



2009 Fall Issue



Share

Printer-Friendly
Newsletter

Search Back Issues

In This Issue

[Entry-Level Actuaries](#)

[Caught in Economic
Turmoil](#)

[The Athletic Actuary](#)

[Become a VIP:
Victorious Interview
Prospect](#)

[Working Abroad: Same
but Different](#)

[Actuarial Foundation
2009 Scholarship
Winners](#)

[Wanted: Your Interview
Stories!](#)

Become a VIP: Victorious Interview Prospect

By Michael Pacolay

Imagine you are looking for an exciting new restaurant to frequent. You see ads on T.V. You see billboards that clutter the roadsides. Your friends and family make suggestions, and you read a number of reviews about various locations. You finally narrow it down to a few eateries, and you are excited to pay each a visit. Upon entering your first destination, you see that the employees are sloppily dressed and that it takes them a minute or so just to acknowledge your presence. When you are finally seated, your table looks clean but it is deceptively sticky. Your waitress greets you with a generic and monotone 'welcome,' and her smile has been replaced with an impressively sized bubble of chewing gum. When your food arrives, it is somewhat cold and your request for refills falls on deaf ears. You do not see your waitress again until she quickly walks past and drops the bill on the table.

Now, imagine what is going through your head at this point. Perhaps you would be in shock and awe. Perhaps you would become furious and demand to see a manager. Perhaps you would calmly pay and leave as soon as possible. Regardless of your emotions or thought process, one thing is certain: you have no intention of returning.

Going to a restaurant for the first time is similar to a job interview. The restaurant is selling a product that you are interested in, and you would like to see if it is worth the investment of your precious time and money. At an interview, you are selling your skills and the company needs to decide if you are worth it or not. Your résumé and recommendations help to get you that interview just as the restaurant's advertising and reviews persuade you to visit. However, even the best résumé in the world will not matter, if the impression you project is a bad one. Through the illustration above, you can easily assess the importance of first impressions. The following tips were provided by three actuarial managers from a Pittsburgh based health insurer. Each holds an FSA designation, and they frequently interview potential candidates for internship and entry level openings.

Interview DO's:

Body Language: Be confident! Show enthusiasm for the opportunity to interview for this position. Make sure you have a firm proper handshake and that you maintain eye contact when answering or asking questions. As the old saying goes, actions speak

louder than words.

Communication: You will have to answer a variety of questions. Make sure you answer them quickly and efficiently while also being as thorough as possible.

Similarly, make sure you show initiative by asking thoughtful questions, both about the job for which you are interviewing as well as the company and its goals.

Professionalism: Proper attire is crucial when interviewing. This is the very first thing they see when you step through the door. Be conservative. If you have to ask yourself if something is 'appropriate,' it probably is not.

Interview DON'T's:

Body Language: Everything you do with your body says something about you. Do not yawn, nervously tap, slouch, or make minimal to no eye contact. These are all very noticeable behaviors. If you act like you do not want to be there, then they will not want you there.

Communication: Do not 'wing it' when considering your questions or responses. If your answers are scattered or irrelevant, it shows that you are indecisive and ill prepared. Furthermore, if you ask no questions (or worse—inappropriate questions) this will make you seem uninterested and careless. Finally, do not use slang or curse in any way.

Professionalism: Do not dress casually. While some interviewers may be more carefree and relaxed than others, you should never make any assumptions. Just because the person across the table is not wearing a tie does not mean you can make yourself at home.

Deal-Breakers:

- Inappropriate dress. While this may be most obvious, it is extremely critical.
- Inappropriate comments. Employees are a reflection of their managers. No manager wants a team member that risks tarnishing the manager's reputation and credibility.
- Money. If it is obvious that you are only concerned with the paycheck, you will soon be looking for one elsewhere.

If you keep all of the above suggestions in mind when preparing to interview, you should definitely have an edge on other candidates. Good luck!