

THEORY AND TECHNIQUES OF THE INTERVIEW

5. CLOSING AN INTERVIEW

5.1. Closing the Interview for Interviewees

Don't leave a job interview wondering where you stand with the hiring manager. There are techniques you can use to professionally close an interview so the hiring manager will know that you want the job, and so you'll be able to leave knowing the next steps in the hiring process. A job seeker's goal is to sell herself/himself to the hiring manager and to evaluate if the position will be a good two-way fit. But don't forget if you decide during the interview that you want the job, then you should also try to discover where you stand with the hiring manager and find out the next steps in the hiring process. There always seems to be a big debate on whether or not a candidate should try to "close the sale" at the end of a job interview. The answer is yes, but you need to close the interview with class. Professionalism is of the utmost importance and the preference is to take an open, honest approach at the end of a job interview. After the hiring manager has asked if you have any questions for him or her and you've discussed those, consider asking one of the following questions:

- **“Based on my background and the skills and experience we discussed, how well do I fit the profile of the candidate for which you're looking?”** This question will help you find out what the hiring manager thinks of your background and whether or not they believe you're a good fit.
- **“Given what we've just discussed during this interview, do you have any concerns about my fit for this position?”** This is a reverse question because it tries to uncover any issues that might hold the interviewer back from hiring you and gives you the opportunity to discuss those concerns before you leave the interview.

Once you have the answer to your question, you'll be in a better position to determine your next comments. For example, if the hiring manager brought up any concerns about your fit for the position, this is a good time to discuss those. After that, find out where the interviewer is at in the hiring process by asking:

- **“What are the next steps in the hiring process?”** This should help you uncover if they have more candidates to interview (and possibly, how soon he or she will be making a decision).

Finally, at the very end, reiterate your interest in the position. Here are two suggested methods:

- **“Based on my research and what we’ve discussed, I would really like to work for you in this job. How soon until you’ll be making a decision?”** This closing lets the hiring manager know you believe you’re a good fit and confirms that you want to work for them. It may also help you find out where they’re at in the process or even uncover any additional decision makers.
- **“This discussion has made me even more excited about this job opportunity and I would love to be the person you hire. Is there anything else you need from me before you make a decision?”** This closing also demonstrates that you want to work for the hiring manager and can uncover anything else you’ll need to do to move the process along, such as providing your reference list or letters of recommendation.

Choose the most appropriate closing questions and comments, given your situation, and then thank the hiring manager for his or her time and ask for a business card before you leave the interview. That way you’ll have their correctly spelled name, title, mailing address, telephone number, and email address to use when you write your thank you note. As the first impression, the last impact will help the interviewer remember you after the interview, for a good impression, you should keep the eye contact as you stand up, and the same when greeting, and leave your interviewer with the right picture of you. We can consider as important closing points, the following:

- **Think of at least 3 skills for which you want be remembered after the interview.**
- **Ask if you can provide more information from your experience such as references work samples, certification, etc.**
- **Emphasize your interest in the job and your potential value for the company, you can include the phrase I’d really like to work with you.**
- **Ask which the next step is for you, if you have to wait for the result, ask the dates.**
- **Ask how to contact them after the interview to check the status.**

- **Thank the interviewer for his or her time.**

5.2. Closing Points for Interviewees

Regardless of your style or how you choose to close the interview, there are some key points to keep in mind:

- **Leave your interviewer with the right picture of you.** Think of at least five skills or traits you want remembered after the interview.
- **Ask if there is anything else you can provide, such as references, background information or work samples.**
- **State your interest in the position.** Don't be overly anxious, but act interested. Remember to mention the added value you can bring to the job.
- **Ask about the next step in the process.** It's important for you to know the next step so you can follow up. Ask for the decision date.
- **Find out how to contact them.** If you don't hear back, you will need to know who to contact and whether they will accept calls to check the status.

Many people often do a great interview and then fail to close it properly. This is like baking a terrific cake and forgetting to put on the icing. The closing of your interview is the most memorable part not only because it comes at the end of your time together, but because you are able to interject your own personality, comments and questions into the conversation with the interviewer. Here a few good examples on how to close your interview;

Ask Questions: You should be well prepared for the interview with questions of your own to show that you're considering their company as much as they are considering you. You should ask questions that show you've paid attention to information in the interview and done research on your own before coming into speak to the interviewer. If the interviewer doesn't ask for your questions, be sure to ask him/her, "Do you mind if I ask you a few questions before we finish?"

Reinforce Your Attributes: When the interviewer makes a statement similar to, "If you have nothing else, that will be all," offer a respectful closing comment reiterating your strengths and how they tie into the critical skills the company is seeking. Include four or five reasons why you should have the job and show your knowledge of the company in the process. "This is an exciting position and I know that my experience with teamwork will help me mesh well with the existing sales team, my industry knowledge will be useful in developing new leads and my time

spend building industry contracts will help to solidify my client list almost immediately. The work I've done with your computer system will give me an advantage in that area as well."

Alleviate Concerns: If you suspect the interviewers have any concerns about you as the right applicant, your next statements should alleviate those concerns. It is wise to give the interviewer a chance to state concerns so that you can address them, "I believe I'm the right candidate for this position. Do you see any issues that might make you think otherwise?"

Express Enthusiasm: Your enthusiasm for the position and company should be shining through during the interview process, but be sure to include a few direct positive remarks about the company and position as well.

Determine the Next Step: Be sure you ask for the next step in the hiring process. This will show you are an organized and professional candidate. If possible, establish a time frame for the hiring decision as this will give you critical information about how and when to follow up.

Thank the Interviewer: Thank your interviewer graciously and stand to shake her hand. Keep confident eye contact during the handshake and walk out of the room knowing you've done well. Hopefully, these pointers help you to close your next interview.

5.3. Successful Closing Tips for Interviewers

For some hiring managers, figuring out how to close an interview can be tricky. With only a few minutes to go, you can bring an interview to a graceful close by following these steps:

1. **Let the candidate ask questions.** Before closing the interview, provide an opportunity for the individual to ask any questions they may have on their mind after the interview.
2. **Let the candidate know what comes next.** Advise the candidate how and when you're going to be in contact and whether any further steps need to be taken for example; forms, tests and so on. This interview closing practice not only is a common courtesy but also creates a positive impression.
3. **End the interview on a formal but sincere note.** Thank the candidate for

the time and repeat your commitment to follow up. Either stand or shake hands again. This action is a way of formally closing the interview and provides a signal for the candidate to leave. Walk the applicant out of the office to the elevator lobby or front door.

And one last suggestion regarding how to close an interview: As soon as possible after the candidate's departure, take a couple of moments to collect your thoughts and write your impressions and a summary of your notes. You don't need to make any definitive decisions at this point, but recording your impressions immediately after the interview closing, while they're still fresh in your mind, will help you immeasurably if the final choice should boil down to several candidates, all of whose qualifications are comparable.

The closing brings the interview full circle. Your goal is to leave the interviewee feeling positive and satisfied with the interview. The typical closing issues deal with not actually including a closing portion for the interview. To counteract this, interviewees should actually prepare for the conclusion, by a verbal signal such as, "My final interview question..." Another angle is to highlight the key aspects and overall conclusions of the interview, point out areas of agreement and/or disagreement, and even ask the interviewee about the accuracy of your summary. Another idea is to include a post interview discussion. Here, the process is more informal and not a part of the formal interview. The interviewer and interviewee usually engage in light chit chat. This is usually signaled when you close your notebook, turn off the tape recorder, etc. The goal is to not introduce any new information at this point. But, if necessary, you can reassure the interviewee, restate confidential nature of interview, purpose and use of information. Interestingly, the interviewee often relaxes and may relay important information. Finally, a farewell marks end of post interview discussion.

In conducting the information interview, you want to be prepared, yet flexible, and create a communication climate in which the interviewee will feel comfortable. Balance note taking with maintaining eye contact with the interviewee. Remember that interviews are a critical part of the hiring process. After the interview, have human resources follow up with any fact checking or background items you noted during the interview. Have HR schedule a second interview or draft an offer letter. Also, watch for the candidates' follow up. They should send a note thanking you for the opportunity and offering to provide any additional information you might need.

