INTERVIEW HANDBOOK

Career Development and Counseling Center
City College of San Francisco
Phelan Campus, MUB 39
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of May Ng Lee a former career counselor with the Career Development Counseling Department.
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What is an interview?

A mutual exchange of information between two or people for the purpose of making a sound employment decision.

What is the purpose of an interview?

For the interviewer:
• Gather information about your background, including education, experience and accomplishments.
• Determine how well your qualifications match with job requirements.
• Find out whether you will “fit in” with the company.
• Promote the company and attract the best person for the job.

For the interviewee:
• Communicate information about yourself
• Obtain further information about the job and the company.
• Determine whether the job is suitable.
• Favorable impress the interviewer by selling your skills, abilities, and experience.

The focus of the interview is on “YOU.” Be prepared to talk about yourself, what you have done, what you are good at doing, and what you want.

What are the different types of job interviews?

Screening/personnel interviews:
• Applicants not meeting minimum requirements will be screened out in the initial
• If you meet the minimum qualifications, you will be referred to the appropriate department.

Selections interview:
• Applicants invited for a selection interview most likely do meet the minimum qualifications.
• A representative of the department in which the job openings occurs will probably conduct the interview.
• The interviewer will probably be someone who has the power to hire.
• The criteria for selecting the right applicant for the job is one of how well you will “fit” within the department. Your personality and work style are important considerations.

Stress Interview:
• It is used to assess how well you respond and react under pressure.
• Stress may consist of long periods of silence, challenging of opinions, or a seemingly disinterested interviewer.
• It can be a style used in either the screening or selection interview.
What is a typical interview like?

A typical (30-minute) interview session can be divided into four stages:

Introduction:
- Interviewer initiates with small talk to put you at ease and establish rapport.
- Sharing general information:
  - Interviewer shifts to general information about you and the company.
  - You may be asked to discuss your background, interests, and goals.
  - Interviewer discusses the company and its goals and makes a “sales pitch.”

Narrowing the focus:
- Interviewer concentrates on the job and looks at how well you might fit in.
- You have an opportunity to present your skills and show how they match the job requirements and qualifications.

Closing:
- Interviewer summarizes what has been discussed and clarifies points in question.
- Interviewer explains how and when the next contact will be made.
- This is time to express your interest in the job, emphasize relevant skills, and thank the interviewer for his/her time and attention.

What does an interviewer look for?
- Interest and enthusiasm.
- Appropriate facial expressions and hand gestures.
- Neat appearance.
- Maturity, self confidence, and poise.
- Good communication skills.
- Ability to relation qualifications to job requirements.
- Ability to clearly explain personal goals, interests, and desires.
- Ability to explain negative factors in work history (i.e., frequent job changes, many years since last job).
- Ability to answer questions and make statements on company or job applying for.
- Demonstrates capacity to learn.
- Motivation.
- Interpersonal skills.
- General Character/personality.
II. INTERVIEW PREPARATION

How can you prepare for the interview?

Know Yourself:

Why?
• To convince an employer to hire you.
• To increase the likelihood that you will be happy in the job.
• To respond appropriately to interviewer questions such as, “what are your strengths? Weaknesses? Or “Tell me about yourself.”

What do you need to know about yourself?

• Skills/Abilities
  ➢ What Abilities and Skills do you have?
  ➢ How well do your skills match the position you are applying for?
• Values/Needs:
  ➢ What are those things that are important to you in your work?
  ➢ What kinds of satisfactions/rewards do you want from work?
    EXAMPLES: Money? Helping people? Opportunities for advancement?
    Work independently?
• Interests:
  ➢ What kinds of activities do you enjoy?
• Personal Characteristics:
  ➢ How would you describe yourself as a person?
    EXAMPLES: Extroverted? Leader? Persistent?
    Motivated? Organized? Patient?
• What are your personal strengths and weaknesses? How have you tried to overcome your weaknesses?
• Preferred Work Environment
  ➢ In what type of environment do you function best in?
    EXAMPLES: Fast paced? Structured? Laid-back?
• Immediate Goals:
  ➢ What do you want to be doing 5 years from now? What steps are you taking toward achieving those goals?
• Long-Term goals:
  ➢ What do you want to be doing 10 years from now? What steps are you taking towards achieving those goals?
• Accomplishments/Sucesses
  ➢ What have you done that you can talk about with a feeling of pride?
  ➢ What have been some work/school problems that you have dealt successfully with? How can you know yourself better?
How can you know yourself better?

- Work/Life Autobiography: Write a detailed autobiography of your work life experiences. For specific guidelines, refer to APPENDIX A.
- Personal traits checklist: Refer to APPENDIX B.
- Skills Inventory: Refer to APPENDIX C
- Career Planning Class: Enroll in LERN 60 (3 Unit) or LERN 61 (1 unit). For course description refer to CCSF catalogue.
- Job Seeking Skills Class: Enroll in LERN 62 (1 unit).
- Individual Career Counseling: Arrange an appointment with one of the career counselors at the Career Development and Counseling Center, Science 127.

Know your work history, Skills and abilities:

- Be prepared to discuss your work history with the interview.
- Analyze each job in terms of transferable, adaptive, and work content skills.
- Relate your skills and abilities to the job you’re applying for.

Research the company and field:

Why?
- To be able to respond appropriately to interviewer questions such as “why are you interested in working for our company?” or “What do you know about our company?” requires prior research.
- Your career satisfaction will depend on the degree of match between you and the company.
- An awareness of problems particular to the industry and/or company and how to deal with those problems will make you much more marketable to the employer.

What do I need to know about the company and the field before the interview?

Basic facts:
- Products and services.
- Size of organization
- Parent organization, branch, and division.
- Organizational structure.
- Geographical locations.
- Short-term financial structure.
- History of organization.
- Formal or informal training programs.
Field or industry facts:
• Trends in the field.
• Future growth areas.
• Potential new markets, products, and services.
• Areas of concern, problems, headaches.
• Reputation of organization within field.
• Who are its competitors and what are they doing?
• Effect of government legislation and funding.

New items:
• Recent news about field, industry or organization.
• Employees in the news.
• New government legislation.

How can you research the company field?
• Request from the company a copy of its brochure or annual report.
• Refer to business directories such as Standards and Poor, Dun and Bradstreet, and the Thomas Register, these are available at most libraries.
• Check the internet for employer websites.
• Find information in newspapers and periodicals.
• Talk to family, friends, colleagues or classmates, teachers, the staff at the Career Development and Counseling Center.
• Check with the local Chamber of Commerce.
• Contact professional/trade associations.

Know the requirements of the job:

Why?
• You will be in a much better position to evaluate your qualifications.
• You will be better prepared to meet with the interviewer.

What do you need to know about the job?
• What skills are needed?
• Is this an existing position or newly created?
• How does this position fit in within the department or overall organization?
• What is the salary?

How can you find out about job requirements?
• Request copy of job description from employer before the interview.
• Refer to Dictionary of Occupational Titles and/or The Occupations Outlook Handbook, both publications by the U.S. Department of Labor.
• Talk to people who are doing that type of work.
• Use Eureka, a computerized career information system, available at the CDCD and the Rosenberg Library.
Anticipate interviewer questions and prepare answers:

What questions will most likely be asked?
• Most interview questions evolve around 3 key issues:
  ➢ Why do you want to work for our company?
  ➢ Why are you interested in this particular job?
  ➢ Why should we hire you?
  ➢ For a list of employer questions, refer to APPENDIX D, “Questions From Employers.”

Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask the interviewer:

Why?
• Asking questions of the interviewer shows interest in the job.
• The more information you gather about the job or the company, the better you will be able to determine the suitability of the job.

What should you ask about?
• Show your interest in the job you are applying for by first asking questions about the job itself.
• Ask questions that demonstrate your knowledge of job requirements.
• Do not ask too much about salary and benefits.
• Ask questions which could not have easily been answered by your having read the company’s literature.
• Refer to APPENDIX E, “Questions For the Employer.”

Cultivate a positive attitude and confidence in yourself:

• Believe in yourself. It’s difficult to convince the employer that you are the best person for the job if you don’t believe it.
• Dress to enhance your own feelings of self-confidence.
• Be aware of body language --- what you are communicating non-verbally through:
  ➢ Tone of voice
  ➢ Don’t ramble or speak in a monotone fashion.
  ➢ Speak clearly and audibly.
  ➢ Keep your voice melody friendly and sincere without speaking too loudly or mumbling.
  ➢ Posture
    • Don’t fidget or slouch.
    • Sit straight facing the interviewer in a relaxed and receptive manner.
  ➢ Eye contact
    • Maintain good eye contact with interviewer.
    • Poor eye contact communicates lack of self-confidence and casts doubt on your credibility.
  ➢ Level of energy in handshake and movements.
    • Be sure your handshake is firm
    • Keep your energy level upbeat.
Have the following information/materials ready to bring with you to the interview:

- Social security number
- Military records (if applicable)
- Names and addresses of present/past employers:
  - Exact dates of employment
  - Former/present supervisors’ names, titles and phone numbers
- Names of references with complete addresses
- Resume:
  - Have extra copies of your resume with you. If you had earlier faxed a resume to an employer, replace with a good copy.
- Pen and paper:
  - Bring pen and paper; you may wish to take notes.
- Notes
  - If you have prepared notes on questions to ask, important points to cover in the interview, etc., it is acceptable to refer to them occasionally during the interview.
- Letter of Recommendations:
  - If you have copies of letter of recommendations from past employers, bring them with you to the interview. You may want to offer these to the interviewer and attach to your file.
III. HANDLING THE INTERVIEW

How should you conduct yourself in an interview?

- Be on time. Promptness communicated interest, enthusiasm and responsibility.
- You should have written down the name of the company, place and time of the interview, and interviewer’s name.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- Treat secretaries and receptionist in a polite and business-like manner.
  - They may be asked for an opinion of you; their opinion might make a difference.
- Greet the interviewer by name.
- Take your cues from the interviewer.
- Be sure your handshake is firm. Many people no longer extend a hand for a handshake. Take the cue from the interviewer.
- Do not smoke or chew gum.
- Be yourself. Don’t try to be something that you aren’t.
- Dress in appropriate business-like attire.
  - When in doubt, be conservative.
  - How you dress reflects your level of maturity and sense of judgment.
- Be aware of body language. How you say it is as important as what you say.
  - Maintain eye contact.
  - Look alert and interested.
  - Avoid nervous gestures.
  - Do not cross arms.
  - Smile at appropriate times.
- Show enthusiasm and interest. This could be the tie-breaker.
- Be positive.
- Be a good listener.
  - Listen carefully to the interviewer’s questions and statements to pick up clues about the position and the type of person they are looking for.
  - Be alerted to non-verbal cues indicating when you should start or stop talking.
- Sell yourself --- but don’t come across as a boastful-know-it-all.
- Emphasize your strengths.
- Discuss ways you can contribute to the organization. Let the interviewer know how you can meet or solve a problem.
- Be assertive and confident.

What are strategies that could be used in answering questions more effectively?

- Discuss job-related information only.
- Focus your answers on what you can do for the employer, not what you hope to get from the job.
- Emphasize your positive qualities.
- Ask yourself, what you would like the employer to know about you. Think of ways in which you could structure answers to convey your good points.
- Avoid phrases like “um”, “you know”, “like”, “I mean”, “I think”, etc.
• Be prepared for questions that could put you in a bad light.

EXAMPLE:

Questions: What is a weakness that you have?
Answer: My major weakness is that I do not have rest until I complete my work assignments.

You’ve stated a weakness, but you have also communicated to the employer that you are responsible, motivated and conscientious in your work. Show how a personal weakness can be a strength.

• Whenever you make a statement about yourself, support it with an example.

EXAMPLE:

I am dependable and hardworking. In my last job, I never missed a day of work in over a year and a half.

• Listen carefully to the questions. Be specific.
• Clarify the question if necessary.
• Take time to think through your answer.
• Maintain eye contact as you listen and respond to questions.
• Treat every question as important. Don’t respond jokingly.
• Don’t speak badly of former employers or bosses.
• Be enthusiastic and positive.
• Never let a negative statement stand alone. Follow it with something more positive.

EXAMPLE:

Question: Can you operate a fax machine?
Answer: No, I don’t know how to use a fax machine, but I am a fast learner.

Qualify a “no” response with “but”

• Don’t answer with a mere “yes” or “no”. Expand your answer with an example.

EXAMPLE:

Question: Can you type?
Answer: Yes, I can. In my last job, I typed reports and business letters.

• To answer questions that may be embarrassing, such as job dismissal, gaps in employment, personal record, be brief and truthful in explaining what had happened. Secondly, explain that the debt or problem has been overcome, and lastly, explain that you are a better employee because of that experience.

EXAMPLES:

Question: Why is there a two-year gap in your employment history?
Answer: Well, I must tell you that …however, that experience has really helped develop my maturity and …

- The “verbal sandwich” is one approach to answering questions: first, praise the company, secondly, sell yourself, lastly, tie the two together.

EXAMPLES:

**Question:** Why do you think you would like to work for our company?
**Answer:** I know that your company has been in business for 25 years and gives quality service. I do good work and I enjoy it. For these reasons, I know I can be an asset to your company.

**Question:** Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?
**Answer:** I know that your company develops the best material available in this field. I have had a great deal of experience working in this area.

**Question:** In what type of position are you most interested?
**Answer:** You have a successful, productive company. I have a variety of experiences in e.g., office work, etc. I could do a great job for you.

*What are reasons why employers do not hire?*

- Refer to APPENDIX F, “Negative Factors Which Lead to Rejection of an Applicant.”
IV. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview, what's the next step?

- Thank the interviewer by writing a follow-up letter and sending it our immediately following the interview.
- Several days after the interview telephone and inquire as to the status of your application.
- Evaluate your performance in the interview. Look at ways in which you can improve your interview presentation.

How important is the follow-up letter?

- It will help the employer to remember you.
- It is a way for you to express interest in the job you’re seeking.

What information is included in the follow-up letter?

- State your interest in the position.
- Refer to a topic that was discussed.
- Provide more indicators of how you will fit in.
- Include additional information about your qualifications.
APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR WORK/LIFE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Follow guidelines as outlined below and complete a worksheet for each:

- Employment History (include all paid/unpaid jobs)
- Favorite Leisure time Activities
- Extra-curricular Activities – School/Community

Summarize information from each of the worksheets:

- What you would like to include in your next job.
- What you would like to avoid in your next job.
- Skills you enjoyed using the most.
- Your perceived strengths.
EXAMPLE: Employment History

Job Title:

Describe duties/responsibilities:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

List Skills used:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What aspects(s) did you like?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What aspects(s) did you dislike?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

List major achievements/accomplishments

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
SUMMARY

What I would like to include in my next job:


What I would like to avoid in my next job:


Skills I enjoy using most:


My strengths are:


### PERSONAL TRAITS CHECKLIST

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<th>Direct</th>
<th>Methodical</th>
<th>Sensitive</th>
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<td>Mature</td>
<td>Sensible</td>
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APPENDIX C

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION

One way to view skills is to classify these specific talents and skills under three headings:

(A) **Transferable Skills**: skills people are born with or have developed that are transferable to almost any field or job.

(B) **Adaptive Skills**: skills which seem almost like “personality traits” and that are related to environments – help determine where you can or cannot be happy or most effective.

(C) **Work Content Skills**: skills related to the knowledge required to perform a job or a task in a particular field or occupation.

Some examples:

**Transferable Skills**

*Using Hands*: assembling, building, operating tools or machinery, fixing, repairing, typing, showing dexterity or speed, making models, constructing

*Using Whole Body*: creating, planning, doing outdoor activities; physical education, sports, camping, hiking, skiing, playing, traveling

*Mind*: problem-solving, trouble-shooting, researching, analyzing, organizing, systemizing, remembering, judging, evaluating, diagnosing, appraising, assessing

*Intuition*: showing foresight, perceiving, planning, policy-making, balancing factors, visualizing in 3rd dimension, able to read blueprints

*Creativity*: imagining, creative imagining, creating, inventing, developing, designing, being an idea wo/man, applying theory

*Artistic*: dealing creatively with colors, shapes, faces, spaces, music, paints, handicrafts, drawing

*Words*: reading, copying, writing, talking, speaking, debating, public speaking, communicating, teaching, training, editing, instructing

*Helping*: being kind, being of service, rendering services to, interviewing, consulting, understanding

*Performing*: getting up before a group, demonstrating, lecturing, making people laugh, performing, acting, playing music

*Persuasion*: influencing others, selling, promoting, persuading, negotiating, reconciling, manipulating

*Leadership*: initiating, organizing, leading, directing others, coordinating, managing, controlling, showing courage, taking risks, effecting change

*Using Eyes*: observing, examining, inspecting, diagnosing, determining, deciding, filing, showing attention to details

*Using Numbers*: taking inventory, counting, calculating, doing cost analysis, keeping financial records, doing accounting
Using Responding Skills: applying what others have developed, following-through, a detail wo/man, focusing

ADAPTIVE SKILLS

Self-disciplined: able to set a regimen for the self and stick to it. For example, exercising, dieting, etc.

Impulse control

Consistency: needing the familiar in the surrounding environment, and wanting to sense continuity and structure

Change: needing or wanting change, risk, and lack of any structure which would stifle discretion and choice

Authority: moving toward, or away from, or against others. (choose)

Time: punctuality, self-pacing, self-routing, responsible, reliability

Awareness: of self, and the surrounding environment and of others, deeply concerned, unusually good grasp.

Dress and property: desire for material comfort, surroundings, attitudes toward dress

Resourcefulness: versatile, responsive, conscientious, purposefulness

Other: Unique, exceptional, outstanding, earning respect, deft, penetrating

WORK CONTENT SKILLS

Such as: a mechanic knowing parts and function in cars, a doctor knowing of muscles, a Spanish student knowing Spanish, etc.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FROM THE EMPLOYER

Openers

• May I see your resume?
• What can I do for you?
• Why are you interested in joining our company in this job?
• Why do you feel qualified for this job?
• What do you think you can do for us?
• What attracts you to us?
• Tell me about your experience?
• What pay do you have in mind? (Try tactfully to avoid answering this one early in the interview.)
• What do you like (don’t like) about this job?

Regarding motivation

• Is your present employer aware of your interest in the job change?
• Why do you want to change jobs?
• What caused you to enter your job field?
• Why do you want to change your job field of work?
• Why are you leaving military services at this point?
• What would you like to be doing five years from now? When you retire?
• What is the ideal job for you?
• What do you want from a job: money, power, relevance, etc.. ?
• What did you like and not like about your last job?

Regarding education

• Describe your education for me.
• Why did you pick your major?
• Why don’t you go to college? Graduate school?
• What was your class standing?
• What were your extra-curricular activities?
• What were your most important accomplishments?
• What were your average grades?
• Did your grades adequately reflect our full capability? Why or why not?
• What causes did you like best/least and why? Have you had any special training for this job?
Regarding experience

- Why should I hire you?
- How do you fit the requirements for this job?
- What did you do in the military services?
- Who has exercised the greatest influence on you? How?
- What duties performed in the past have you liked best/least and why?
- What are your greatest strengths/limitations for this job?
- What are the strongest limitations you have found in past supervisors?
- Describe your relationship with former supervisors.
- What kind of people appeal most/least to you as co-workers.
- How many people have you fired? How?
- What are your greatest accomplishments to date?
- What equipment can you work with?
- Why have you changed jobs so frequently?
- Have you ever been fired or asked to resign?
- Describe several problems in your work and how you solved them.
- What were you doing during the period not covered in your resume?
- Why were you out of work so long?
- Why did you leave your previous job?
- Could I see samples of your work?
- What were the biggest pressures on your last job?

Regarding pay

- What do you require?
- What is the minimum pay you will accept?
- What is your pay record for the last five years?
- Why do you believe you are qualified for so much more?
- We can’t pay the salary you should have. Would you be willing to start lower and work up to that figure?
- What do you expect to be earning five years from now?

Other questions

- What are you primary outside activities?
- Do you belong to any professional organization?
- What kind of security clearance do you have?
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime?
- How many days have you been off the job for illness in the past two years?
- Will you be able to put in extensive overtime or travel extensively on the job?
- Whom can we check as references?
QUESTIONs FOR THE EMPLOYER

Regarding job content

- Could you tell me where this position fits in the organization?
- Is this a new position?
- What specific skills or experience would help someone do well in this job?
- How would you describe a typical day on the job?
- What kind of training can I expect the first three months?
- What experience do you consider to be ideal for this position?
- What happened to my predecessor?
- To whom would I be reporting?
- How independent would I be in this position?
- Is overtime work available for this position?
- What can you tell me about the department I would be assigned to?
- What is the largest single challenge facing your staff now?
- Is there anything unusual about the job I should know about?
- What are some of the results produced by this department?
- What primary results would you like to see me produce?
- May I see the department in which I would be working?

Regarding the employer’s problems (and reflecting your ideas)

- Do you have some type of incentive program for new ideas?
- Is there any problem on this job with waste/quality/accuracy public acceptance/meeting quotas/inventory, etc?
- I have often wondered…
- Do any factors prevent action along this line?
- Have any recent steps been taken regarding the problem of…?
- How is the current marketing program going?
- Is there any untapped market for your service in…?
- Would this approach produce good results…?

Regarding your bid for the job, pay, and other closing questions

- Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?
- From what I’ve told you, how do you think I measure up for the job?
- When can I start?
- What is the salary range for the position for which I’m being interviewed?
- Do you think more could be justified in light of my particular experience?
- What is the policy of your company as to promotion from within the organization?
- What is the career path of this job?
- Do you have any training programs for which I may participate?
- I’m thinking of returning to school in the evenings, is this something which your company encourages?
- I greatly appreciate your offer. How soon do you need a decision?
- Will it be all right if I let you know by (date)?
Regarding benefits (Question only after it looks like you will be offered the job—or separately with the personal department.)

- Could you tell me briefly about your benefits program? (Vacations, insurance, retirement, profit sharing, bonuses, hospitalization, etc.)

If the employer is undecided

- Can you give me an idea of when you will be making a decision on this position?
- May I check back with you on (day of the week)?

If the employer finally says “no”

- Do you know of the others in the organizations of elsewhere who would be interested in my experience?
- I very much like what you are doing. Could you keep my qualifications brief on hand for other openings in your office or referral to others?
- If the situation changes, would you please let me know?
NEGATIVE FACTORS WHICH LEAD TO REJECTION OF AN APPLICANT

1. Poor personal appearance.
2. Overbearing – overaggressive – conceited “superiority complex” and “know it all.”
3. Inability to express himself or herself clearly – poor voice, diction, grammar.
4. Lack of planning for career – no purpose and goal.
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm – passive, indifferent.
7. Failure to participate in activities.
8. Overemphasis on money – interest only in best dollar offer.
10. Unwilling to start at the bottom – expects too much too soon.
12. Lack of tact.
13. Lack of maturity.
15. Condemnation of past employers.
16. Lack of social understanding.
17. Marked dislike for school work.
18. Lack of vitality.
19. Fails to look interviewer in the eye.
20. Limp, fishy hand-shake.
22. Late to interview without good reason.
23. Difficulties in social/personal relationships.
25. Merely shopping around.
26. Wants job only for short time.
27. Little sense of humor.
28. Lack of knowledge of field of specialization.
29. Parents make decisions.
30. No interest in company or industry.
31. Emphasis on whom he knows.
32. Unwillingness to go where we send him.
33. Cynical.
34. Low moral standards.
35. Lazy.
36. Intolerant – Strong prejudices.
37. Narrow interests.
38. Poor handling of personal finances.
39. No interest in community activities.
40. Inability to take criticism.
41. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.
42. Radical ideas.