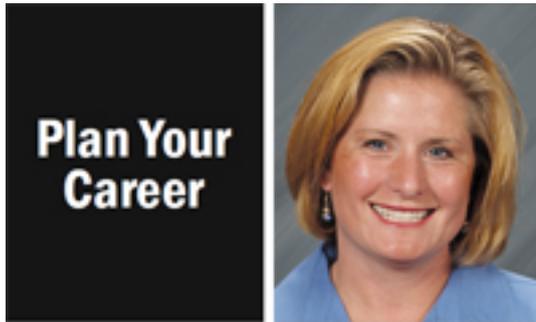


Four steps to prepare for any job interview

Written by Julie Desmond

Wednesday, 11 January 2012 14:21



By Julie Desmond
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In Engineering, there are four candidates for every open position. This means, if you are an engineer, you should be working. And if you are trying to hire an engineer, you might as well be looking for a needle in a haystack, a raindrop in the ocean or your car in the Mall of America parking ramp... It's a tough search.

Job seekers of all kinds can help themselves and their hiring managers by preparing well for each interview. Following four simple steps will help; candidates just have to know the job, the dealbreaker, the company and the location.

If you have not seen a job description, ask for one when the interview is scheduled. Read the requirements and make notes regarding where and when you have had experience with each requirement. For example, if the position requires injection molding experience, what do you know about that? Where did you use that skill? Do this for the entire job description and the interview questions will not surprise you.

What is the dealbreaker on this position? Find out by asking the person who is scheduling the interview: Ask, why is this position open? What is the most critical requirement? Is there anything you're looking for in a candidate that isn't in the job description? If a critical requirement is teamwork, and by the end of the interview teamwork hasn't come up, mention it. Say, I have heard that teamwork is important in this position; may I tell you about a time when my teamwork saved the day?

Check the company website. The most qualified candidate will miss out if they lose sight of what the company is about. If you have time after scouring the company website, go out to Google or Twitter or Face Book and check what people say about the company. The corporate site describes what the organization wants you to know; social media can reveal the true story behind an organization's culture. For example, Nash Finch Company in Edina tells its story online, including information about its value of giving back to the community. One candidate found, through social media, photos of employees doing volunteer work and seeming pretty happy. This was confirmation to her about what the company stands for, and became a positive conversation point during her interview.

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Location matters. Drive by the office prior to your interview. It will save the stress of getting lost when it matters. And it will solidify your commitment to the company during your interview. It's okay to say, "I drive by here all the time," or, "I had a chance to find the building when I was out over the weekend." All else being equal, people like to hire people who live near the office.

Four steps. You don't have to be an engineer to take a scientific approach to job hunting.

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