On-Site Visits with Employers

After a screening interview, either on-Grounds or at the employer’s site, strong candidates are often invited back to the company for further interviews. While the employer will have a schedule for when you can visit, if your schedule cannot allow for it, it is perfectly acceptable to ask to reschedule for a more convenient time. An invitation to the employer’s site is a good sign that the company is interested in you as a potential employee.

Making a Positive Impact

During an office visit, you will meet a number of people who will evaluate you on the basis of your qualifications as well as on your "personality fit" with that company or organization. The people you talk with will be asking themselves: "Would I like to work with this person or have them working for me?"

As mentioned above, during an on-site visit you will be interviewing with a number of people who will work with you if you are selected for a position. You may have both formal interviews and informal meetings such as a lunch with other employees. You must keep in mind that every employee you meet, from the person who picks you up at the airport, to the recent alum you meet with for lunch, to the people with whom you formally interview, is evaluating your qualifications and "fit" for the position. Be sure to present yourself as professionally as possible throughout your visit.

What to Expect

Often a representative from the company will meet you at the airport or in the lobby at the beginning of the day. If it is a visit that requires you to stay overnight, you may not have time to check into your hotel prior to your first meeting, so dress for your interview depending on your arrival time and your schedule. Upon arriving at the company you may first meet with a personnel manager or your host who will provide you with an agenda for the day. This may be an individual meeting or it may be with a group of other applicants also there for second interviews.

Your agenda will include interviews with a variety of people and may include the head of the department in which you would work, the person who would be your immediate supervisor, the people both in the department and in other departments with whom you would need to work
closely, or U.Va. alumni who are currently working for the company. These interviews will often be longer and less directed than screening interviews though many of the same kinds of questions may be asked. You may also be expected to be able to actively participate in discussing technical and specific tasks and responsibilities of the job.

Other activities on your agenda may include a tour, possibly personality testing and in some cases a group activity or work simulation in which you participate with other applicants. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes that are also appropriate to the work environment.

**Tips for Success**

In addition to basic guidelines that apply in any interview situation, keep in mind the following:
- When scheduling your visit, it is appropriate to ask the employer who from the company or organization you will meet with during your visit. That said, in many cases the employer will also provide a schedule listing this information for you.
- Use the draft schedule to help you prepare questions you want to ask of the different individuals you will meet (direct supervisor of the position, colleagues who work with the position, departments who collaborate with the position, alums from U.Va. etc.).
- Prior to your first appointment of the day, you may ask to use the restroom to freshen up after your trip (particularly if you have just flown or driven in that morning).
- Be honest and consistent. Several people with whom you interview may ask you the same questions and often these people will not have exactly the same expectations for the position. If you play the game of trying to give each person with whom you talk the answer you think he/she wants to hear, you may contradict yourself. Be yourself – do not play to what you think the employer wants to hear.
- Be courteous, enthusiastic and interested in all your activities during the day.
- Remember names and titles of those people you meet - you may want to jot these down as the day proceeds and check spelling with your primary host for the day before you leave. You may also ask for business cards during your interviews.
- If you participate in a group activity, keep in mind that your ideas as well as your group behavior will probably be evaluated.
- Keep in mind that the questions you ask reveal as much about you as your responses to questions.

**Meals/Food**

At meals, remember that your primary goal should be to talk rather than eat. Order light and order foods that are not difficult or messy to eat. Take your cues from your host when ordering. When ordering, do not order the most expensive item on the menu and remember some firms have a “no alcohol” clause in their expense accounts, so generally it is advisable not to order alcoholic beverages unless your host encourages you to. Even then, you should not feel compelled to drink, and if you do drink, make one drink your limit.
Evaluating the Opportunity

During the office visit, you will have a great opportunity to collect information, which you will need to make a good decision about where to work. Be observant. Prepare questions to ask and think about what you want to observe. Utilize the Interviewing for Employment handout for ideas of questions you might ask during your visit.

Conclusion

The on-site visit is your opportunity to "close" the deal if you decide that this job is right for you. Remember, your major task is to convince the employer that you are the best fit for the job and that you are an eager and enthusiastic person who is interested in the organization, the location, the products and services, the clients, the position and enjoys challenging work. You want the employer to like you!

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