

GUIDELINE

Once your CV has secured that all-important interview, it is time for you to shine. This is your one opportunity to impress; to use that combination of personality, knowledge, body language and interpersonal skills that will make you the perfect candidate. All too often interviewees fall a long way short of expectations.

Many companies have a comprehensive approach to selection. As well as formally interviewing they may use any combination of psychometric tests, case studies, group sessions and short presentations.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

A successful interview has a lot to do with good preparation.

- Find out the format for the selection process and you can prepare in advance.
- Get to know the company, the market sectors it operates in and the industry in general.
- Research the company's competitors. This may help you to ask significant questions later on.
- You must also be able to demonstrate an understanding of the company's products and services. Interviewers will often test a candidate's knowledge of these.
- You may be asked about your achievements, aspirations, team building skills, what you can offer the company, why you want the job. Try to anticipate these and rehearse your answers.
- Prepare details in advance about specific job-related, quantifiable achievements that you have directly influenced (this may include areas such as cost savings, inventory reductions).
- A good interviewer will fully describe the role. However, it is a good idea to prepare a list of questions so you have something additional to ask when the time comes.
- If you have to attend a second or third interview, demonstrate an increasing knowledge and commitment. Make sure you take advantage of any material about the company at your first interview.

HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF

First impressions count. A high proportion of interviewers make up their minds about a candidate within five minutes of meeting for the first time.

- Wear something smart. Something you feel confident and professional in. Darker or more subdued colours are safer.
- If you have to travel some distance, hang up your jacket during the journey so that it does not crease.
- Make-up, jewellery, perfumes and aftershaves should always be subtle.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

The purpose of an interview is to win a job offer. It is also your chance to evaluate. You can tell a lot about an organisation by the way they conduct interviews and what is said during them. So relax. Try to enjoy the experience. Use it to gain as much information as you can, so that you can make the right choice.

- Shake hands firmly and confidently.
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer.
- Never stare. It can appear confrontational and should always be avoided.
- Allow your expression to soften, and smile occasionally.
- Be keen, alert and interested. Even if you have been headhunted, a laid back or too relaxed attitude can show disinterest and arrogance.

- Be aware of nerves. Keep nail biting, hand rubbing, fidgeting and nervous laughter under control.
- Answer questions directly. Relate to your own relevant experience and achievements where appropriate.
- Listen carefully. Make notes which may be referred to later, particularly in a question and answer session.
- Build a professional rapport with the interviewer. Strong communication skills are essential if you are to persuade and influence people at all levels.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Interrupt or talk over the interviewer.
- Make claims you cannot substantiate.
- Talk round a subject you are not up to speed on.

A LITTLE EXTRA HELP

Here are a few tips worth bearing in mind.

- If you are asked to give a brief synopsis of your career, keep it brief. No more than 10 minutes long.
- Any broad overview should be concise and to the point. Do not spend 45 minutes talking, because that may be all the time you have been allotted!
- Do not go through any pre-written reports or presentations unless specifically asked.
- It is OK to occasionally refer to notes, to substantiate certain points. It demonstrates how well you have prepared for the interview.
- Try to be aware of your interviewer's body language. If you sense boredom or disinterest it may be because you have become sidetracked or long winded.
- Do not tell jokes, or make humorous remarks about any potentially controversial subject.
- Go to the interview with a clear idea of your salary requirements. Only discuss money if the interviewer mentions it. You will have the opportunity to discuss financial packages later.
- Be direct if you are asked about salary, or career expectations. Make sure your requirements are realistic and match your skills.
- Be prepared to justify your expectations. Then leave the negotiations until you have received an offer.

**YOUR JOB INTERVIEW IS A TWO-
WAY EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION,
SO RELAX AND ENJOY IT.**

