



The Second (Company-Site) Interview

The company-site interview is often the final step in the interview process before an eventual job offer. However, you first need to survive the close scrutiny that accompanies it. Instead of just meeting with one person, you may be meeting with three or four. Instead of a simple half-hour interview, you may experience a half- or full-day of interviews. And you may be required to take one or more tests. But all with the promised reward dangling within your reach.

The company-site interview is also your final opportunity to evaluate the company. You will be given the opportunity to see the inside of the company and meet with some of the key people - possibly some of the people with whom you will be working. As a result, you will gain a better understanding of the true work environment.

Your Sponsor

The recruiter with whom you initially interviewed has a vested interest in your doing well at the company-site interview. This person, who may have initially been a screener, is now your "sponsor." You will be the personal representation of what s/he views as a potential new employee. In a way, your sponsor's professional reputation is on the line whenever a candidate is brought back to the company-site. No sponsor wants to hear the dreaded, "Why on earth did you invite that person back?"

So take advantage of this and be prepared to ask your sponsor some questions prior to the interview:

- Who will I be meeting with?
- What will they be looking for?
- What can I do to best prepare myself?
- What are their backgrounds?
- Will there be any other activities scheduled during the day?
- Can you send me additional material about your company?

Such questions will prepare you to be successful at your company-site interview. Your sponsor is now your advocate. Build your personal connection to your mutual benefit.

What To Expect & What to Do

The substance of the interview will depend on the type of job for which you are interviewing. For technical positions, one or more people will undoubtedly try to determine your technical expertise. Positions that require supervision of others will include questions about your supervisory experience and style. In short, a second interview is a time for you to exchange very specific information about the job and your ability to fill that role.

- Preparation should include in-depth research on the company, beyond their homepage. Go to some objective web sites and find out what has been written about the company lately. Financial web pages frequently have links to news about organizations.
- Prepare different questions to ask the boss and people who might be your co-workers.
- Several people may ask you the same questions as the day proceeds. Be consistent with your answers so at the end of the day, when the interviewers get together to discuss your qualifications, they have the same information about your strengths and qualifications for the job.
- Be as enthusiastic at 3:00 p.m. as you were at 8:30 a.m.
- Be very observant and try to get some sense of what the work environment is like, both physically and socially. Do people seem to enjoy working there? Can you picture yourself being happy working here?
- Be nice to everyone! Everyone may have a say in the hiring decision.
- Collect business cards from people you interview with so you can send individual thank you notes immediately after the interview.
- A lunch and/or dinner may be included in the day or half-day's activities. Be advised - you are still being evaluated during meals - so demonstrate excellent "dining etiquette."
- Salary negotiations may occur – generally at the end of the day. But don't be surprised if salary and benefit information isn't broached until an offer is made. Know what range in salary you should be expecting.

Travel Expenses

- Employers typically reimburse candidates for normal travel and hotel expenses. Some will make all of your travel arrangements for you. Reimbursement policies and procedures vary, but most organizations understand that applicants may not have the cash or credit cards to support long distance travel and they do their best to provide reimbursement before the end of the visit or very shortly thereafter.
- You should know an employer's travel policies and their reimbursement plans before you agree to a second interview that you may not be able to afford on your own. Demonstrate your good business sense by keeping careful records, documented with receipts, of all reasonable expenses.
- Unreasonable expenses include flying first class, expensive restaurants, and entertainment not arranged for by the employer. Room service meals are usually an unreasonable expense, but an employer would not expect you to leave a hotel in search of a restaurant when you are in an unfamiliar city, especially if you arrive late in the evening. Use the hotel restaurant whenever it is the most reasonable choice; charge the meal to your room to simplify reporting your expenses.

Company Site Exams and Testing

At a company site interview, be prepared for the possibility of taking one or more tests. Being asked to take a test is a good sign, because employers do not waste the time and money on testing someone in whom they are not interested. Following are the five basic types of tests you may encounter:

Intelligence/Mental Ability Tests: These tests are designed to test your critical thinking skills, including problem solving, mathematical aptitude, and memory. They are usually structured in a format similar to the SAT and ACT.

Work Simulation Tests: These tests are designed to provide you with example work scenarios or problems which you must work through to a satisfactory result. For example, a test for a Programmer position may ask the candidate to develop the program logic for a bank statement program.

Specific Skills Tests: For many highly specialized professions, they will test your skills in specific areas. Many of these tests are tied into certification, such as the CPA or CNE. A subset of these certification tests is the specific skills test. These tests are designed to ask questions at a detail level. They are very specific and very accurate. You will be more likely to encounter these tests in technical professions, such as engineering or computers.

Personality Tests: These tests are often the best indicator a company has of someone's values, beliefs, and personal preferences

Honesty Tests: These tests are usually reserved for jobs in high security areas or where there will be access to trade secrets, merchandise, or cash. Many of the questions are repetitive comparisons ("Do you like chess better than poetry?" and later "Do you like poetry better than chess?"), although some will ask for absolutes ("Have you ever told a lie?"). You know the answer. And the test knows if you are telling the truth.

While these tests are all an attempt at standardization and greater objectivity, they are all lacking to a certain degree. They still have a subjective element. Be prepared, both mentally and physically, for these tests. With any test, keep in mind that the purpose is to further qualify you for the position. Put forth your very best effort and do not show discouragement when you finish the test. If asked about the test, make a comment about it being "challenging" (for quantitative) or "interesting" (for qualitative).

Portions of this handout are from *Job Search Tip of the Week*, by Brian Krueger, author of "CollegeGrad Job Hunter