



MAHER Associates

www.careerpilot.com

bob@careerpilot.com

214-563-2865

CLOSING THE DEAL: Interviewing Tactics

A productive mindset, during any career transition, is your ability to relate your well positioned "story" to others, answer questions effectively, conduct productive negotiations, and, in general, fine tune your personal salesmanship skills. So what are those basic tactics that will allow you to effectively "close the deal?"

1. **Practice your two minute drill every chance you get....** it's the fundamental building material of your communication strategy--your verbal collaterals!
2. **Practice your exit and qualification statements...** most all potential employers and networking contacts will want to know your current situation and why you are available.
3. **Practice answering both common and tough questions...** including pre-offer negotiation tactics.

The most asked question during career transition is, "Tell me about yourself." Appropriate use of your two-minute drill and related verbal strategies, your "verbal collaterals," is a key ingredient to personal salesmanship...

- **A verbal resume...** A tightly focused, upbeat telling of "your story" told in a high impact two minute format. With practice, can be easily personalized to your listener.
- **An "elevator pitch"...** A succinct summary of your qualifications for a specifically positioned function or opportunity. With practice, can become quite spontaneous.
- **Brag bytes...** Wordcraft various collections of words, phrases and sentences to capture memorable moments or accomplishments--the best you have to offer. "...saved 80% cost-per-hire..." Used in MSWord Auto Text Format can be quite efficient when building high impact correspondence as well.
- **Personal Portfolio...** Your collection of certificates, examples of work, reference letters, etc that can bring life and interest (not to mention PROOF) to your story.



"If you **practice** the way you play, there shouldn't be any difference. That's why I practiced so hard. I wanted to be **prepared** for the game."

Michael Jordan (1963-)

American basketball player & business person

regarded by many as the greatest basketball player who ever played the game

Interested, Qualified and Available...

At the end of the day both third-party and Corporate recruiters deliver *Interested, Qualified and Available* candidates to the desktop of hiring managers. They source a set of candidates, qualify them, get their interest, present and hopefully close.

An individual should suspect the Company of compiling a pool of talent when they receive a position of interest by email--especially unsolicited. If you choose to submit, you will typically be directed to a series of questions about the position. These are answered by the candidate and immediately scored by the software managing the talent pool. You might be amazed by the swiftness of the next step.

The candidates immediately receive a response telling them they are qualified or not for the position while simultaneously those who are Interested, Qualified and Available are sent to the desktop of the recruiter and hiring authority for the next step in the process.

We all must be challenged to understand and embrace new technology that can make us more productive and effective to the organizations we serve. What we have, here, is the failure to merge two ineffective processes in to one very mutually advantageous one: **Shared productivity in the world of recruitment.**

INTERVIEW PREP

A productive networking call sometimes can result in a screening interview, so **BE PREPARED**. Most interviews follow a predictable format, with steps that both the interviewer and applicant follow to decide if both will benefit from working together. The best interviews are ones in which both participants are equal and have a mutually beneficial, interactive conversation regarding the opportunity at hand.

Think of an interview as the natural extension, the successful result of your effective networking. Many networking conversations actually become screening interviews, where influential contacts are assessing your qualifications, skill sets and experience relative to an opportunity at hand. "Perfect practice" of the basics builds the confidence necessary to perform well in formal job interviews.

Let's break down the basics into four areas...

1. pre-contact preparation/ research,
2. greeting and rapport,
3. questions/answers, and ...
4. meeting closure.

All four stages are equally important and deserve your consideration and preparation.

Know the needs of the company

Once your basic research is complete, you must next identify how your abilities, experience and expertise can meet the needs of the interviewer, the company and the job. This point cannot be over-emphasized. It is the company's needs that you must fill, not your own. Surprisingly, however, by meeting the company's needs, your needs also will be met.

Your VALUE PROPOSITION

Prepare for your interviews (and networking meetings) by fully understanding the value you bring to a potential employer and hiring company. Incorporate portions of this information into your interview responses, or use some of the material in your interview closing remarks. Tell them why you are good at what you do!

The Interviewee's Nine-Box Matrix of Interview Process...

Confirm FIT	YOU	JOB	FIT
ASK			
ANSWER			
MONEY			

Answering questions effectively

The key to being successful in an interview is to answer each question well, with strong content and credible delivery. The way you deliver your responses can be just as important as what you say. Look directly into the interviewer's eyes; give short, crisp, smooth answers that don't sound memorized. Put energy in your voice.

Consider one of the following guidelines in answering questions relative to your communication strategy...

- ✓ **ANSWER the question.**
- ✓ **Highlight strengths**, giving examples as appropriate... plays to behavioral interviewer style and tactics. **Minimize weaknesses.**
- ✓ **At least address the issue of the question before**
 - Blocking
 - Turnaround
 - Answering in your terms
 - Confronting or changing the subject!

Do you have any questions?

Have at least two questions ready. They could relate to: the procedures; the systems; reporting relationships; size of working group; equipment; or immediate goals of the department or position. Do not ask questions about benefits or holidays until you are close to a job offer.



Your POSITION "WORTH"

While potential employers recruit within well-defined salary ranges, your position's worth is so much more. This total value is what you seek to improve upon, and it has several variables...

1. Base Salary
2. STRUCTURED BONUS... paid in a regular and frequent paycheck
3. UNStructured Bonus... these are the elusive, discretionary money sources.
4. Benefits
5. Perks
6. First year vacation
7. Starting date, if currently employed!

POST Offer Tactics...

Regardless of offer acceptability or detail, try never to accept on-the-spot. Rather choose to get back to them with your acceptance in a reasonable time period. You never want to imply that you are getting back with them to negotiate.

This separate transaction will help you feel prepared and confident, and help to mitigate the emotion of the moment.

Even the most passive communicator should focus on one item within the offer as a target for upgrading. When in the conversation of accepting the position, express interest and motivation regarding the opportunity... pause... then "**I must ask, though... Is there anything we can do about _____ ?**" An inquiry about an item often leads to getting it!

You could be a bit more assertive in your acceptance by asking for a few minutes to go over the entire offer, to make sure you understand it... pause... then, go through each of the seven items included in a position's worth (above), inquiring about each item.

Only the more aggressive communicators should attempt a more aggressive approach where you ask to go through the entire offer, making a specific request to upgrade each item as you discuss it.

In fact, when you know you have a position of negotiating strength (other offers, new business or new contacts to bring, or a unique operational strength to bring, like a personal patent or a design resolution) you might even consider a counter-offer.

MULTIPLE OFFERS

Do not let negotiation become gamesmanship between you and several organizations. Negotiate more aggressively with the Company you desire to work for, leveraging your negotiation with the other offers. While this still must be done with a win-win outcome in mind, you can afford a bit more of a risk in your approach.

To RECAP...

1. **Practice** answering both common and tough questions... including pre-offer negotiation tactics.
2. **Practice** your exit statement... Recent salary history may be part of the information they seek... be discreet, even with your personal contacts.

Now, GO PRACTICE !

Recruitment can become a win-win proposition. *FIT HAPPENS !*



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2. **GO TO: www.dfwcareerpilot.com** Click on FOLLOW to register for updates
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Bob Maher created his online presence, www.careerpilot.com, in 1994. He has over thirty years of successful experience in Corporate Recruitment, performance management and Career Management Services. He is an entrepreneur and innovator in the use of information technology in the recruitment and employment process.

On the Founder's Council of the Association of Career Professionals - International and quite active in their Professional Development, Technology and Chapter Growth initiatives--a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. Bob was presented with the prestigious LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT award by The Association in 2006.