



10 tips for a successful job interview

Bruce Williams, director of courses and grounds at The Los Angeles Country Club, has plenty of experience on both sides of the interview table. During the past 20 years, most of his time in job interviews has been spent on the interviewer side of the table. After conducting hundreds of interviews for prospective golf course superintendents, Williams has a few ideas about what candidates can say to get a job.

Interviewees will sit before a panel of people involved with golf course operations. They could range from the general manager or director of golf of a facility to a private club's green committee or park district's selection committee.

Based on his experience sitting on some of these committees, Williams offers 10 points to follow to win over the multiple types of interviewers when applying for a position. These tips can be applied to jobs at any golf course in the United States, he says.

1. There's no need to cram for the interview exam; you either know things or you don't. If you don't know facts about the club before you go in, you're not going

to soak up that knowledge two days ahead of time.

"These things don't happen quickly," Williams says. "You can't just look stuff up on the Internet. Surely there are a couple of weeks to prepare from the time you apply for the job until the interview."

Prospects should prepare until they feel comfortable with the golf course's history and current information. Learn what makes the course unique, and find out if there are any projects in process. Is there any construction planned for the course?

Mock interviews help to increase the comfort level as well.

2. Have an agronomic plan in mind for the property. Prospects need to be able to communicate their vision for the future and how they would accomplish it.

3. Know the history of the facility, including the architect and the former superintendents who worked there. Also, know the financial information about the club and department. Know if the club has a waiting list, if it's profitable, etc.

4. Ask for a collection of soil tests, water tests, USGA reports or other consulting reports prior

to the interview. Interviewees should review this information before the interview so they can speak intelligently about it.

"In addition to getting the job, I would want to know if I can be successful with resources that are currently there and if I can make improvements with those resources," Williams says.

Whatever the condition of the course, don't make the mistake of insulting the current owners.

"People tend to be proud of their facility, so you have to walk a fine line," Williams says. "Go for constructive criticism rather than drawing negatives."

5. Analyze your staffing and budgetary needs before the interview and make appropriate recommendations. If the potential employer asks the interviewee what he or she thinks about the budget, the prospective hire should be able to respond with an intelligent answer rather than asking the interviewer what the budget is. To keep up with or exceed the competition, acquire that information before the interview.

6. Bring copies of your accomplishments and work at previous positions. Show before

and after work pictures. This is another way to get a leg up on the competition.

"When I would go into the interview, I would make sure every person has a portfolio with my resume and a business card attached," Williams says.

7. Be relaxed and be yourself. Let your personality glow and show. Don't let your nerves lose the job for you. Being relaxed comes with adequate preparation and practice. Being relaxed also can help the interviewee feel more like himself or herself.

"Sometimes people make the mistake of trying to be somebody they're not," Williams says, adding there's a fine line between confidence and overconfidence.

"If somebody says, 'You're going to make a big mistake if you don't hire me,' that's too much."

Fitting in appearancewise also helps the interviewee to feel more comfortable.

"If you think everyone in there is going to wear a coat and tie, why would you go in with golf attire?" Williams asks. "If you don't know, it's OK to ask. Some people go out and golf afterward."

A general rule of thumb is to wear a sport coat and tie or suit. Don't overdo it.

"A tuxedo isn't necessary," he says.

8. Reflect on the business acumen side of things and show future employers how savvy you are on the business side of

things. Terms such as return on investment and net profits should not be foreign to applicants.

"People worry about which agronomic questions are going to be asked," he says. "Usually less than 20 percent of the interview questions are agronomic."

Job seekers should focus on other topics of conversation, including business aspects.

9. Show examples of team building, development of training programs, motivational techniques, etc.

"Businessmen understand these things much more than plant pathology and soil science," he says.

Applicants should use portfolios to highlight this.

10. Tell the interviewer you want the job and why you are the best fit. Sell yourself. Some candidates go through the interview without ever mentioning they want the job, which is a mistake.

"Tell them when you go in that you want the job," he says. "Then, during the course of the discussion and when you close the interview, tell them again you want the job," he says. "Don't be redundant. Tell them you're excited and you'd be a good fit."

– Heather Wood

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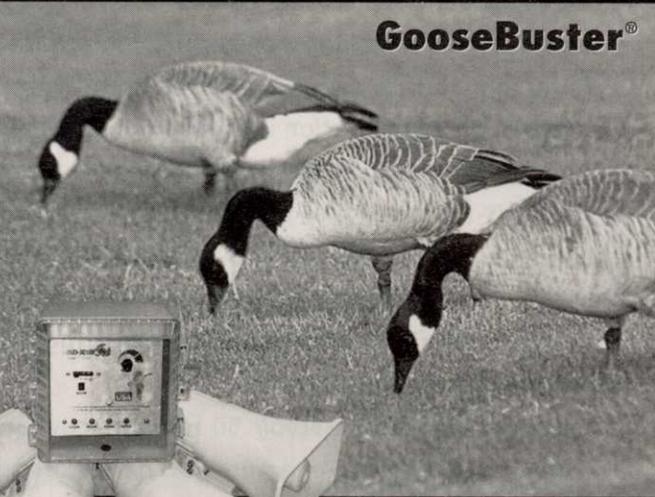



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