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Insider Advice from a Hiring Manager by Matt Brooks

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In a competitive job market, job seekers need every advantage they can get to win a position with a company. There are a few things that can give candidates a leg up on the competition such as knowing a decision maker, having the right experience, or having a great recommendation from a past employer or dignitary. All these advantages can put you in near the top of the list, but understanding what hiring managers want can be the difference in being a top candidate and actually landing the job.

For many hiring managers, there is a multi-step process to filtering hundreds of applications. The first step is to pull the resumes that stand out, or the candidates that come recommended by someone (or hand delivered resumes). In order to make it past this step, your resume needs to focus on your met goals and objectives, significant contributions, and skillsets that translate into a great fit for the position. Hiring managers donâ€™t need a list of responsibilities â€“ they can tell that from your job titles. They want to see how you contributed to the company in your roles and positions.

Getting past step one may earn you a phone interview. Many hiring managers see this as a critical step in the process. A phone interview allows the hiring manager to ask questions and hear your responses without the bias of appearances or external factors. In the phone interview, job seekers should be equally interested in the hiring manager and the company as the hiring manager is in the applicant. Answer their questions, but also ask some questions â€“ not so much about benefits or time off, but about culture, history, and direction of the company. The interview should turn more into a conversation than a question and answer session. The goal of the phone interview is to make the hiring manager want to talk to you again, and accomplishing that can lead directly to a second or third interview, even landing the job.

If you are invited to an in-person interview, there are a few things to do to set a good tone right from the start. First, you have to look your best. This includes wearing the right suit and tie. Do not go too far over the top. Power ties and pinstripes are reserved for executives, and unless you are applying for a C-level position, go with something less aggressive. The hiring manager and others in the interview shouldnâ€™t remember what you were wearing, but they should remember you. The right suit for an interview is one that looks great, fits well, is well pressed, but doesnâ€™t get recognized for its aggressive tones, colors, or designs. Second, be well hydrated. Talking during an interview can dry out your throat and make you feel uncomfortable if you arenâ€™t well hydrated. Third, be yourself. Preparedness breeds confidence, and they want to interview YOU. No one knows you as well as you do, so give real answers to questions and be engaged in the conversation. If you can manage these things, your interview should go well.

After the interview is over, the ball is in the hiring managerâ€™s court. Be sure to send a thank you note to all parties in the interview, and follow-up with a phone call. If you did enough to win them over, you will win the job. Remember, winning a position with a company is all about the fit â€“ you have to be the right person at the right time with the right skills, and be able to sell yourself as the right fit. And, with a few tips to get you moving in the right direction, you will be that much closer to a new job.

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