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How to Successfully Interview

Your CV has got you here

Now it is up to you

You have done all the groundwork, researched roles, applied to those roles, and now your CV has landed you an interview. Meaning it is now time to get that job. However, no matter how many interviews you have been on it never gets any easier. You're interviewed by different people using different techniques, having to sell yourself and your skills time after time. Whilst getting questioned over every gap in your CV and getting the third degree on the information you do and don't know.



That being said, there are certain things you can do before, during and after the interview to make it less stressful and help you present the best version of yourself. The below tips could help any interviewee whether a seasoned pro or a novice, nail their interview.

Tip #1

Fail to Prepare Prepare to Fail



Think of the most likely questions you're going to be asked before you get to the interview. Practice your responses to these questions, think of examples from your work history or education that will help back up your answers. By doing this you're prepared for the more frequently asked questions and are less likely to get stuck when answering or unable to draw on an example. Here are some of the more regularly asked interview questions:

- What can you tell me about yourself?
- Can you list your strengths?
- What weaknesses do you have?
- Why should I consider hiring you?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What is your salary expectation?
- What motivates you?
- What makes a good team player?
- Is there anything that you would like to ask me?

Although you are unlikely to be asked all of them, it is highly likely you will be asked some of them. You may even be asked more bizarre questions, such as 'if you were a chocolate bar what would you be?' These questions are designed to find out what you're like thinking on your feet, therefore, there is no way to prepare for them. Consider any gaps in your career on your CV, what are the reason for these gaps? Plan how you're going to answer these questions in the interview as you are very likely to be asked to explain them.

Tip #2

Research



Don't just research the company, research the industry they operate in. Who are their main competitors? What threats are there to the industry and what opportunities? Also, if possible research the individual who will be interviewing you, find out what they're interested in. Building a positive rapport and making a connection to your interviewer can help your chances of getting the job, as people tend to hire individuals who they like and seem a good fit for the company culture.

Don't just do the minimal amount of research by reading through their homepage and the about us page. With so much information readily available to you, it's baffling that candidates still do this. Research their different sections on their website, their blog posts, their social media channels, their competitors, any news articles you can find. In today's world, content is king and the more you can find and learn about, the better.



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Tip #3

What to take to the Interview

• Your CV, application form and interview invitation

o We recommend reading your CV prior to the interview, this will help refresh your memory of your work history and help you run through any potential examples you have of core skills their person specification required. The application form will remind you of any free text questions you have answered so not to use the same examples in the interview. The interview invitation will just refresh your memory of who to ask for at reception and what time you were due in.

• Your academic qualifications

o Although you're not always asked for them, this will show great preparation if, during the interview, the interviewer asks if you have them to take copies.

• The job description and person specification

o Fantastic pre-interview reading, it will remind you of what they're looking for in the ideal candidate and what the role entails. These will be key points they're listening for in the interview, so it is paramount to remember and repeat them during the interview.

• A valid photo ID

o For the right to work purposes, it may well be requested. Again, this shows that you're fully prepared for the interview.

• A pen and notepad

o Shows you are eager and you're there to learn just as much about them as they are of you.

• A bottle of water

o The last thing you want in an interview is a dry throat.



**Don't just be
on time, be
early**



When we say be on time for an interview, we mean early, perhaps 5-10 minutes. Give yourself time to go to the toilet, check your outfit and just calm yourself down. So, prepare your journey beforehand and leave in plenty of time. If you're not sure exactly where it is then do a trial run at the time you need to be there in the week, to fully test out traffic.

Tip #5

How to Dress for the Interview

For the majority of interviews, the premise is to turn up looking smart, as you only get the one chance to make a first impression. So, unless stated otherwise I would follow the status quo. For men, this is usually very straight forward, a suit and tie with a dark suit usually being the safe option. For women you have a few more choices, you could wear a dress, trouser suit or a skirt and blouse. The safest colours have been found to be black, brown, and navy. There are also some more subtle tips you could follow for your attire:



- Get a haircut
- For men, make sure you have shaved or neatened your beard
- Make sure to wash and iron your outfit
- Make sure the bag or handbag you're taking is smart
- Clean and polish your shoes
- Try not to overdo any jewellery or makeup



**You get one chance
to make a great
first impression**

Tip #6

How to make a Great Impression

You have gone to this interview because you truly want the job at the end of it. Show how much you want it, be enthusiastic, let your personality shine through and make sure the questions you ask aren't the same questions all the other candidates have asked, think of thought-provoking questions that will test the interviewers.



Make it



Count



Remind yourself that the very worst thing that could happen is, you don't get the job. So, remain positive throughout, be polite to all staff you meet from start to finish of the process. Try to avoid discussing any personal problems and never bad mouth a previous employer.



Body language can make a huge difference. Try to start off and end with a firm handshake. During the interview try to sit naturally and do not slouch, also remember to retain eye contact and of course smile.

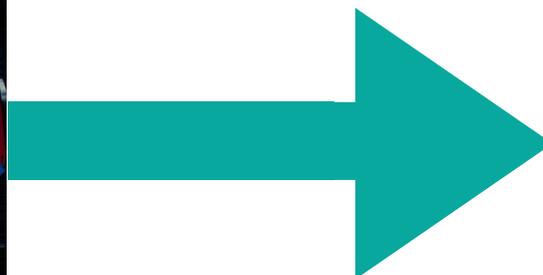
During an interview, it is perfectly acceptable to pause before answering a question, take a sip of water to bide your time. If it is a difficult question or one that you're unsure what they're asking the last thing you want to do is answer too quickly. Just make sure you answer all questions in the interview clearly and concisely, giving clear examples of your relevant skills, experiences, and life achievements.



Tip #7

Show them what you have learnt

This is a great situation where you can really show the interviewers you have done your homework on the company and the industry they're in. Try to relate what you know about this when answering their questions. When you're going through your CV and discussing all your past work history and accomplishments, try to match these to what the company have said they're looking for on the job description and person specification. Throughout the interview aim to use examples from your research to really stand out from the other candidates and sell yourself to the interviewer.



In a crowded and competitive market, it is vital that you stand out from the rest.

Tip #8

When answering questions, use the 'PAR' structure

Problem

What was causing you or the company you worked for an issue?

Action

What was causing you or the company you worked for an issue?

Result

How did your action remedy the problem?

An interview is a very high-pressure environment for any individual, and it can be very easy to get distracted from the point, you were trying to make and go off on a tangent. This is where your answers can lose their structure and you may start to waffle. Leading you to panic and perhaps hindering your chances of getting the job. There is no harm in taking a moment to gather yourself when answering any of their questions, and when answering the question, we would recommend using the 'PAR' structure to make sure concisely and completely answer their questions using your own examples.

Problem

What was causing you or the company you worked for an issue?

Action

What was causing you or the company you worked for an issue?

Result

How did your action remedy the problem?

Tip #9

Always ask them Questions

Never, ever say you have nothing to ask them at the end of the interview. In your preparation for the interview, you should have come up with a number of questions for the end of the interview, make sure it is at least 10 so if any questions get answered during the interview you should still have some to ask. It is also your final opportunity to impress the interviewer so why not use this as an opportunity to ask a question and reveal something else about yourself:

What you could ask

"Does the company provide any opportunities to help local charities?"

What you should ask

"I used to volunteer for (charity name) and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to give back and help others. Does the company have any relationships with any charities which could give me the opportunity to get involved?"

Always
ask

Questions

Reveal
Something
Else

Tip #10

Close the Interview like a Pro

Be Bold

This is a bold question to ask, but, if delivered properly it will show just how confident you are and how much you want the role

“Have I said anything in this interview or is there anything on my CV or application form that makes you doubt that I am a good fit for the role?”

If they answer no, then you have put yourself in a great position. If they say, yes, then you get the opportunity there and then to clarify that point and rectify their doubts. Without asking that question that may well have cost you that opportunity.

Be Brave

Tip #11

The Follow Up



After the interview when leaving the company, remember to leave with a firm handshake and inform the interviewer that you're able to answer any follow-up questions they may need. Always send a thank you email to your interviewer within 24 hours of concluding the interview, not only will it show your gratitude, but it will also refresh their memory of your interview if you were interviewed early in the process. It will also open up the opportunity for further dialogue with the interviewer. If more than one person interviewed you, send each of them a personalised email.

Prepare

Be Early

Follow Up

Be Confident

Ask Questions

Remain Positive

Give Great Examples

We hope you found these tips to be useful for your upcoming interview, if you have any questions at all please give us a call on 01733 802300.