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### **The Purpose of the Company Visit**

The company visit serves two primary purposes:

- 1). It allows the company to get more in-depth assessment of the candidate prior to making a job offer. The company is confident that the candidate who is invited to visit for a day has the technical skills and intelligence to do the job. The company visit becomes their opportunity to confirm that there is a good match between the candidate's goals and the career opportunity. They also attempt to see that there is good "chemistry" between the candidate and the company's culture. The company visit is generally the last step in the selection process before an offer is made.
- 2). It allows the candidate an opportunity to see the company and some of its people first hand in order to make a more informed decision should an offer be made. The company visit provides the candidate with an opportunity to learn more about the position, the long-term career opportunities, the company's employees, the company itself, and the local community. The company will usually be doing as much "selling" as evaluating because this is the information the candidate will use in deciding whether to accept or decline an offer. The candidate, like the company, is trying to determine whether or not there will be a connection between the two.

### **Preparing for the Visit**

Considering the importance and purpose of the company visit, it is imperative that the candidate prepare for the day. Preparation for the company visit should not be taken lightly since the visit is the final step for most companies in deciding whether to make a job offer. Candidates should attempt to learn as much about the company as possible. Items of preparation should include:

Notes taken after the initial campus interview

Annual report

Promotional material on the company

Industry and business publications containing information about the company

Talking with former students who are now employed by the company

Talking with current employees in the line of work for which you are interviewing

Talking to people who have had direct dealings with the company or its products.

Candidates should prepare so that they can present themselves as being knowledgeable about the company, its products or services, and the career opportunity being discussed. The better prepared the candidate, the more probable it is that the company will recognize enthusiasm, drive, motivation, maturity and thoroughness as assets possessed by the candidate.

The candidate should use the information obtained to develop insightful questions designed to show interest in the company and the position. These questions should demonstrate the candidate's thorough preparation for the visit, but should also provide the types of information that will support an informed decision to accept or decline an offer. In order for the candidate to prepare these insightful questions they should investigate the following company characteristics:

The business in which they operate

Their mission and long range goals



Most companies will make all the arrangements for the company visit by reserving and pre-paying flights.

Most companies will make hotel reservations for the candidate. The candidate should confirm his/her hotel reservation with the company contact person and make sure he/she will know up front how payment will be handled.

Arrangements for ground transportation should be discussed with the contact person so the candidate is prepared in advance to handle this part of the trip.

Some employers may include spouses on the visit. Others may offer a later visit for the spouse, after an offer has been made.

Arrangements for the spouse need to be discussed with the company contact person. These include transportation, activities during the day, hotel reservations, etc.

Don't expect the company to pay for the spouse's expenses.

### **Arrival**

It is usually a good idea for the candidate to plan to arrive in the city the night before the company visit. The wise candidate tries to avoid very late flights or the last flight into the city. This will help avoid the problems that can arise from airline delays, cancellations or related difficulties.

Many hotels have courtesy vans from the airport. In other cases, the candidate may take a taxi. In any case, receipts for ground transportation expenditures should be kept for later reimbursement.

When checking into the hotel the candidate should ask for any messages (the company may have left information for him/her) and verify any pre-payment agreement. Most hotels will ask to imprint a credit card for any charges not covered by the company.

### **Evening Before**

Many companies arrange for an employee to meet the candidate for dinner on the evening of arrival. The dinner is designed as an opportunity for the candidate to relax and meet an employee while getting a casual flavor for the next day's schedule, the company, the city, and any other pertinent topics.

The dinner companion might be a line manager, the candidate's key contact, a recent hire, or an alumnus of the candidate's school. The degree of informality and nature of conversation at dinner can vary but they are usually quite relaxed.

Dress appropriately for a social dinner

Eat moderately, avoid alcoholic beverages (beyond a glass of wine, a beer, or a single drink)

Ask good, penetrating questions revolving around the particular topic of discussion and relax

**To a degree, the candidate is being interviewed during this dinner. The dinner host may be evaluating the candidate's:**

Social graces

Manner of speech

Contemporary ideas/views

Ability to mix business/pleasure

Maturity

Professionalism

### **Interview Day**

The day of the interview is generally a very busy one. Under the pressure of numerous back-to-back interviews, it is easy for the candidate to grow weary. **It is important that the candidate be himself/herself, maintain a positive attitude, and relax as much as possible.**

Many companies will schedule three to five hour-long interviews with various levels of management in a one-on-one setting. These interviews may, however, be shorter or longer, fewer or more numerous.

Some employers schedule group interviews with four to twelve candidates visiting at one time. The candidates engage in some group sessions, and at other times are involved in one-on-one interviews. The group visit is more difficult for the company to arrange but allows them the opportunity to see each candidate among his/her peers. It permits the candidate a chance to see some of those who might be a part of his training group.

Candidates may be asked the same questions by three or four different people throughout the day. This can be tiring and there is a tendency to not give as good an answer to the fourth as to the first.

Some employers may not be well-prepared. Candidates are sometimes called upon to carry the interview with their questions and observations.

If the candidate is interviewing at a plant-trip location it is probable that an employment manager or plant manager will conduct a tour of the plant at some time during the day. While this is usually a relaxed tour, the candidate should be aware that he/she is still being interviewed, even in this setting.

Anyone the candidate meets for even a few minutes is a potential evaluator. Considering this, the candidate must remain sharp and confident at all times. At no time can the successful candidate reflect a lack of professionalism and expect a positive response.

### **Departure**

The last meeting of the day will often be with the contact person or personnel manager. This session is to answer any final candidate questions, explain follow-up procedures, discuss reimbursement and take care of any similar details.

### **Interview Insights**

The wise candidate takes the opportunity to ask a lot of questions and to get a feel for the company's operating environment. He/she relishes the opportunity to speak with as many workers as possible at the company location. This gives the candidate a better understanding of the people and environment in which he/she might eventually be employed. Candidates sometimes obtain valuable information in unexpected settings:

Waiting for an interviewer to come pick him/her up at a reception area  
In the company cafeteria during lunch  
Speaking with a secretary in a manager's office





usually a good measure of how much to spend. The company wants the candidate to enjoy the visit but not to be extravagant.

### **After the Visit**

Following his/her visit the candidate should send a personal letter of thanks to all the people met and talked with that day. While this may not affect the probability of getting an offer, it is a common courtesy and will definitely be remembered if he/she ends up working there.

Additionally, a letter of thanks to the main contact person is mandatory. This letter should reaffirm interest in the position, highlight qualifications one last time or, if applicable, indicate no further interest in the position. This short letter provides the candidate one last opportunity to stand out above his/her competition and position himself/herself for potential hiring.

On an average, companies will get back to candidates within two weeks of the actual visit with an offer or a rejection. However, it is a good idea for candidates to find out how long they can expect to wait to hear from the company regarding an employment decision. The candidate should feel free to contact the company to check on delays if the estimated decision date passes with no response.

Finally, candidates are advised never to be afraid to turn down a job offer it, after careful consideration. After all, long term career satisfaction is the goal of the whole process.