

COPING WITH INTERVIEWS

After coming through all the hurdles of the SELECTION PROCESS, you will eventually arrive at an interview. This is of course, a major obstacle for many job applicants. Although they may have the qualifications, experience and a proven track record, they may lose out to a candidate who **'interviews better.'**

'Interviewing Well'

So what does 'interviewing better' actually mean? It comes down to the candidate being **well prepared and confident**.

- A candidate who can answer questions in a way which is acceptable (but not necessarily right) to the interviewer,
- Someone who knows something about their potential employers business and the post they hope to fill.

These are really the basic components of any candidate who 'interviews well'. There are undoubtedly other aspects employers may look for in relation to specific posts - having their own ideas, articulate, thinking on their feet, aspects which will be related to the job and to the company's preference in employees.

The employer will also be looking to fill a post which has a particular job specification - in other words personal aspects besides the experience and qualifications that can be put down on paper. The interviewer will set out to ascertain that the candidate has these personal qualities, skills and abilities the company requires.

Preparation and Confidence

These two essential ingredients are interlinked. Good preparation instils confidence. So the basic approach to an interview is to be well prepared. This means two things - preparing yourself practically for the interview, and gathering knowledge and information you can draw on during the interview.

Preparing Yourself

The worst nightmare for an interviewee is rushing around at last minute, arriving late hot and bothered for an interview. This shakes the confidence. Your mind is not on the interview, and your personal presentation will have suffered.

If you don't look good and feel good you'll interview badly.

So get the practicalities sorted first! Plan and be organised!

Interview Checklist

Be sure you know the time, date and location of the interview and name of interviewee where appropriate.

- Check out how you will get to the location, and when you need to set off to be there in good time - do a dummy run if necessary. Plan to get there earlier 10/15 mins the interview time, anticipate delays.
- Have what you are going to wear ready in advance - everything down to your underwear!
- Do not go to the interview laden down with baggage - psychological as well as physical. Take the bare minimum of belongings necessary. Concentrate on the interview at the interview - nothing else.
- If you are asked to bring certificates, references etc, get them ready before the day. Take your interview letter.
- On arrival ensure the receptionist knows you are there, visit the toilets to tidy up etc.

What to bring to the Interview

1. A folder which should include the following....
2. A copy of your CV & cover letter you originally sent to the employer
3. A copy of the application form (if one used to apply for position)
4. A note of your skills, qualities & work experience. These can be jotted down on cards and used as a prompt card to remind you of what to say at the interview.

REMEMBER

If you are well organised and have planned for the day your *confidence will increase.*

THE INTERVIEW

Preparing To Meet the Employer

The interview is a chance for you and the employer to get to know one another.

Do gather information about your employer before you are interviewed –

- what do they do
- how many staff do they employ
- have they branches elsewhere in the country/county

Bigger companies will have websites, smaller ones will provide you with some information - libraries can provide information on local business. (Use the internet - many companies have a presence here now).

Make sure you know what the job entails - get a job description, ask someone in a similar post, ring the company to clarify if unsure.

Don't Forget You

Remember the employer is interested in you as a person, your experiences and your opinions.

Do take the time to sit down and think about you, who you are and what you've achieved. It can be highly embarrassing to know more about the employer than yourself.

Sit down with your CV and make notes, about your work record, what you've achieved. Look at yourself as a person in employment - how do you see yourself, what have you done, what ambitions do you have. Make notes and prepare and rehearse sound bites about yourself. Remember that one of the most common of interview questions is 'Tell me about yourself' prepare a sound bite for this in particular, but not a life history.

Usually interviewers want to know about personal qualities not achievements - though examples can be included to support your statement.

Or Your Questions To Them

There is always the opportunity to ask them questions at the end of the interview - remember the interview is a two way process, you need to be sure you want to join them too!

Try to concentrate on issues which are both important to you and combine an apparent interest in the company, leave issues like terms and conditions until the very last, even they may feel the most important to you. Write you questions down prior to the interview and take them with you.

Presentation of yourself

Wear what is appropriate for the post and the company.

It may vary from smart, smart casual and in some instances to very formal dress.

Try and get an insight into what the company would expect from employees or through observation. What would be appropriate for a building company is very different for a public relations agency.

Be well groomed and clean. Try to look calm and confident, simple things like deodorant can boost your confidence.

BODY LANGUAGE

Once you are ushered into the interview room there will usually be a short exchange of pleasantries and ice breaking. Don't be fooled by this time - it really is designed to put you at ease in most circumstances, but these initial moments are the most formative - don't go over the top being exceptionally friendly or alternatively going rigid with fear feeling that your handshake was too limp!

A pleasant natural smile, a firm handshake and a brief exchange of words in a natural manner of this greeting is sufficient.

Some simple, but frequently broken rules!

- Sit comfortably with both feet on the floor, lean slightly towards the interviewer.
- Don't play with your hair or your hands. Keep them out of pockets!
- Try not to create defensive barriers between you and them, like a brief case on your knees, folded arms or crossed legs....even if you feel you need to.
- Maintain natural eye contact with the interviewer - that is maintain eye contact, but don't stare like a snake!
- If there's more than one interviewer, look at who's talking. When you're talking, shift your glance from one to the other.
- Don't over use your hands, if you are a natural gesticulator.
- Don't squirm and fidget.
- Do nod and Mmm, to show you're listening to them.
- Above all try to be you, try to be natural, unless you're naturally offensive!!!

Obedying these rules, will allow the interviewers to concentrate on you, and not what you're doing in the interview. Body language conveys all sorts of messages, and the right body language will convey the message of a well balanced and confident individual.....even if you're not!

Interview Planner

- Purchase correspondence paper stock (stationary and matching envelopes).
- Keep enough paper stock on hand to print your CV, cover letters and other correspondence on matching stationary and envelopes.
- Know the standards for writing cover letters, thank you letters, and when to phone.
- Keep stamps on hand at all times!
- Keep track of all career related written and verbal correspondence.
- Identify your basic interview wardrobe: select one or two outfits or suits that are considered fairly conservative for your field.
- Locate your local overnight or one-hour dry cleaner.
- Polish your business shoes.
- Always have extra, clean copies of your resume with you.
- Keep on file an interview folder to bring with you on interviews. It should contain: a few resumes in a plastic sleeve, some reminders for yourself about your skills and your goals, and a pen and some paper to make notes before and after the interview.
- Bring to the interview: your interview folder, the names of the people you are meeting and the address with directions. You may also want: a comb, tissues, breath mints.
- Know where you're going in advance.
- Leave yourself plenty of time to get there.
- You want to arrive a little bit early, not just on time and **never late**.
- Make sure you can be reached, whether by phone, fax or email.
- Please ensure that you have message service set up on your mobile incase an employer is trying to contact you as a result of you submitting your CV or to call you following on from an interview.

Research, Rehearse and Relax

Sell Yourself!

Remember you must be able to verbalise what is on your CV. If the interviewer has a CV in front of him, candidates may think they do not need to go through everything on it. But your CV is your main selling tool and you need to be able to discuss it in detail and describe to the employer how your skills and experience match the requirements of their vacancy.

No matter how well qualified you are for a job or how articulate you are about your strengths and experience, there is nothing that can replace preparation. Once you have practiced asking and answering questions (suggestion use flashcards), the next step is to relax and remind yourself that:

- 1) There is no question you cannot answer,**
- 2) You are well suited to the position, and**
- 3) You would be an asset to the company.**

Visualise yourself sitting in the interview feeling serene and confident. Get a good night's sleep before the interview, arrive a few minutes early, take a few deep breaths and seize the day.

- [Research the Company](#)
- [Rehearse Your Presentation](#)
- [Relax and Project Self-Confidence](#)

ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviews vary enormously, from very informal to formal. However, some questions can be anticipated, as can the subject matter (see separate handout title Most Popular asked Interview Questions and sample answers).

If you are well prepared, then the majority of problem questions should not arise.

You will **know about the company**, you will **know about yourself** and you will have a good idea of the demands of the job - these questions will not be a problem to the well prepared interviewee.

A few general rules:

- Speak up when answering questions.
- Answer briefly, but try to avoid yes or no answers.
- Don't worry about pausing before you answer, it shows you can think and are not spitting out the sound bites you learned!
- Don't worry about admitting you don't know - but keep this to a bare minimum.
- Don't embellish answers or lie! Be as honest as possible.
- Be prepared for hypothetical situation questions, take your time on these.
- Be prepared for the unexpected question, that's designed to see how you cope with the unexpected.
- If you ask questions keep them brief during the interview, remember you're the interviewee. At the end of the interview ask your questions in an open manner.

Thank the interviewer/s for their time

It is important to put it across that you will fit in well. You would not be in front of them unless they thought you were suitable for the role, so you are halfway there already. It all comes down to being personable.

Remember Employers are looking to employ someone who will fit into their culture. If you present yourself as a confident individual, they will be confident in your abilities.

If you come across as really nervous; if you are not making eye contact or you're not that friendly/or if you come across as too cocky – they may not be able to picture their team working with you.

CV Writing - Make an Impact in 20 seconds!

Your CV has about 20 seconds to make an impact. Therefore it is important to make the most out of this short window of opportunity. Failure to do so will mean your CV ends up in the bin. Here are some CV writing tips to ensure your CV creates an instant impact.

Avoid bland professional summaries

Bland professional summaries waste valuable space. More importantly, bland professional summaries can turn the reader off your CV. Offer clear evidence to highlight how you will add value in the role targeted, clearly telling the reader why they should interview you. Communicate this information in five short bullet points, as this will make it easier to read and digest.

Excite the reader with impactful content

Avoid long lists of job responsibilities. Instead, tell your story in terms of delivery. Highlight how you have added value in previous roles, providing clear evidence of your results and achievements.

Get your message across in fewer words

You must deliver your message in the least words possible. Create concise impactful statements, with bullet points to make content easier to digest. You should use action verbs to help the content read with more energy. Remember, no statement should be longer than two lines.

Position relevant information on the first page

The reverse chronological rule can be an issue, especially if the work experience you need to highlight is earlier in your career. The heading "Relevant Work Experience" can help you navigate this issue, allowing you to position important work experience on the first page of your CV.

Let your CV to breath

Don't shrink font size to pack more information onto the first page of your CV. This is cheating!! Similar applies to cutting white space. A cluttered first page is a turn off. It makes it more difficult for the reader to access important information, achievements and results.

Do not make it easy for the hiring manager to bin your CV

Hiring managers are looking for reasons to bin CVs. Remember, they can't interview every applicant. Don't make it easy for the hiring manager to bin your CV. For example, don't list qualifications on the first page of your CV when you don't meet the minimum requirements.

TAKE OWNERSHIP/RESPONSIBILITY OVER YOUR CV -

**TO INCREASE THE OPPORTUNITY OF BEING CALLED FOR AN INTERVIEW ENSURE YOUR CV IS
TARGETTED TOWARDS THE JOB VACANCY**