.

## **Telephone Interview**

- Increasing in popularity is the use of telephone interviews to make first contact and screen applicants. Questions are asked to confirm your qualifications or to provide additional details about the job before a regular, on-site interview is conducted. When answering these calls, strive to be at your best and smile while you are speaking.
- Telephone interviews can be used to 'surprise' a candidate to receive unscripted answers. If you are caught off-guard or the time is inconvenient re-schedule the interview, saying something like, "I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you however this is not a good time as I'm headed out the door for an appointment. Can I call you back in an hour?"
- If they will not re-schedule a set time, ensure you keep yourself prepared.
- Prepare by creating a folder to be kept by your phone, including your cover letter, resume, examples that demonstrate your qualifications, jobs applied for, company fact sheets and all people spoken to.

## **Video Conferencing Interview**

- This format is increasingly used by major companies when interviewing out-of-town candidates. It has many of the benefits of a personal interview as employers can get a good idea of your personality, body language, appearance, and conversation style.
- Dress conservatively in solid colours. Be prepared to experience time lags and allow for the delay when speaking. Look straight at the camera as if it were a person. Cameras magnify movements so be careful not to use your hands to make a point. If there are problems with the sound or picture make sure you let them know.

# **THREE STAGES OF AN INTERVIEW**

## **1. Opening Phase**

### **Greeting/Small Talk**

- Make the strongest first impression possible. Be prepared to give a firm handshake, a great smile and look the interviewer directly in the eyes. Usually the interviewer will extend his/her hand first but if this doesn't happen extend yours.
- Small talk is important as during this time first impressions are made. The interviewer will try to help the interviewee feel at ease and relax. Follow their lead regarding topics for this light conversation.

### **Discussion of Company/Position**

- During the initial screening interview, the interviewer will provide an overview of the company and the position. When the job is discussed, ask a few questions now, but save other questions until after the details of the position have been described.

### **Resume Review**

- The interviewer will refresh him/herself about your qualifications by reviewing your resume. You may be questioned about statements in your resume. It may take a couple of minutes to review your resume, and silence may feel uncomfortable. Avoid the temptation to start justifying or clarifying anything on your resume. Simply wait for any questions or for the next phase of the interview.

## **2. Heart of the Interview**

### **Questions and Answers**

- This is when the interview turns into an actual business situation. There are a variety of questions that will be asked, usually traditional and behavioural.

### **Applicant Questions**

- This is your opportunity to ask your prepared questions.

### 3. **Ending Phase**

#### **Closing/The Next Step**

- Signs that the end of the interview is near include a slowing of the questioning or rhythm of the interview, a glance at a watch, a request for any additional questions, or a statement that the interviewer will contact you.
- Don't leave without finding out what happens next and when. If the interviewer says that he/she will call you, find out when that may be. If he/she is not sure, ask if you can call in a few days or a week to find out where they are in making a decision. Ask for the interviewer's business card, make sure you thank him/her and restate your interest before leaving.

## **PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW**

### **OVERVIEW - Before the Interview**

1. Research the company.
2. Research the position.
3. Know your strengths, skills and accomplishments.
4. Be aware of typical interview questions and practice your answers.
5. Compile a list of your questions for the employer to answer.
6. Know what the competitive salary is and your personal requirements.
7. Bring copies of your resume, job posting, references, water, paper and a pen.
8. Try on your interview clothing the day before.
9. Mentally prepare yourself by using the power of positive visualization.
10. Know the interview details – Who, Where, When, How to get there.

### **RESEARCH - Company and Position**

Research shows the employer you are truly interested and have initiative. It is key to preparing your answers/questions and ultimately reducing your stress during the interview.

#### **What You Need to Research**

- Company mission or values statement.
- Products and services.
- Clientele.
- Company profile.
- Industry/ competitors.
- Job description and competitive salary range.

#### **Where to Find the Information**

- Electronic - company website, search engines.
- Public libraries - business directories and databases – ask the librarian for help.
- Networking - use contacts, friends and family to get names of people employed with the company - talk to these people.
- Informational interviews – contact HR/Managers – for information only, don't ask for a job.

### **PREPARATION – Resume, Job Posting and Mock Interviews**

- For each point listed on your resume, you need a solid example that backs it up.
- For each qualification required (see job posting), you need a solid example of how you meet it.
- Prepare and practice answering questions aloud, especially for questions you consider difficult or uncomfortable to answer.
- Focus your answers on how your unique talents will benefit the employer.
- Practice mock interviews and remember: It is not always the most qualified candidate who gets the job but the candidate who does the best job of selling him or herself.

## **TIPS – Day of the Interview**

- Dress in a manner that suits the job you are applying for, but at a slightly higher level.
- Pay attention to details in your appearance and do a quick check before entering.
- Arrive 10 minutes early. Leave yourself lots of time to get there (do a trial run the day before).
- Remember you are “on” the minute you arrive.

## **TIPS – During the Interview**

1. Think positively: you have nothing to lose and everything to gain from the experience.
2. Tell the truth. Relax and speak in your own words. Don't be overly scripted.
3. Speak well of others – including prior employers.
4. No gum or candy.
5. Take long deep breaths.
6. Maintain eye contact.
7. Beware of your body language. Sit up straight and keep your hands at your sides/in your lap.
8. Ask appropriate questions.
9. Know that the interviewer may also be stressed based upon his/her experience, pressure to choose wisely and other external factors.
10. Know that while the employer is evaluating you, you are also evaluating them.

# **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Questioning usually starts with more generic/traditional questions and from your answers behavioural-based questions may be asked later on. Traditional questions address: employment history, job suitability, career planning, salary, self-management, work preferences, management style preferences, problem solving, strengths/attributes, company knowledge and accomplishments. Make sure you understand a question before you answer it and ask for clarification if needed. Answer them in a of maximum 60 seconds.

## **TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The following are some traditional interview questions and tips on how to build an answer. Note that it is very important to use your own words so you sound natural and unscripted.

### **“Tell me about yourself?”**

- Provide an overview of your experience, education, skills and attributes that are relevant to the job. Do not give your whole life story! Skills should not just be listed off rather they should include a short explanation. Do not repeat your resume verbatim and answer in less than 2 minutes.
- Be prepared for further questions from the interviewer about interesting points you may have made.

### **“What are your long/short term goals?”**

- Answers should demonstrate growth and some degree of longevity. Keep you answer work-related with their company in mind. State your interest and commitment to staying and growing in this field of work.
- For example, “After 2 years I would like to move into a more senior position where I can continue to hone my existing skills, acquire new ones and have new challenges. For me, life is about constant lifelong learning.”

### **“What are your strengths?”**

- Have a minimum of 3 of your top strengths to elaborate on. These are more interpersonal quality statements which need to be backed up with specific examples.
- Briefly mention that besides the skills, training and experience that you would contribute you also offer job-related qualities such as (list your attributes).

### **“What are your weaknesses?”**

- Have 1 weakness to elaborate on that can be ‘reframed’ positively. Reframing means not just ending with the weakness statement, but rather includes information such as, “This is something I am working on by .....” Focus on what you are doing about it. The weakness should be something that can be overcome, not something static that would prevent you from doing the job well.
- If you have an obvious weakness or handicap, honestly state it and then describe factors that compensate for it. Remember that once you have raised a doubt you have to explain it immediately.
- Never say you don't have any weaknesses.

### **“What salary are you looking for?”**

- The best manner to answer this question is to try and put it back to the interviewer, politely saying something like:  
“I am open to negotiation and can be more specific once we establish performance goals and what your needs are.”  
“Pay can be remunerated in many different ways, could you explain your compensation plan and how it relates to the position?”  
“I’m really interested in finding out what salary range you are offering.”  
“I’m negotiable and ready to discuss an amount which is fair to both of us and takes into account my responsibilities and qualifications”.
- If the employer insists on a figure, name a range that you know is realistic. Research salary before the interview and know your personal needs.

### **“Tell me about your experience with this type of work.”**

- If you have done this work, give examples of your achievements.
- If you have done related work or training, list your transferable skills indicating your interest in this position and willingness to learn.
- If you have not done this work, mention work-related attributes and skills and quickly indicate your interest in on-the-job training.

### **“You seem to be overqualified.”**

- In this case, the interviewer thinks you will want too much money, not be satisfied with the job and will continue to look for another one. Thank the interviewer for thinking you have outstanding qualifications but reassure them that the job is a good one for you.

### **“Why do you want to work here?”**

- Describe what you know about the organization and if you can honestly compliment the company on such points as its reputation, service, products, growth, quality or appearance, do so. Indicate the interest that you have put into researching their background information.
- Indicate your liking for the work you do and how your skills match their requirements.

### **“Why should we hire you?” or “What can you do for our company?”**

- If you have done your research then you will know and understand exactly what the company hopes to acquire with the position. Focus your answer on how you have the skills, abilities and talent to benefit the organization. Know what they value in their employees.

### **“How much were you absent from work in your last job?”**

- If you had an excellent attendance record, say so; “I've had an excellent attendance record. I take pride in my work and when my contribution is needed.”
- If you had poor attendance and it was due to something now dealt with, briefly explain this to the employer, indicating you are committed to having a reliable work record. Mention positive references and previous good work records.

### **“When are you available to start work?”**

- If you are free to start immediately and if you are keen to work for the company, say so.
- If you are working and need to give notice, state the length of time you need.

### **"Why did you leave your last job?"**

- Mention what the employer appreciated about you, some of your work achievements and the good relationship you still have with some personnel. If you have a good reference, say so.
- *Possible personal reasons:*
  - "To look after family members."
  - "To attend to a one-time medical matter that has now been taken care of."
  - "To re-assess my career goals."
  - "To take advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, such as travel."
- *If you left on bad terms do not speak poorly of the company, your boss or colleagues:*
  - "There was a company re-organization and my job description changed."
  - "I did a career evaluation and realized that the position which I am applying for is really where I should be at this point in time."
  - "The company was taking a new direction and this offered an opportunity to re-evaluate my own career goals and development."

### **"How is your health?"**

- If you have excellent health, say so.
- If your health is poor or you missed work in the past for physical or mental health reasons, put any doubts to rest by assuring the employer that you are ready for work. Mention any positive points you can about your fitness, stamina and ability to cope with pressure. Indicate a positive work attitude and do not mention anything that will not interfere with your work.

### **"What would your last employer's say about you?"**

- If you had a good relationship with your employer, mention some of the employer's qualities that you admired. If you have a good reference or performance evaluation, mention positive facts that the employer mentioned and would likely say about you.
- If you left on bad terms, focus on positive aspects of your performance the employer would agree were true. Do not refer to negative aspects.

### **"Can you work under pressure or tight deadlines?"**

- If you can, you might say, "I know pressures and deadlines are a part of work and I enjoy meeting goals and challenges." Follow this with prior job-related examples to show how well you coped.
- If you cannot cope with pressure, first state some positive points and then add that you prefer knowing deadlines well in advance and work better in that environment.

### **"Do you like to work overtime?"**

- Before answering ask the interviewer to clarify what overtime is and how it impacts the position.

### **"Are you thinking of going back to school?"**

- If you are going back full-time, be honest. State when it will happen, then assure the employer of advantages of hiring you such as your ability to learn quickly, reliability, compatibility and honesty.
- If you are going back for courses on your own time, give assurances that it will not interfere with your work. Let the employer know if the courses are work-related, focusing on benefits to your performance and the company, that you are eager to upgrade your skills and stay current.

### **"What is your greatest achievement?"**

- Provide a work-related achievement showing your knowledge and expertise in the field, dealing with people or problem solving. Be specific.
- If you are new to the work force or re-entering it, use an example from school, volunteer work or recreation and show how the skill is transferable. For example, dedication, leadership, creativity.

### **"What did you think about your old boss?" "What type of supervisor do you like?"**

- Be as positive as possible.
- If there were qualities or approaches you did not see eye-to-eye on, reframe them in a positive manner, such as ways you would like to be supervised.

## Other Possible Questions

Many of these can be answered using some of the tips from the above questions.

- "If I brought up your name with former coworkers, what would they say about you?"
- "Would you rather work with others or alone? How about teams?"
- "What is your definition of success? Of failure?"
- "Is there anything else I should know about you?"
- "Why do you want to change jobs?"
- "What is the toughest job challenge you've experienced?"
- "How do you organize your time?"
- "What do you know about our competition?"
- "What are your opinions about some of the challenges facing our company?"
- "What do you like least about gathering information to deal with a problem?"
- "What is your experience with group projects?"
- "Based on your experience, what problems do team-based projects face?"
- "Your experience doesn't exactly match our needs right now, does it?"
- "What do you do to keep up to date in your job? How do you improve yourself professionally?"
- "Because you've been with your last employer for so long, do you think you may have a hard time adjusting to a new company's way of working?"
- "You've been in your previous position an unusually long time – why haven't you been promoted?"
- "Were you fired from your last job?"
- "Have you ever been asked to resign? Why?"
- "You've changed jobs more frequently than is usual – why is that?"
- "You say you can do the job. How would that work? Can you explain more?"
- "Because you're our first applicant with a disability, we've never dealt with accommodations before. How and what do they look like?"

## BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The premise for these types of questions is that your past behaviour is the best way to determine how you will act in the future. The most effective way to answer these questions is by telling brief 'proof stories' of actual situations that help prove the qualities you say you have. These stories can also be used to discuss how you meet various job requirements. Stories may be pulled from many influences such as education, work, volunteering, hobbies, etc. and are formatted into a 'proof story' using the three step **S.T.A.R.** model.

1. **Situation/Task** – Briefly and concisely explain the situation or task, not going into extensive detail. Stories that are not specific lose impact. Reveal just enough detail so the interviewer can understand the basic story and you capture their attention.
2. **Action** – Clearly describe the action you took to resolve/handle the situation. When and where did you do it? How and why did you do it? Use action verbs.
3. **Result** – Explain what the outcome was and what you learned. Try to quantify results when possible or measure what happened against a standard. Don't be too modest. Link the ending of your story back to the trait or quality mentioned at the beginning of the question.

Behavioural questions relate to core competencies needed for the job. For example, leadership, communication/dealing with conflict, decision-making/problem solving, initiative/work ethic, assertiveness, energy level, research/analytical skills, dealing with change/self management and team building. It's important to understand what core competency the interviewer is looking for from the question they are asking.

For instance, if leadership is a core competency for the position, a behavioural question may be, "Tell me about a time when you had to manage a team that was not working well together? What did you do?" In planning the answer you would create a 'proof story' according to three steps of the S.T.A.R. model. The interview will be looking to understand: What was the reason for your actions? Why did you behave the way you did? What skills did you use?

Sample behavioural questions formulated to reveal specific competencies:

### **Leadership Ability**

- "Tell me about a time when you led a discussion, task force, or committee meeting. What was the situation and how did you orchestrate it?"
- "Tell me about a time when your co-workers looked to you for guidance on an important project or task. What was the situation and how did you handle it?"
- "Tell me of a difficult time you dealt with when supervising others. What did you do and what resulted?"

### **Communication Skills/Dealing with Conflict**

- "Tell me about a time when you had to explain a challenging concept or idea to a co-worker. How did you communicate it to them to ensure that they understood?"
- "Tell me about a time when you were required to speak before a large audience. What was the situation, how did you feel about doing it, and what was the outcome?"
- "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an angry customer or co-worker. How did you handle it and what was the result?"
- "Has a supervisor ever challenged you on one of your decisions? How did you respond?"

### **Decision Making/Problem Solving**

- "Tell me about a time when you were required to make an important decision without having complete information. What was the situation and what was the outcome?"
- "Describe a situation when you had to make a decision that you didn't feel was your responsibility or authority to make. What course of action did you take to make sure you did the right thing?"
- "Have you ever misjudged something? How could you have prevented the mistake?"

### **Initiative/Work Ethic**

- "Describe a situation that required you to show initiative."
- "Describe a time you took an idea or concept and turned it into a program or project."
- "Describe the last time you did something that went beyond what was expected in work or school."

### **Assertiveness**

- "Tell me about a time when you had to speak up in order to get your point across. Be specific."
- "Tell me about a time when you had to "sell" your manager or co-workers on one of your ideas. What was the idea and what was the outcome?"
- "Tell me about a time when someone made an unreasonable request of you. How did you react and what happened?"

### **Energy Level**

- "Tell me about a time when you were required to work with a team on an important project and you weren't pleased with the speed at which it progressed. How did you deal with the situation?"
- "Describe a situation where you were required to work an extended period of time to accomplish a task. What was the situation and how did you keep yourself motivated?"

### **Research/Analytical Skills**

- "Tell me about a time when you had to collect, manipulate and analyze research data?"

### **Dealing with Change/Self Management**

- "Describe a time when you had to adjust to change. How did you cope or adjust to this change?"
- "We all face disappointments. Tell me about a time you had to handle disappointment or rejection."
- "Describe a time when you were most frustrated or discouraged in reaching your objectives or goals."

### **Team Building**

- "Explain a role you filled as a group/team member."
- "Are you team-orientated about rolling up your sleeves to get a project done even when it's not in your job description? Can you give me an illustration of when that was the case?"



## HOW DO YOU HANDLE ILLEGAL QUESTIONS?

1. Most of the time the interviewer is not intentionally asking you an illegal question. Sometimes he/she is trying to put you at ease or trying to learn more about you as a person. Determining the motivation or worry behind the question is the most crucial step towards designing your approach.
  - You will put the position in jeopardy if you deal with it angrily.
  - Instead, you might answer the concern behind the question while still promoting yourself and positioning yourself positively.
2. Answering the question as if you did not notice it was illegal or inappropriate. (Your inner self-talk will be that this person is just curious and means no ill will. So they are probably unaware that people might be offended by the question).
3. Sometimes, a facial expression speaks volumes. When asked an illegal question, you may have a quizzical look on your face followed by:
  - I'm curious why you asked that question? or,
  - I've never been asked that question before. Can you tell me a little about why that information is needed?

## Race/Colour/Ancestry/Place of Origin/Ethnic Origin

### Permissible

- Questions about or relating to a service organization working with a particular community as to membership in the group served, if such membership can be justified as required to do the particular job.

### Prohibited

- Questions about or relating to physical characteristics such as colour of eyes, hair, skin, height, weight.
- Questions about mother tongue, where language skills were obtained and whether one speaks English or French fluently, unless fluency in English or French is a reasonable and genuine requirement for the position.
- Questions about or relating to birth-place, nationality of ancestors, spouse and other relatives, Canadian citizenship, landed immigrant status, permanent residency, naturalization, requests for proof of Canadian citizenship or Social Insurance Number (A SIN may contain information about an applicant's place of origin or citizenship status. A SIN may be requested following a conditional offer of employment).
- Questions about or relating to "Canadian" experience for a particular job.
- Questions about or relating to membership in organizations which are identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination, such as an Anglo-Canadian organization.
- Questions about the name and location of schools attended.
- Questions which do not fall into the "Special Interest Organizations" exemptions set out below.

## Citizenship

### Permissible

- Questions about or relating to citizenship, if required by law for a particular job.
- Questions about or relating to citizenship or permanent resident status, where cultural, educational, trade union or athletic activities can be restricted to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.
- Questions about or relating to citizenship or place of residence with intention to obtain citizenship, when an organization requires that a senior executive position be held by a Canadian citizen or a person living in Canada with the intention to obtain citizenship.

### Prohibited

- Questions about or relating to the applicant's citizenship that do not fall within the exceptions outlined in the *Code*.

## **Creed**

### **Permissible**

- Questions by a denominational school as to religious membership, if the job involves communicating religious values to students.

### **Prohibited**

- All questions which do not fall into the "Special Interest Organizations" exceptions set out below.

## **Sex**

### **Permissible**

- Questions about or relating to gender, if it is a reasonable and genuine requirement for a particular job, such as employment in a shelter for battered women.

### **Prohibited**

- All other questions concerning the applicant's sex, including questions regarding pregnancy or child-bearing plans.

## **Sexual Orientation**

### **Permissible**

- None.

### **Prohibited**

- All questions about or relating to sexual orientation.

## **Record of Offenses**

### **Permissible**

- Questions to determine whether the applicant has been convicted of a criminal offense for which a pardon has not been granted.
- Questions to determine if an applicant is bondable, if being bondable is a reasonable and genuine qualification of the job.
- Questions to determine if an applicant has a record of convictions under the Highway Traffic Act, if driving is an essential job duty (e.g. bus driver).

### **Prohibited**

- All other questions except those with respect to unpardoned *Criminal Code* convictions.

## **Age**

### **Permissible**

- Questions about or relating to age if the employer serves a particular age group and/or if age requirements are reasonable and genuine to qualify for employment.

### **Prohibited**

- All other questions about age.

## **Marital Status**

### **Permissible**

- Questions about or relating to marital status if the employer serves a particular group identified by marital status (e.g. single woman) and/or if marital status is a reasonable and genuine requirement for employment.

### **Prohibited**

- All other questions as to marital status.

## Family Status

### Permissible

- Questions about or relating to family status if the family status is a reasonable and genuine requirement for employment. Please see further Nepotism or Anti-Nepotism Policies in "Section 7: Exceptions".

### Prohibited

- All other questions as to family status.

## Disability

Employers are obligated to offer candidates with disabilities an accommodation of their needs if required for any part of the interview or test screening process.

If the applicant's disability becomes an issue at the interview, e.g. where the applicant chooses to talk about his/her disability, an employer may make inquiries about the applicant's accommodation needs. Inquiries should be limited to the applicant's ability to perform the essential duties of the job. Questions should not be unnecessary, such as, "How did you end up in a wheelchair?" or, "Have you been blind all your life?" They should be asked with the aim of ascertaining the applicant's ability to perform essential duties.

Any questions beyond this scope should be made with great caution and care as it may lead to a complaint on the ground of disability should the applicant not be successful. Additionally, if an employer fails to canvass possible accommodations measures where disability has become an issue at an interview, this also could potentially lead to a complaint on the ground of disability should the applicant not be successful.

Any other disability issues should not be raised until a conditional offer of employment is made. These protections also apply to other accommodation needs covered by the *Code*, such as pregnancy and religious needs, although the requirement to accommodate a disability is based on the needs of the individual, whereas other grounds are protected on the basis of needs of the group.

### Permissible

- Questions directly related to the applicant's ability to perform the essential duties of the job.

### Prohibited

- All other questions concerning the applicant's disability.

## HIV and the Interview

- Legally you do not have to disclose your current health status in any job interview. If possible, avoid discussing medical issues. Not mentioning a medical problem in a job interview does not preclude you from asking the employer for accommodations later.
- Although HIV may be uppermost in your mind, it may be the farthest thing from a prospective employer's mind. If you want to bring it up, that's fine, but be aware that some people may know little about HIV/AIDS and some may not handle it well.

If you can't avoid discussing the issue:

1. **Open it.** Face it head on when asked why you left your last job. You can simply say you had a medical issue to deal with that is now resolved.
2. **Explain it.** Provide a small amount of detail to satisfy the employer's curiosity.
3. **Close it.** End the discussion focusing on your strengths, ability to do the job, training/volunteer work taken while off, etc. Remember that a well told story can turn the description of medical leave into a forceful and convincing story of initiative, resourcefulness, adaptability and skills.

## **YOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK**

In the latter part of the interview after you have been questioned, you may be asked if you have any questions. Be prepared with questions beforehand. Ensure they have not already been answered in the interview prior to asking and ensure they are not answerable from doing your own research. Questions *before* a job offer has been made should only be about work issues, not pay, benefits, vacation, etc. Questions that are of more self-interest are asked *after* a job offer has been made.

Some possible questions are:

1. "What would a typical day be like?"
2. "What are the primary duties during the first six months?"
3. "What is the most urgent or difficult part of the job?"
4. "Why did the previous person in this position leave?"
5. "What are the expectations of the supervisor?"
6. "How much autonomy would I have in my role?"
7. "What is the management style of the company as a whole?"
8. "How would you describe the working environment? What's unique about it?"
9. "In your opinion, what are the advantages of working for this company?"
10. "Can you tell me how my performance will be evaluated?"
11. "What do you see as my greatest strengths and weaknesses in terms of this position?"
12. "Is there anything in my resume or background on which you would like clarification? If so, I'd like to discuss it with you."

## **ENDING THE INTERVIEW**

- The end of the interview is an opportunity to recap your unique attributes and how they will benefit the job. You may leave the door open with questions such as: "What is the next step and when do you plan on making a decision?" or "When can I contact you to check on the progress of your search?"
- Finally, express thanks to the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you. Say it with a smile, solid handshake and say something to the effect: "I am excited about the opportunity with your company and look forward to hearing from you."

## **INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP**

- Most interviewers either decide "No" or "Maybe" at the conclusion of an interview. Therefore, follow-up is important as it can turn the interviewer's indecision to your advantage.
- Take notes after your interview including names/contact information and what you discussed.
- Draft a brief follow-up letter. Express your interest, show positive "matches" between what they want and what you have to offer, refer to related experiences or education, volunteer further information, offer to give references or justify a reason to get together again.
- Review the letter. Have an objective, third party read your letter to see if it says what you mean.
- Written or email - professional business writing, error free, appropriate tone, look and style.

## **TIPS – Top Interviewers' Pet Peeves**

- |                             |                          |                            |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Know-it-all attitude      | • Speaking too softly    | • No goals                 |
| • Indecisiveness            | • No enthusiasm          | • Overemphasis on money    |
| • Expecting too much        | • Lack of tact/maturity  | • Making excuses           |
| • Poor eye contact          | • Limp handshake         | • Lateness                 |
| • Cynicism                  | • No copies of resume    | • No questions about job   |
| • Talking negatively        | • No research            | • Not thanking interviewer |
| • Not thanking receptionist | • Poor waiting behaviour | • Overly long answers      |