

Interviewer Quick Tips #2

Background Information

1. Determine ahead of time the critical background information you want to collect. Take a blank Company Background form and highlight the key fields, but do not collect this information during the executive interview. If not collected before the interview, ask the executive if human resources and facility personnel can fill out the Company Background information that has yet to be completed.
2. View the company's web site to collect information for the Company Background form.
3. Use a reputable source on research data about the business sector - IBIS World for example.
4. Look to see what industry sector research has already been completed on your market that can be reviewed to help gain knowledge.

Appointment Call

1. The best way to score an interview is to build relationships with the company by providing services and recording the request(s) and results in Interactions and Assistance Tracking. A history with the company greatly improves the odds of getting an interview.
2. Are there retired executives in the market, community leaders, or Board members that can aid in opening the door to schedule an appointment?
3. Develop a few key remarks you can make about what you are hoping to learn and act upon based on the interview with many companies in your market. Essentially indicate that the time spent will be used to help them and the business community.
4. If a previous report was developed (short report that says "What you learned from interviews"; "What the data meant"; and "What you've done or will do to address needs") then offer to send it to them to help secure the appointment.
5. When scheduling multiple visits on the same day, allow time to accept a tour of the business if offered as well as for travel between the meetings.

Before the Interview

1. Sit down with someone and go through the interview a couple times to get familiar and comfortable with the process.

2. Read your file on the company and review the industry data you have.
3. Google the company and the person you are visiting. In fact, set up Google alerts on your key companies and executives. Something that pops up in an alert may trigger an interview earlier than planned.
4. Look at the executive and company's LinkedIn pages. These can provide useful info for making a connection with the individual or the company. It is OK to follow the company; however do not request a LinkedIn connection until the executive is well known. Do not do a Facebook search.

Conducting the Interview

1. Take a colleague or partner on the first few interviews to help take notes. This will allow you to focus on the conversation and gain confidence.
2. Have an NDA available should they ask about confidentiality
3. Find an area of non-personal small talk to make them feel comfortable, but use judgment to limit this so you can get to the survey.
4. Always have extra copies of the On-Site Interview form with you. The executive may ask to see a copy. But, more importantly, when you reach the final two questions, hand the form to the executive so they can be looking ahead as you go through each point. This simple technique will save valuable time and keep the executive engaged right up to the end.
5. After a half dozen interviews you will have an internal clock on the time to take to get through the interview. That said, it is always good to have a watch where you can easily see the time you have to finish. Looking at your Smart Phone for the time is not recommended.
6. In most cases, the exec usually sets aside 60 minutes for the interview but it may be good to ask early in the interview to show you care about their time and can work within it.
7. Filling out the paper forms, or entering directly into the system, is a subjective decision. It depends on the relationship with the exec, ease of accessing and keeping a Wi-Fi connection, and overall comfort with doing the interview in this manner.

After the Interview

1. Repeat any specific follow up issues you need to address with the exec.
2. When you are off site, make sure you note any actions in Assistance Tracking to begin acting on them right away.

3. **Make sure you do the Post Interview questions.** The post interview questions allow you to share your observations as the interviewer.
4. **Send a handwritten thank you** on your company's letterhead to thank each executive for their time and ability to learn about their business.

Other considerations

1. **Be prepared to briefly talk about your organization** and the core things you are working on - could be workforce, public policy, recruitment, etc.
2. **Be prepared to give a brief update on economic factors** in the region - job growth, unemployment rate, etc.
3. Even if you know the industry and company, **you are not an expert and you should never offer advice on how to do something they bring up**, unless they specifically ask for guidance.
4. Even though you may use less than an hour for the interview, it is advised to hold 90 minutes on your calendar as the exec may offer a tour of their offices/facilities. If offered, this give you the opportunity to do so and to gain a perspective of the business not available in the sit-down interview.

For more information on these and other executive contact issues, see "Synchronist Business Information System® Interviewer's Guide."

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