

Making the Most of Your First Impression: Interviewing Tips & Techniques

By Kevin Miracle

Does the following scenario sound familiar? You're anxious to advance your career in cardiovascular services, and you've been sending out resumes for weeks with no response. But, one day you get home and listen to your voicemail to hear someone from your top-choice employer calling to schedule site visit and interview. The open position is a perfect match to your skill set and experience and you meet all application criteria...So how can you maximize the results of the face-to-face time? How can you prepare yourself to best perform under the pressure of your first interview (of hopefully several)?

As a leading Recruitment firm for cardiovascular management positions across the country, Corazon often assists both clients and candidates through the interview process—how to make the most of the one-on-one interaction in order to best match job requirements and candidate qualifications.

It has been said before, but the phrase is certainly worth repeating: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Maximizing the first few minutes of a job interview is the most effective strategy...But how do you make yourself stand-out as the candidate to remember? Preparation is key! This month, we will discuss several recommendations that you can add to your repertoire to help with being prepared for an important job interview.

Before the Interview

First and foremost, it is important to **do your homework** on the perspective employer. Would you really want to work for a hospital that you don't know much about? I would recommend learning as much as you can about the organization and the department so that you know whether the culture is a fit for your working or leadership style. This knowledge about the program will also increase your credibility with the interviewer and demonstrate your interest in the opportunity. If you know anyone who currently works there or has in the past, ask for information about the culture. Studies have shown that one of the factors leading to an employee's performance failure and job dissatisfaction has a lot to do with a lack of fit with the organizational culture. Furthermore, if you don't align well with your boss's core beliefs and values, it will be very difficult to develop an effective working relationship.

It is most essential to "look" the part and **dress for success**. It's always a good idea to visit the rest room to double check your appearance. Another common mistake is like it or not, appearance will factor into a hiring manager's decision regarding a candidate from the first moment you meet face-to-face. One recommendation would be to dress in business appropriate attire, even if you've learned that the working environment is casual.

In addition to knowing where you're going, **arrive early** for the interview. Also, don't forget to turn off (or silence) your cell phone/pager.

We also recommend that if the position that you are interviewing for requires specific licenses or certification, make sure you bring copies of these documents with you just in case they are needed.

During the Interview

The all-important 'first impression' begins the moment you walk into the interviewer's office. Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and **make good eye contact** as the conversation gets started. The majority of times the interviewer will engage in small talk with you before getting down to the details of the job opening. This is a great tactic to help put you and the interviewer at ease. For example, if the interviewer asks if it's raining, offer a bit more of an answer than "yes" or "no". At the same time, don't become a meteorologist and ramble on about the weather. This small talk is also an opportunity for the interviewer to determine how well you keep up with current events and how well-rounded you are as a candidate.

As the interviewer begins what you have determined to be the interrogation, be prepared to **appropriately respond to the questions**. The best answers are positive, concise, and honest. Negativity is never well-received, especially when you may be referring to a previous or current employer. When formulating your response to a given question, be careful not to ramble. Responses should generally be limited to two minutes, wherein you can give a concise and appropriate answer without being too long-winded. It is equally important that your answer not be a "yes" or "no". A minimum time your response should last is approximately 20 seconds. This interrogation is your opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and the expertise you can bring to the organization and the position. The interview is not the time to be humble; rather, it is most definitely your time to shine. Don't overdo the self-praise, however, as that may also raise a red flag to the interviewer.

Usually, the interviewer will allow you to ask questions as well. Don't neglect to ask about something at this time. You've done your research and you understand the position and overall responsibilities, but be sure to **ask relevant questions** to ensure your understanding and/or to seek further clarification on a subject. Interviewers often are impressed by candidates that demonstrate their knowledge of the hospital or position.

When it's time to talk about salary, the interviewer should broach the subject first. In fact, you shouldn't bring-up the topic until you're almost certain to get the job offer. That being said, however, during a screening interview, it's common for the recruiter to inquire about your current salary and may be willing to share some general information related to the position pay grade and salary range. This information is important, but is by no means the final word on pay. Based on your experience and expertise, your point in the quoted range could vary, which is why salary should be discussed near the end of the process, after the interviewer knows more about what you'll bring to the table.

Your body says a lot about you in many ways as you communicate, so **be aware of your non-verbal communication**. Body movement can indicate attitudes and feelings while also acting as illustrators and regulators. Your body movement includes your eyes, eyebrows, lips, shoulders, arms, hands, as well as gestures. Together these pieces can convey if you are comfortable, unhappy, friendly, anxious, nervous and many other messages. Considering these 'little things' can mean a great deal, as perceived negative behaviors based on non-verbals will go a long way to eliminate you as a candidate. It is essential that your words don't say one thing while your non-verbal communication says another. Many interviewers believe that the non-verbal clues

are a more accurate reflection of the candidate since they tend to be an unconscious reaction.

After the Interview

After you've walked out of the interview and have a chance to take a breath, remember the importance of timely follow-up. A hand-written note or friendly email to **thank the interviewer** for her or his time and consideration is important. You should also restate your continued interest and commitment to the position and to the hospital.

If a week or two has passed with no word, a polite **call to inquire when a decision will be made** is definitely ok. In fact, if a position has had multiple candidates, your follow-up could be a deciding factor, especially if the hiring process has been a lengthy one with interviewers speaking with multiple candidates each day for many weeks. Most hiring managers do their best to outline the decision time-frame at the conclusion of an interview, but if this information is not shared, feel free to inquire.

As you walk away, you'll inevitably begin to reflect on how well you thought the interview went. Always remember—all you can do is your best. You've done your homework, were prepared for the interview, arrived early, looked and acted the part, honestly answered the interview questions, and spoke with respect and passion. But did you forget anything? Did you focus on the little things as described above?

It is my hope that this review of some of the more common interviewing tips will help you land that perfect position. You've worked hard and have excellent experience and references. Don't risk being eliminated as a candidate due to a lack of attention to the important details that create a great first impression that will last long after the interview is complete. Good luck with your career path development. And remember to smile; it makes people wonder what you're up to!



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