The objective of an interview is to get a job offer. Once you have the offer, you then have the opportunity to accept or reject it. As you prepare for interviews and actually meet employers, remembering this objective is the single most important thing you can do.

You are NOT interviewing to:

- Decide if you would like to work for the company being interviewed.
- Broaden your knowledge of available opportunities.
- Learn what the particular company can do for YOU.

Your singular purpose is to get the offer - whether it is good, bad, or average. You can always turn down an offer once it has been extended to you.

Interviews take various forms and are conducted in various sequences. The basic parts of the interview are split into seven sections, each defined below.

1. The Arrival
   - Typically, the first person you will meet is the receptionist who may or may not be expecting you.
   - Greet the receptionist and tell him/her your name and the individual's name you wish to see.
   - Then, follow his or her Instructions.

2. The Initial Contact
   - Greeting should include a firm handshake and an enthusiastic "hello" followed by an introduction of yourself.
   - If your first contact is a supervisor in the department offering the job, he or she may talk with you first, introduce you to other staff members and speak with you again before you leave.
   - Remember to "play by the company rules" without question.

3. The Icebreaker
   - In every interview, there is a short interval of "small talk" before "business talk" begins.
   - You should respond with enthusiastic and pleasant answers to remarks and questions regardless of how trivial they may seem.
   - This part of the interview is also your opportunity to get on a first name basis with the interviewer.
   - After the icebreaker, do not hesitate to drop the "Mister" or "Ms." and simply call the interviewer by his or her first name.

4. The Interview Type
   - Chronological
     - The interview will likely be a chronological interview controlled solely by the interviewer.
     - This type could provide poor framework for the interviewer to discover the skills and goals wanted in the new employee and for you to explain how you can satisfy those job requirements.
     - Shifting to the topical interview is not difficult; simply look for the first opportunity to ask this question: "What exactly will my first assignment be?"
     - When the interviewer responds with a description of the initial responsibilities of the position, your opportunity to convince him or her that your qualifications match the position requirements has begun.
Topical

- The topical interview is completely different from the chronological interview.
- Instead of being guided by a backward review of your previous jobs, the topical interview focuses on the responsibilities of the specific job for which you are interviewing.
- Remember that your strategy is to find out exactly what will be expected of you in the new position and to convince the interviewer that you have the skills to perform exactly as expected in the position.

5. The Interview Close

- The Close involves four steps:
  - Briefly recap the reasons you believe you are qualified for the position.
  - Regardless of the interviewer's response, stay enthusiastic!
  - Make the statement that the position is exactly what you are looking for and that you would like an offer from the company. (As in all sales, always ask for the offer.)
  - As you prepare to leave, tell the interviewer you would enjoy working with him or her personally.
- Remember that you want an offer.
- Very important: All interviews, regardless of who the interviewer may be, should be conducted with a topical interview and a strong, positive close.

6. The Exit

- Your exit from the interviewer's office should be viewed as an additional opportunity to display a positive attitude about the position and company.
- At the interviewer's office door (or at the elevator), you should repeat your statement that you have the ability to do the job and that the position is exactly what you are looking for.
- You should also take this opportunity to tell the interviewer you would enjoy working with him or her personally.
- Reinforcement at the Exit phase can make the difference between receiving the offer and not receiving the offer.

7. The Follow-Up

- After the interview, it’s always advised to follow up with the interviewer(s). On the day following the interview, call the employer to again express your interest in the job.
- Tell the employer you thought over everything discussed in the interview and that you are even more interested in the job now than you were when you left his or her office the previous day.
- Although the phone call is most effective, if you cannot reach the employer by phone, send an email or hand-written letter with the above message.
- By following this interview procedure, you have done everything possible to ensure a good chance of receiving an offer from the company.

About the Author: Carol Wenom, CPC/CTS specializes in nationwide refining, petrochemical and chemical engineering/technical recruiting and executive retained search. With over 30 years in engineering/technical recruiting Carol is highly qualified to offer career advice, insight on staffing trends and respond to the demands of today's marketplace. In addition to her operational roles, Carol also serves as Vice President of Training and Organizational Development for the Whitaker Companies and President of the Pinnacle Society.