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Learning from job interviews

To improve on your interview performance, treat every job interview as a learning opportunity by reviewing your performance and getting useful interview feedback.

Prior to the interview

The learning process begins as soon as you get the call to invite you for an interview. Prepare yourself by anticipating commonly-asked questions and learning more about the company. Find out the nature of their business, their products or services, their organisational structure, the name of their key managers, and so forth. You can do this by browsing through their website or talking to friends who are currently working with the company.

During the interview

Job interviews should be a two-way process. It is not just about the interviewer assessing your suitability. You should see it as an opportunity to assess the company and the position being offered. This will help you make an informed decision about joining the company if you are eventually offered the job.

Ask relevant questions during the interview, such as:

- What are your requirements for the ideal candidate for this job?
- How well do you see me fitting into this position?

Remember to raise these questions only towards the end of the interview. Otherwise, you will create the impression that you are assuming yourself to be the right candidate.

After the interview

Make a list

Always take note of all the job applications that you have sent out. If you think you might forget, make a list of the company names, the contact persons' names and the positions that you applied for respectively. This will avoid embarrassing and awkward moments when your potential employers call you for the first or subsequent interviews. Avoid the situation where you have to ask the caller which position you have applied for within their company.

Conduct a self-assessment

No matter how well you thought you performed as an interviewee, go through the interview session in your head. Be very honest with yourself in answering these questions: What went well and what didn't? Did you develop a rapport with the interviewer? Did you link your answers to suitable examples of what you have done in the past? Did you highlight your strengths? Were you relaxed?

Follow-up calls

If you do not hear any news regarding the interview with your potential employer, you could make follow-up calls. This will show that you are very keen in the job. However, do not call too often as this will be a turn off to busy hiring managers.



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Write a thank-you note

A thank-you note to the interviewer shows consideration and allows you to confirm your interest in the job. It also opens another opportunity to highlight your strengths and to address anything you did not get across during the interview.

Request for feedback session

If you were rejected by your potential employer, politely request for a feedback session with their HR department or the recruitment firm that arranged the interview for you. Explain to them that you are genuinely looking for useful feedback that will help you improve on your performance in future interviews. If your request is turned down, do not push for it. It is often difficult to get interview feedback from companies. Besides having many candidates to attend to, hiring managers may not be able to offer feedback as it is against their company policy to do so due to confidentiality reasons.

Make full use of the feedback session

When granted with a feedback session, be friendly and courteous. Besides taking notes, prepare a list of questions beforehand to find out what they thought your style was like in the interview, that is, if you appeared friendly, over-confident or unclear. Remember that the interviewer may be busy, so try to be concise and do not drag the feedback session longer than necessary.

Make constructive use of feedback

Analyse the feedback given critically. Adjust the areas that need improvement. Do you need to have better examples to illustrate your skills and achievements? Do you need to change your style to ensure clarity in communication?

Keep trying

If you didn't get the job, always remember, you may not have necessarily done anything wrong in the interview. There was just someone else the company believed to be more suitable for the position. Continue to place yourself out there and keep sending your applications for other jobs. Always bear in mind what you have learned from previous interviews.