

Some advice for directing your Oscar-winning interview

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Finally the phone rings. “This is Mr. Jones from the Wonderful Company. Would you be available on Tuesday to meet with me?”

“AN INTERVIEW!!!” you think, “They want to meet me! They liked my resume!”

You agree to a date and time one week away. Then you start feeling the butterflies in your stomach, your palms sweat, and your leaps to your throat.

“Oh my god, an interview!” you lament.

It is true your resume has successfully won your admission to the interview stage. You can strut your stuff before a live audience, under the bright glare of the interviewer’s gaze. Stage fright comes with the territory. And guess what?...there’s a cure...it’s called **preparation**.

Being prepared not only helps calm stage fright jitters when you walk through that door, it often determines whether you’ll be asked to do an encore and if you’ll win the Oscar-caliber production. Since you are both the director and actor, you have a large task before you. Don’t fret, however, the challenge is surmountable once it is understood.

Successfully directing your interview performance necessitates that you first place yourself in your audience’s (potential employer’s) shoes. This will enable you to create a script, character and production that will receive a standing ovation.

The major concerns of the employer are:

- ✓ **What can you do for me that will alleviate my pain?**
- ✓ **Why should I choose you over others?**

Getting ready to address the major concerns of the employer at the interview

Before you write your script, you must complete some important tasks:

- **Research the company**
 - ✓ Find out as much as possible about the company’s product (including the competition) and how they serve their customer’s needs. Know how the business is structured (for example, private/public, corporate ownership, partnership).
 - ✓ What is its reputation within the industry?
 - ✓ What distinguishes it from its competition?

- **Select appropriate dress**
This will depend on the particular company, position and community. Research this well. Match your clothing to the company norm, though you can add personal flare This is not a way to draw attention to yourself. It is better to err toward conservatism than flamboyance.
- **Assess the company's needs**
What does the company lack or, conversely, need to accomplish it's goals of growth and success? The fact that the company is hiring suggests that it is experiencing significant pain. You must know this to properly direct your interview performance. How you will solve the companies pain is what your performance is all about. Your interviewer will try to match your skills, qualifications and career interests with the company's needs. You need to know the "personality" of the company and then create a script that demonstrates how you complement and mirror it.

Enacting the interview

What to do before the interview:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes in advance of the appointment time. This is a statement of your dependability, punctuality and planning.
- Make sure that your arrival is announced to the interviewer.
- Present yourself in a friendly and courteous manner to everyone you meet along the way.

What to do during the interview:

- **Appear poised, friendly, knowledgeable, and remember to smile and breathe!** You may wish to rehearse before a mirror or on video tape. Then critique your performance with a friend.
- **Remain in the director's chair.** If you have prepared adequately you can do this courteously, without offending the interviewer. You know specifically how you can satisfy the company's needs for the position and why you are distinguished from other interviewees. Tell brief poignant stories that illustrate these two pressing points. Be sure (no matter what questions the interviewer asks you) that you work this into your presentation. Be clear, articulate and focused. Be honest. Listen carefully and respond powerfully to all that is said.
- **Size up the interviewer's personality as (s)he will do you, and find out his/her expectations.** If (s)he is serious, be earnest, if congenial, be gregarious. Let the interviewer set the tone and match it. Be aware of body language and non-verbal cues. For example, if (s)he appears distracted or exhibits impatience while you are talking, it may be an indication that (s)he is losing interest. You must then pick up your pace or be more specific and to the point. Again, listen and respond preceptively.
- **Pace yourself.** If the interviewer announces you have 30 minutes, keep your presentation within that time frame.
- **Maintain good eye contact.** Look directly at the interviewer. This suggests confidence and equality. You are on equal footing since (s)he has a need and you can meet it.

- **Maintain a talk/listen balance.** Listen carefully to what the interviewer is saying and be flexible to incorporate relevant responses into your script. (S)he may be implying something beyond what the words suggest.
- **Don't patronize the interviewer or act condescendingly.** Particularly, don't correct him or her regarding a perceived misstatement of an unimportant fact. It is more essential to maintain good rapport and win your strategic goal of securing the position than it is to win a point.
- **Be aware.** If the interviewer goes into short discourse on his/her own personal life, relax and go with it. Listen, (s)he may be telling you something important.
- **Ask questions.** Your future time, energy and efforts are on the line. You have the right to find out as much as possible about the position requirements, and the company itself.
- **Summarize what you've learned.** If you're sensitive to body language and non-verbal clues, you'll know when the interviewer is drawing to a close. State succinctly what you've learned about the company's needs and the position requirements. Ask the interviewer if that matches his/her desires.
- **Ask the employer if (s)he has any other questions.** State you would be pleased to get together again at your mutual convenience.
- **Close the interview with a statement suggesting your desire to fill the position** (if that is still true by this time). Ask when a decision will be reached. This is important in planning your interview follow-up strategy.

What to do after the interview:

- **Write a thank-you note the following day.** This can be hand-written or typed. It should be concise and friendly. Reiterate, as you did at the close of your interview, how you can allay the painful needs that have precipitated this costly hiring process.

After the last handshake, when you're walking out the front door, take a bow. You have given the audience your all. The final outcome, whether you win the Oscar (are offered the job), depends on many factors; however, a well directed and orchestrated interview is no small accomplishment. Congratulate yourself on a five-star production!

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