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THE INTERVIEW MAVEN

The Power of You

TAMARA JACOBS '73, founder and president of Tamara Jacobs Communications Inc., is the author of *Be The Brand* and the upcoming *Success is a Planned Event* and an expert on establishing and leveraging the “power of you.” The marquee companies that make up Jacobs’ client base span industries from pharmaceutical to financial to retail powerhouses and include Bayer, Chase, Genentech, Novartis, Pfizer, and Revlon. The skills Jacobs shares about how to make a good first impression in the job market are applicable to anyone searching for a job, including our newest alumnae, hitting the workforce and soon to be the next wave of leaders, movers, and shakers.

As a distinguished Mount Holyoke alumna your degree will certainly be a factor in securing an initial interview. However, in order to maximize your impact during this critical conversation, you will need to employ a set of strategies to ensure that you put your best foot forward. Whether you are interviewing for your first job, re-entering the job force, or changing careers, it is critical that you research the company, highlight your strengths and experience, and convey that you are excited about the opportunity and ready for a challenge.

1. Believe in Yourself

We’ve all heard it time and time again: “I hope they like me!” Well, hope is not a strategy, and let me add my own mantra: “Success is a planned event!” Success is the

result of devising and applying useful strategies, and you start by working from the outside in.

2. Dress for Success

Rather than buying a new outfit to wear to an important interview, consider wearing something you already own. When you wear something for the first time, you spend a great deal of psychic energy feeling self-conscious. Wearing something tried and true is much more effective, and as a result, you will enter the room with more confidence.

3. Set the Tone

A good handshake will set a winning tone. When the interviewer comes into eyesight, extend your arm fully (no bent elbows). She

will mirror you, taking the same approach and creating an additional three feet of space between you. This allows for an accommodation for height differential and an elongated moment of connection. Be sure your grip is “web to web,” connecting the space between the thumb and index finger.

4. Plan Your Must Airs

Before you go into any interview, plan the three things the interviewer must hear about you—these are your must airs. Instead of citing your work or academic accomplishments as a laundry list, attach what you’ve done to how it will benefit the company, e.g., “I excelled in my law firm internship, was an exceptional sales associate at Lululemon, and was an outstanding waitress at IHOP.” Translation: “I will be able to deal with your company’s complexity, meet your need for better personal client relationships, and deliver outstanding customer service.”

5. Send a Thank You

Within five days of an interview, send a handwritten thank-you note. Thank your interviewer for meeting with you personally, state how you connect to the culture and mission of the company, emphasize that you will take this opportunity seriously, and remind her of your unique contributions. A well-written note will set you apart from the competition, make you a memorable candidate, and put you in the running for the job of your dreams.

—BY TAMARA JACOBS '73