

HANDLING MULTIPLE INTERVIEWERS

One of the toughest interview situations out there is when you are meeting with more than one person, sometimes referred to as the *Team Interview*. There's no doubt that a team interview has its own set of special challenges.

If you're particularly uncomfortable with team interviews, ask your career counselor to help you set up a team mock interview. Like all aspects of communication, knowledge is power, and you'll get better with practice.

Learn & Use the Names of the People Interviewing You

That personal touch of using someone's name during an interview will help you establish rapport. This is especially true if you're being interviewed by people at different levels within the organization – if the person is the lowest ranked person in the room, you'll give them a sense of importance, and they'll appreciate it.

Quick Tips to Remembering Names:

- Repeat each person's name as they're introduced to you
- If you don't hear a person's name or you're not familiar with the name, ask them to repeat it by saying "it's important to me that I get your name correct."
- If they can't see your notes, make a chart with the interviewer's names, and use it as a cheat sheet

Make Sure Everyone Has a Copy of Your Resume

You should always bring several copies of your resume with you to an interview even if you have sent it ahead of time. A common issue is that people are busy and have a lot on their minds so they may have forgotten to bring a copy of your resume to the interview. Just politely ask if anyone needs a copy of your resume when the interview is about to start.

Address Everyone & Make Eye Contact as you Answer Questions

Whether it's two people or ten people, it's important to not ignore everyone else when one person asks you a question.

Make sure you acknowledge each interviewer one at a time. You should answer questions directly back to the person who asks the question but simultaneously give brief eye contact to each member of the team. Don't forget to smile and interject your personality. Staying focused too much on one person on the panel could make others feel that you don't see them as important. When you finish answering a question, look to the others in the room to see if someone else might have a follow up question.

Remember that the panel is not one entity, but several individuals coming together with the common goal of hiring the best candidate for the job. At the same time, each person has his own agenda or department's interest at heart. For example, the HR manager will be checking to make sure you are a good fit with the culture and people working at the company. The hiring manager will want to know about your legal skills or business know-how. And the associate will want to know if you are a good team player. Without doing ping-pong, speak to each person in the room, and make eye contact.

Panel interviews are usually rather formal and organized, using a standard of set questions for all applicants. A list of standard questions makes it easy and less subjective when they later have to come together and decide. This type of interview is most commonly used in academia, government or for high-level executives but can be used for any other type of position in any company.

Good Cop/Bad Cop Interview

Another multiple-type interview is the “good cop/bad cop” interview. The team is usually made up of two interviewers, one who asks the questions and one who takes notes. The two typically trade roles, which can be confusing if they have different styles. In fact, one person may be kind and gentle and the other more harsh or pushy. It may be difficult to identify with the company personality or management philosophy based on this type of interaction.

Just remember, these inquisitors are working together toward the same end. Treat them equally, not favoring one over the other. Do not prejudge them or the employer based upon this kind of interview. Your performance in answering their questions should remain at its peak as well as maintaining interest and enthusiasm for the position and the employer.

At the End, Thank Everyone

Shake hands and thank everyone whether they asked questions or not. In big groups, not everyone has the chance to ask a question so be sure to make everyone feel important at the end. A nice gesture is to say something like “I know we didn’t have enough time to get to everyone’s questions, but if you do have any more questions, my email and phone number are on my resume, and you’re welcome to contact me.”

A good tip to remember is to make sure that you immediately write a thank-you letter to each person. Upon leaving the employer’s office, thank the receptionist or administrative assistant for assisting you.

Additional Advice & Tips

1. Prepare and practice answering some classic interview questions beforehand
2. Ask for a business card from each person up front; place the card in front of you for easy reference, and use their name during the interview
3. Carry some small comfort items to use in between each interview to refresh yourself:
 - Breath mints
 - Tissues for moist hands
 - Eye drops for redness or moisture