



Candidates - Interview Techniques

You have made it past all the obstacles in the first stage of the selection process and have managed to secure an interview for that dream job. The important thing now is to make sure you do the best you can at your interview. This means researching and properly preparing. You will need to distinguish yourself from the competition by presenting your skills, experience and personality more effectively and persuasively than anyone else. How you come across in the interview is of vital importance. Essentially to do well at interview comes down to two factors; preparation and confidence.

General Tips

Before your interview make sure you research the company (via their website or reading their annual report which you can obtain by telephoning them). Think through your career and the questions you may be asked at the interviewer. Try and anticipate the general questions which will be asked and prepare some questions to ask the interviewer. Remember you need to find out whether this company can offer you the career you are looking for!

To do well at the interview you will need to convince your interviewer that you are technically qualified to do the job. You will also need to show that you are sufficiently motivated to get the job done, and that you will fit well within the company's organisational structure and the team in which you will work.

You should always dress smartly for the interview and should leave home earlier than you need to – you may be delayed by traffic or for other reasons. Be courteous to all employees of the company. At the interview you must be positive about yourself and your abilities and make sure you do not waffle.

Research

Firstly, start with their website, paying close attention to the products and services that they offer. It's also a good idea to look at the history of the company and their latest press releases.

Next, take a look at their main competitors' sites and highlight any interesting differences. A candidate that knows the market place shows that they are proactive and genuinely interested in their industry.

Once you've done this, you'll be able to put together a list of questions that you can ask at the interview.

Preparation

Interviewers are continually amazed by the number of candidates who have not prepared and possess little or no knowledge about the company they are interviewing with. Time spent prior to the interview researching the organisation will pay off on the day. In order to approach the interview successfully you should also carry out a mini-review of your professional profile and experience to date, the qualifications you possess and where you want to go with your career.

Write down a few points about your strengths and weaknesses so that you have a clear idea of what to say (or not) in the interview. A few examples to consider are:

Commitment and determination
Ability to work in a team
Self confidence
Leadership skills
Enthusiasm and stamina
Competitiveness
Good judgment and confident decision-making
Willingness to take responsibility and ownership
Initiative and creativity
Organisational skills
Listening and understanding

Ask yourself:

In which areas can I really improve?
What are my strengths and weaknesses?
Why am I leaving my present job?
What tasks and situations do I have the most difficulty with?
Why do I want this new role?

These could be some of the questions asked at the interview and asking yourself these type of questions will help you formulate suitable answers.

Rehearse your answers and questions

Typically, you will only have around an hour to get across your key selling points, so it's worthwhile rehearsing what you want to say. Start by identifying the most important things you want to get across. Focus on structuring your answers without letting them sound rehearsed.

Ensure that you know the exact location, the time of your interview, who you are seeing, what their position is within the company and how you pronounce their name. First impressions are very important.

Essential Do's and Don'ts

DO smile and always try to maintain good eye contact throughout
DO dress conservatively
DO come well prepared and with a list of questions to ask
DON'T answer questions with just a "yes" or "no" - always back up answers with examples
DON'T be the first one to bring up the subject of salary
DON'T condemn your current/previous employer

Positive Thinking

The most important thing to take with you to the interview is a positive attitude. If you don't believe in yourself, then how are you going to convince the interviewer to believe in you?

Try to relax and remind yourself that you have been short-listed from many other applicants, therefore you stand a pretty good chance of getting the job. Try and go into the interview with the attitude that they want you more than you want the job, but don't become over confident.

First Impressions Count

Dress and Body Language

The acceptable style of dress varies according to which industry you work in, it is generally better to over dress rather than under dress and a suit should almost always be worn.

Research has shown that employers' impressions are made in the following way:

Body language (70%)

Tone of voice (20%)

What you say (10%)

The way that you walk into a room and sit down is crucial. It can set the tone for the entire interview and if you make a bad start it can be an uphill struggle. It is very important that you give out the right signals – don't underestimate the power of body language. The way in which you present yourself will tell an employer much more about you than your CV ever could. Always give a good firm handshake and look attentive. Never lie to anyone in an interview, your body language and tone of voice or the words that you use will probably give you away – classic body language giveaways include scratching your nose and not looking directly at the person when you are speaking to them.

Although a professional interviewer will strive to get a thorough idea of your skills and personality before making a judgment, the reality is that almost everyone makes an initial opinion of a stranger within the first five minutes of meeting them. As soon as you enter the building you should consider yourself as a potential employee. Be polite to everyone you meet from the receptionist onwards. Remain calm and confident. Putting the interviewer at ease by being down-to-earth whilst remaining business like, always gets you off to a good start..

A few important points to remember:

A smile is the most positive signal you can give, it re-affirms your enthusiasm and good nature
Your handshake should be firm, but not too forceful!

Always maintain good posture, do not slouch. Sit upright and adjust your position slightly if you feel uncomfortable

Be a good listener and acknowledge the interviewer's comments with nods, and if there is more than one present, switch your glance between them at regular intervals

Mirror the interviewer's techniques. If they laugh, laugh with them

Try not to gesticulate, as it suggests nervousness

Always try to adopt an open, honest and confident attitude

Closing the interview

Four important things you need to remember about closing an interview are:

- 1) If you have questions about the company ask them now.
- 2) If the interview has failed to elicit some important information about you, make that information known before you close.
- 3) Find out what the next step will be and when it is likely to occur.
- 4) Take the time to thank them for interviewing you and give a firm handshake when you leave, even if the interview didn't go as well as you would have liked.

Post Interview Afterthoughts

If you are not getting the job offers you desire, then you will need to look carefully at your interview performance. Perhaps you weren't fully prepared for the interview? Did you say unfavorable things about previous employers? Did you come across over-confident? All of these things could have contributed to your failure in not getting the job. To become more successful in your job quest, after any interview you should try and get as much feedback as possible from the people who have interviewed you. Feedback will allow you to modify your interview technique (if needed) and hopefully do better at the next interview.