HOW TO HANDLE
INTERVIEW MEALS

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HOW TO HANDLE INTERVIEW MEALS SUCCESSFULLY AND GET THE JOB

Taking job candidates out for a lunch or dinner interview is a common way to learn a lot about an individual and discover how he or she will function in a social setting. So much can be learned, in fact, that you may almost be able to count on this as part of the interview process - especially if you are going to be in a position that requires working closely with others. The important thing about a free business meal with a possible future company is that you be well prepared and know what they will be looking for.

WHAT YOU WANT A JOB INTERVIEW MEAL TO ACCOMPLISH

Once you understand what the potential employer is going to be watching you for when taking you out to lunch or dinner, it will enable you to be on your toes and come up to their expectations easily. Basically, three things will most likely be considered: 1). Your manners, which will show whether or not you understand social conventions; 2). Your attitudes toward others, which may be tested under stress or when you think it may not matter (think waiters); and 3). Your ability to socialize (or lack of) will also be scrutinized.

If you are looking at a free interview meal only as a freebie, instead of as being an important part of the interview process, you will miss the whole point of it - and probably fail the test miserably. The truth is that you should never let down your guard during the meal because the scrutiny (the magnifying glass) is still on you and every action (or inaction) is being watched and will be remembered.

FOODS YOU SHOULD AVOID DURING A JOB INTERVIEW MEAL

As you get ready to eat, you want to remember that certain foods will affect you in different ways. Eating too many carbs (or just too much of anything), for instance, is sure to make you drowsy. This will only tend to fog up your brain, and it will rob you of the sharpness you need to succeed. Avoid white foods and highly processed carbs like white sugar, white flour, and white rice. Watch out for corn sweeteners, too.

Different foods can affect you negatively, or positively. By using some proven techniques, you can take advantage of a good lunch, and still be very alert. One writer at BNet, Gail Belsky, writes about how to successfully use food to maintain your energy and alertness during business situations. The important thing, she says, is to mix carbs and proteins. While carbs will provide the quick energy you need and can make your "insulin levels go thru the roof," the protein will stretch it out so that it isn't used up too quickly. Otherwise, you will definitely start dragging rather quickly.

Also, foods such as spaghetti, ribs, or anything sloppy like corn-on-the-cob, or foods that have sauces (such as meatball sandwiches), should simply be avoided. An exception to this would be, says Taunee Besson at CareerCast, if you're invited to an outdoor barbecue, and your host is getting greasy or messy foods out. In that case, she says, not getting messy with the rest of them is apt to make you stand out, or worse yet, make you look like a snob..

If you should drink alcohol and drink too much, Gail says, eating some cheese in an appetizer should help to slow down the body's absorption rate of the alcohol. It would also be a very good idea, to limit yourself to one drink or, better yet, avoid alcohol completely during the interview process.

TIPS FOR HANDLING A INTERVIEW MEAL SUCCESSFULLY

In addition to eating the right things, however, it is also very important to do or not do the right things. Kim Gerard, also at BNet, calls such a lunch "a test," and mentions examples of people not getting the job simply because they failed lunch – possibly because they did not think it important, or did not realize that it was part of a behavioral interview. It is even possible, that when all other things are about equal, that simply having better manners and social graces may enable you to get the job over another candidate.

Some basic rules of eating apply and they should not be taken lightly. This includes things like using good manners, not ordering more expensive food than the host, not putting a cellphone or other device on the table (turn it off - or leave it in the car), and not talking with food in your mouth.

If you suspect that the lunch interview will be at a fancy restaurant that uses formal dinner settings with multiple silverware, you may want to call in advance to find out. This may give you time to learn how to use them properly (if you don't already know), so that you don't look or feel awkward in the restaurant – which is a sure clue you are not familiar with such settings.

One last thing, and its very important. Be sure to relax and have a good time, too. Loosen up a bit and be yourself. This will enable you to convey confidence and others around you will certainly notice who you really are. It will help them be at ease, too, and it is sure to help you build a better rapport with them more quickly. After all it's you they are interviewing and it will be you they are working with. Yes, it's important to be prepared, polished and professional... but it's also important that they get to know the real you, too.

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