

### PREPARING FOR SITE VISITS

A site visit, sometimes called a plant trip, is an invitation to travel to the employer's location to be further evaluated as an applicant, to see the organization's facilities first-hand and to meet other members of that organization.

Three goals to accomplish during your site visit:

- Convince the employer to hire you because you have the skills, abilities, personality, and interests for the job. If you are interested in the position, at the end of each interview during the day, tell your interviewer that you are very interested.
- Evaluate the job setting - Do you want to work there?
- Demonstrate how the employer would benefit if you were hired. Discuss the employer's needs - not yours.

**A. Acknowledge all invitations for site visits in writing (email or by phone, whether accepting or declining a visit).** Only accept invitations from employers in whom you have a genuine interest.

**B. Clarify all travel details with the employer.** You may want to have a pad of paper and pen near your phone so you can jot down this information during a phone call with an employer. Be certain that the following items are firmly established:

- Date of visit
- Time of arrival
- Lodging
- Local transportation
- Contact person (title, business address, phone number and email address)
- Itinerary
- Travel/flight information
- Reimbursement procedure\*

\*It is common practice for most employers to reimburse for all reasonable travel expenses incurred by a candidate who is specifically invited to visit. If this is not stated, seek clarification.

**C. Review your knowledge of the employer and the initial interview you had with the organization on campus. Sources for research:**

- Employer literature/website
- Competitor's activity
- Information from former students who now work there
- Trade journals
- Business magazines
- Financial/Annual reports and stock performance

**D. Consider your wardrobe for the visit carefully.** Plan to wear an outfit appropriate for the visit. Normal business attire (a professional business suit) such as you wore to the campus interview is appropriate. If you are not sure of the appropriate attire, ask your contact person at the company.

**E. Mentally review the content of your resume to prepare for many interviews during the day.** The interviews could be longer and more detailed than those you experienced on campus. The interviews will be directed at your career goals, qualifications, experience, personality, commitment, communication skills and especially your interest in the employer and the position.

**F. Take with you:**

- Appropriate wardrobe (suit, shirt/blouse, ties, hose, clean shoes)
- Carry-on luggage
- Coursework for evenings or lulls in travel
- Extra resumes
- Small notebook and pen
- Travel clock
- Transcript/List of courses through graduation
- Writing samples, project and/or summer reports

**G. Once you arrive in the city evaluate and check:**

- Area's claim to fame
- Cultural events
- Local economy
- Local newspapers
- Local weather
- Real estate
- Sports/Leisure/Recreational activities
- What's happening in town

Tips while staying in the hotel:

- Schedule a morning wake-up call with the front desk.
- Do not bill any long distance calls to the room. Call collect or use a credit card.
- Review the bill upon checkout to verify its accuracy.

**H. The Interview:** Anticipate a full day of interviews, meeting people, seeing facilities, and gaining a glimpse of the community.

Plan to make notes of pertinent facts and impressions about the visit whenever you have the opportunity. You will be exposed to a lot of information and insights into the job, the organization, the people you will work for or with, the location, and the community during the visit.

Make a strong impression:

- Communicate your goals and your skills clearly
- Be outgoing
- Learn and use people's names
- Project enthusiasm

Act businesslike and professional throughout your visit. Remember you are actually being interviewed whether the contact is a guide, an assistant, or a contact in a more formal interview arrangement.

Many employers schedule several candidates for visits each day. Some of these persons may be from Carnegie Mellon or other schools. Keep in mind that you are being measured against these other applicants and you should retain your poise and professional bearing.

For additional information, refer to the *Career and Professional Development Center Success Guide* on *Interviews* handout.

**After the visit:**

- Write a thank you note to those individuals with whom you met as soon as possible. Send by email or U.S. mail.
- Settle travel expense reimbursements - make a copy of all receipts before sending them to the employer.
- Following is a sample itinerary from a "typical" site visit. Remember the length of the trip, the number of people involved, the levels of people interviewing, and the degree of formality varies greatly from one employer to the next.

**Smith & Company  
Friday, February 20, 2008  
Itinerary of Michael Jones**

*Thursday, February 21*

- 3:00 PM:** Flight 23, US Airways, Pittsburgh to Detroit. Take hotel shuttle to Imperial Hotel, 345 Fifth Avenue, Detroit.
- 7:00 PM:** Meet in lobby of Imperial Hotel for dinner with Ms. Cline and Mr. Moss. Reservations at Roadhouse Steak.

*Friday, February 22*

- 7:15 AM:** Meet in lobby of Imperial Hotel for breakfast with Ms. Cline and Mr. Bowling. Room is reserved until evening for checkout. Accompany to Mr. Schaefer's office.
- 8:30 AM:** Review employee benefits, reimbursement of travel expenses, training and education program with company, education benefits and company policies. Accompany to Ms. Frederick's office.
- 9:30 AM:** Discussion on operations management – Steel Operations Division. Accompany to Mr. Root's office.
- 10:30 AM:** General discussion with Mr. Root on Smith & Company. Present and future management needs.
- 11:30 AM:** Pick-up in Mr. Root's office. Lunch reservations at Piccolo Mondo. Lunch with Ms. Cline, Mr. Root, Mr. Bowling, Mr. Schaefer. Accompany to Mr. Smith's office.
- 1:30 PM:** Discussion with Mr. Smith. General discussion on management and technical needs.
- 2:00 PM:** Pick-up in Mr. Smith's office. Travel to facility for tour.
- 3:30 PM:** Tour of Bearing Operations with Mr. Miller. Accompany to Mr. Schaefer's Office.

- 4:15 PM:** Discuss corporate systems with Mr. Schaefer.
- 4:45 PM:** Summarization of visit and interview close with Ms. Cline and Mr. Moss. Drive to Imperial Hotel.
- 6:00 PM:** Meet Ms. Cline and Mr. Moss for dinner in main lobby of Imperial Hotel. Check out of hotel. Reservations at Topp's Chalet for 6:15 PM.
- 8:45 PM:** Arrive at airport for flight to Pittsburgh. US Airways # 67, 9:25 PM.

### **Questions Often Asked During A Site Visit Interview**

- What are your short-range objectives?
- What are your long-range objectives?
- What do you look for in a job?
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- Why should we hire you?
- Can you work under pressure and deadlines?
- What is your philosophy of management?
- What are your three biggest accomplishments?
- What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
- How long would it take you to make a contribution to our firm?
- If you could start again, what would you do differently?
- What new goals or objectives have you established recently?
- What position do you expect to have in five years?
- Why haven't you obtained a job so far?
- How would you describe the essence of success?
- What was the last book you read? Movie you saw?
- What interests you most about the position?
- What interests you least about the position?
- Tell me about a time when you were on a team and someone didn't pull their share?
- Are you a good manager? Give example.
- Talk about a leadership example.
- How would you describe yourself?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What other types of positions are you considering?

Additional questions may include specifics about your academic training, work experiences, skills you possess, and leadership and group qualities.

## Questions You Can Ask During A Site Visit Interview

Prepare a list of well-researched questions to ask the interviewer. Keep in mind that your questions should reflect the amount of research you have done rather than your lack of research. The questions below are guidelines; create and adapt questions to meet your individual needs and interview situation.

- How long do people stay in this job? Where do they go from here?
- Which parts of your job are most challenging?
- How is success in this position measured and rewarded?
- How are goals for this job set?
- How often is performance measured?
- What is the rate of advancement in this division/department?
- What activities are routinely performed in this job?
- What other departments/divisions do you interact with most?
- How much travel is involved and to where?
- What is the ideal profile of the person for this job?
- How is departmental communication handled?
- Do co-workers socialize together?
- How is the company mission supported by strategies and systems (promotions, budgets, compensation)?
- How are new product teams formed?
- What areas of the company are growing?
- Where will the position be located?
- Will relocation be required in the future? To where?
- How much contact and exposure to management is there?
- What is the length of the training program/period?
- What is the average time to move within a particular career path?
- What is a typical day/week like for a person in this position?