

The Chief Said What?

The Chief's Interview

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Many candidates panic when they have to talk to the Chief, especially during a promotional examination. Usually after you have successfully completed the written exam, the Oral Board, or the Assessment Center process, it is the time to face the Chief of your organization. (Some agencies may not have a Chief's interview and will pick an individual according to how they placed (1-2-3) on the eligibility list.

I always gave a Chief's interview because I had other questions regarding the Department that the raters would not ask since they were from outside Agencies and not completely familiar with the Department's inner-workings. This interview also helped me to have a one-on-one conversation with the candidate and gain more insight into who exactly this person was.

If you meet the Chief, this will probably be the most stressful interview of your entire competition. You have been selected from all of the other candidates to discuss your career with the boss.

First of all, feel good about yourself. There are only a few candidates that make it to this step of the promotional process, so remain positive and pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

You really looked good for your Oral Board or Assessment Center presentation; you want to look even better for the Chief's interview. Haircut, suit, skirt, shirts, blouses pressed and cleaned; nails trimmed and cleaned; shoes should be polished to a high gloss finish.

If you decide to wear your uniform for this interview, be sure it is in very good shape with no loose threads or buttons missing. Speaking of buttons, make sure they are buttoned. I always was very surprised when an Officer would enter my office and one of their shirt buttons would be unbuttoned. The uniform should be freshly dry cleaned and pressed. Make sure your badge is polished, more than normal, and all of your accessories or medals are properly attached. You should wear a Class A uniform without a hat, and your tie should be clean and fresh. I never did like a clip-on tie for these interviews because the metal clip was always exposed and it detracted from the uniform. If possible, have a matching pen and pencil set in your shirt pocket. Your leather gear should be clean and in good condition along with your duty weapon. As I mentioned before, polish your shoes to a high gloss, or wear uniform dress shoes if possible. If you wear uniform shoes that do not have the ability to shine, then make sure they have a fresh coat of polish or are very clean. Check yourself out in a mirror and add anything else you feel needs to be completed so that you will feel confident and make a strong statement when you enter the Chief's office.

Second, you are probably asking yourself, *What is the Chief looking for?* Good question! The Chief is looking for persons who will make the perfect match in the organization. He is looking for candidates who:

- will have the ability to lead the organization into the future
- who are developing and/or possessing many of the dimensions listed in the previous articles about Assessment Centers
- who possess high integrity, loyalty, professionalism and are not afraid of hard work
- who will talk with the administration if they are against a policy, but after they are heard and the decision still stands, will carry out that policy with no disrespect to the administration
- who because of their abilities, will gain the respect of their subordinates and treat them in a fair manner and with respect (you don't have to be their friends but you are required to be there for them)
- who will be a leader, mentor, cheerleader, confidant, disciplinarian, and can be counted on by peers, superiors, and subordinates
- who has good interpersonal skills

- who can make decisions on their own and is willing to take responsibility for their actions.

Most of all, the Chief is looking for someone who will represent he and the agency in the best manner possible when they interact with the public or the other officers.

These are the basic traits that are being requested by your administrators. There are sure to be others and you can determine what they are when you ask *your* Chief what he expects of his future leaders.

Lastly, the Chief's interview will consist of a list of questions to determine who you are and if you meet the needs of the Department and believe in the philosophy of the administration. The Chief may want to elaborate on some of the questions asked by the Oral Board or the Assessment Center. More than likely, he will have more questions on the Department policy, budget items, liability issues, leadership traits, more hypothetical questions, and sometimes just some plain talk about family, hobbies, stress reducers that you utilize, such as working out at the gym, walking, hiking, or yoga, so he can get to know you better.

Prior to entering the Chief's office, remember to complete your facial exercises so your facial muscles are relaxed and you are ready to answer all of his questions.

When you enter the Chief's office, shake his hand firmly and take the appointed seat. Sit upright; do not slouch or cross your legs. If your jacket is buttoned, unbutton it when you sit because it does not look impressive to have a suit jacket stretching its limits when you are sitting. Answer the questions just the way you did during the Oral Board. Don't ramble; depending on the number of candidates the Chief is going to interview, you are probably on a time limit. Look directly at the Chief. Don't let your eyes wander and, again if you do not know the answer, say so, with the understanding that you will find out the answer as soon as you leave the interview.

You will probably have a knot in your stomach and it will feel like a giant rock prior to this interview but remember: you are in control. Don't let the stress overpower you. Think positive. Your actions and answers got you to this point; build on that concept. You are good and you have prepared yourself for this position, so run with that thought and soon that rock will return to the little knot you want in your stomach to keep you sharp when you make your outstanding presentation.

Usually, this interview will provide you with time for an opening and/or closing statement, so take advantage of this time and give a concise statement of your achievements and how you can benefit the Department and the community when you are chosen for the position.

When you have finished your interview with the Chief, stand tall and extend your hand, even if you did not feel you did as well as you wanted during the interview. While looking the Chief in the eye, thank him for his time and leave.

Good Job!