

Interview Techniques for Candidates

Once you have secured an interview, there are a number of steps you can take to ensure, as far as possible, that the interview is a success.

Pre-Interview

Before attending an interview preparation is paramount.

- 1) Gather some background information on the company, request a Company brochure or investigate the Company on the Internet.
- 2) Prepare a list of suitable questions for the interview. The Company's operation, internal reporting structures and plans are a good starting point.
- 3) Prepare answers for commonly asked questions.
- 4) Check the time and date of the interview, the location of the Company and the time it will take you to get there. Arrive 10 minutes before you are expected.
- 5) Know whom you are meeting and what their position(s) is/are.
- 6) Dress smartly to create the right first impression.
- 7) Do not smoke 15 minutes prior to your interview.

Whatever your experience of interviews so far in your career, in general, there are certain guidelines.

The start of the interview

The importance of making a good first impression cannot be over stated. A good start to an interview is essential. Ensure that you are professional, well presented, punctual and friendly. A firm handshake and a smile are very good openers. Remember you are giving first impressions from the moment you arrive.

Attitude is important. Even if you are feeling nervous or have reservations about attending, be positive. The position may turn out to be exactly what you want. Remember, you can always turn down a position, but you cannot retrieve an interview if you fail to give the best of yourself.

The Interview

Never sit back and expect your experience / qualifications alone to secure employment. Personality is, at least, as important. Be positive, confident, honest and open. It is vital to enjoy the interview as much as possible. If you do, the chance is that the interviewer will too and you will stand a better chance of getting the job, having built up a good rapport. Remember to be confident about experience you have gained, but don't attempt to make out that you have more experience than you really have.

Know your CV and be prepared to answer questions about your current and previous employers as well as about you as an individual. Prepare to answer commonly asked questions such as:

- What do you know about our Company?
- Why are you looking for a new position? (Do not be too negative about your current employer)
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? (Never answer none)
- What is your understanding of the role?
- Why do you want this position (Really think about it)
- What would your current Company miss about you?

Avoid the temptation to ramble and if you don't understand the question ask the Interviewer to repeat the question. If asked a question you don't know the answer to say so.

Be aware of your own body language. Sit up straight (leaning forward implies interest), smile and use eye contact with all Interviewers. Project enthusiasm throughout and 'smile'.

Asking Questions

Prepare your questions well in advance, ensuring they are positive, relevant and knowledgeable. Use this time to impress with your preparation and clear up any questions you have.

If you are not sure about any parts of the job or about the Company – ASK.

Do not ask about the salary, benefits or holidays, your consultant will inform you.

- What will my responsibilities be?
- How has the position become vacant?
- How will you assess my performance?
- How does the role fit into the structure of the department?
- How does the department fit into the organisation as a whole?
- Who will I report to and are there persons reporting to me?
- Where does my line manager fit into the structure?
- What encouragement is given to undertake professional insurance qualifications?
- Who are your clients'?
- Where is the company going? Expansion plans?
- Where is the specific location of the position?
- How soon will you decide the appointment?
- What is the next step?

At the end of the interview

If you are asked whether you are interested in the position – unless you are very definitely NOT – always answer yes.

Try to impress on the interviewer that you have enjoyed your meeting and are interested in taking things further.

Thank the Interviewer for their time and shake hands.

Last impressions are nearly as important as first, as the way you leave may be the way you are remembered.

Additional Advice

Be prepared to be asked about you as an individual and not only in relation to your experience. This is an additional area to score **PLUS** points. You know yourself better than they do, so you can be ultra positive and highlight any strengths you feel you have not been mentioned.

Do not criticise your current, previous employers or appear unnecessarily confrontational. Be yourself and you will appear confident and relaxed.

It is imperative that you prepare questions for your Interviewer as it shows you have truly thought about the role and the Company.

By all means ask around to find out more about a Company but be prepared to make your own mind up, do not turn down opportunities on hearsay, find out for yourself. Consider all the opportunities, get more information, and weigh up all the pros and cons and think of the long term.