

Making A Success Of Your Interview

The interview is undoubtedly the most stressful part of the job seeking process for the candidate, usually after having to win your way onto a shortlist first. It is also the most important part. When you have got this far, then it could be your performance at the interview that tips the scales in your favour, or against you.

BEFORE THE BIG DAY

What is Your Objective?

Getting to an interview is not the objective, just part of it. The next step is to prepare yourself so as to give the best possible impression of your skills and your personality. You know you want the job and you know you can do it, but first you must convince the interviewer. Think carefully about the following areas before attending the interview.

- What job function(s) can and should you do and in what sector or environment?
- Find out as much as possible about the company - products, size, locations, style, reputation both as employers and suppliers, the sort of job they would have for you. Phone the company and ask them to send you an annual report or look at their website for more information.
- When you applied for the job, which letter and CV did you use? Do remember what you put in each so you do not sound vague at the interview - all your good points ought to be in writing already, saving them for interview may mean no meeting!
- Prepare some questions to ask at the interview and prioritise them as the interview may not be long enough to ask them all.
- Read a good book on body language, so you strengthen your good signals, curb the weak ones.

What Can You Offer The Company?

Think about your skills, competencies, qualifications and experience so you can answer any questions on this without too much hesitation.

How Are You Perceived?

Talk to friendly colleagues, present or recent, about their views of you as a team member, how they see your strengths and weaknesses, as these are common subjects for interview questions.

ON THE DAY

Personal Presentation

Some Reminders;

- First impressions count. Are you well-groomed with tidy hair, shoes and clothing?
- Practise a good positive handshake; not too firm, not too weak.
- Are you well-dressed, in a way that follows conventions in this job sector, at the conservative end of your own range? This is not the time to show how much of an individual you are, as they want someone who will fit in with the company.
- Take a copy of your CV with you, carrying it in a suitable folder or case. You may also want to take along some samples of your work. This all adds to the impression of you being well organised and enthusiastic.

Before You Leave The House

Recheck your paperwork and your 'script' i.e. the smile, the first words (greeting and your name).

Timing

Plan a reliable way of getting there which allows you to be a few minutes early. Allow for any unexpected delays. You do not want to arrive looking flustered. Remember that if you arrive at the company exactly on time, you will often be delayed at reception or while locating the correct department so a few extra minutes can make a big difference to that all important first impression. If you are late this may mean that your interview is cut short so you may not have a chance to convince the interviewer of your skills.

On Arrival

Be polite to support staff you meet. They count too - and may be able to influence a decision in your favour.

Make sure you know who it is you are meeting as it will look bad if you get their name wrong.

AT THE INTERVIEW

Helpful Hints

Try to relax as much as possible. The company has taken the time to interview you and they need to fill the position so it is in their interests too that it is successful.

- Try not to monopolise the meeting - let your interviewer talk.
- Do not be too passive - ask questions of your own as this shows you are really interested.
- If they do not tell you, find out what are the key parts of the candidate specification so you can show how you meet them.
- Ask how the job contributes to the success, efficiency and profitability of the organisation.
- Try to show, without being contrived, that you have done some research.
- Be honest about your experience. Lies will always be found out.
- Avoid too much self opinion.
- Never smoke, and it is probably safer not to accept tea or coffee as it can get in the way.
- Keep your replies simple, but avoid just saying 'yes' or 'no'.
- Offer positive information - do not harp on problems or criticise previous employers.
- Ask about the existing team and show how you would be able to join and enhance this.
- Make sure the employer knows the benefits of employing you.

Questions You Should Be Prepared To Answer

- Describe your work experience to date?
- What knowledge, skills and experience from your current/past employment would be relevant to this job?
- What have been the highlights, major achievements, challenges etc. of your career to date of which you are most proud?
- What has been the most difficult work challenge you have faced and how did you deal with it?

- What are your strengths in terms of technical competency at work?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses in terms of your personality and working style?
- What elements of your work have you found most and least enjoyable?
- What are your ambitions for the future? What would you like to be doing in 1, 5, 10 years time?
- Why are you interested in this job?
- How do you regard your communication skills (written, verbal, one-to-one etc.)?
- How do you regard your management skills (planning, problems, supervision, motivating, negotiating etc.)?
- In the context of work, what motivates you?

Questions You Might Need To Ask

- How secure is the company financially and in terms of future prospects?
- Are there any plans to expand, contract or relocated?
- What is the company's reputation in the marketplace?
- What are the major threats and opportunities facing the company?
- What investment is being made for the future e.g. products, services, marketing?
- Why has the vacancy occurred?
- Who would I be working for and who would I be working with?
- What are the terms and conditions of employment?
- What would my future prospects with the company be like if I performed well?

Close

- If there is time, ask them if there is anything more they need to know about you.
- Never leave without asking if you are suitable for the position.
- Ask what happens next i.e. when they will make a decision. This is important as it will show your enthusiasm.

Follow Up

Send a brief thank you letter confirming your interest in the position and here is the opportunity to add anything else you want to mention. For example, you could demonstrate a good phone manner if the job involves lots of phone contact.

Salary Negotiation

Try to avoid mentioning the subject of salary yourself at the first interview. Either wait for the interviewer to bring it up or wait until the second interview. You should have given your ARS Consultant your salary expectations so the salary offered should be within this range.