



Interview Tips and Advice

Preparation

'Be Prepared'

This is essential. Even though you might appear to be the best candidate on paper, a lack of preparation before the interview can let you down. Most interviews will only last one hour, and you may not get a second chance.

The following guidelines can be seen as the minimum amount of preparation:

1. Make sure that you know the exact time and location of the interview and allow plenty of time to get there (a 10 minute margin for error is good).
2. Do you know precisely who will be interviewing you and their job title? Try and ascertain the format of the interview beforehand and what the overall interview process will consist of as well as checking the profile of the relevant interviewer via the firm's website. Find out as much as you can regarding the interviewer(s). Google them.
3. Research the organisation in as much depth as you can. Depending on the role it might be appropriate to concentrate on their products/services, competitors, recent business growth and plans for the future.

In most cases, your recruitment consultant should be able to assist. However, you can do your own research through:

- The organisation's website - these are fast becoming the best source of material. Look at press releases to make sure that you are aware of recent events such as acquisitions/disposals and appointments within the company. There may also be a recruitment section and financial information for investors.
 - Trade publications are another useful source. Keep an eye on the press for information and bear in mind that many publications now have their own websites with archive material, such as feature articles on your area of specialisation or on the organisation itself.
 - Speaking to anybody you know who works within the organisation to gain an inside track.
 - Without appearing contrived do try and mention any research you have done during the interview.
4. Think about the questions that you are likely to be asked at interview, since some of these can be quite predictable. At the end of this page are some examples of interview questions. If you can think of the answers to the 'worst' five potential questions, this will help ease any apprehension considerably.
 5. First impressions are vital. So make sure that you are dressed smartly in a business suit (even if casual/ 'dress down' is allowed). Don't forget to polish your shoes! Shave/comb hair.
 6. Know your own CV - it is amazing how many people fail at interview because they haven't read their CV recently. It is important to be able to discuss any aspect of your CV such as why you studied a particular course at university, or the part that you played in a particular project/deal (also make sure that you can discuss any overall business aims). Make sure you remember any relevant dates or qualifications.
 7. Ultimately the interview is a two way street. As well as ensuring that you 'sell' yourself to best effect, you should also be considering questions for the interviewer on aspects of the role, such as prospects for career development and the corporate culture.

The Interview

Remember that it is not just your experience and skill set that is being examined at an interview but also whether you will fit into the organisation's culture. As well as trying to be yourself it is important to remember these do's and don'ts:

- A firm handshake and an engaging smile are vital.
- Maintain eye contact throughout. Looking around the room and avoiding the interviewers' eyes gives a bad impression.
- Be to the point and answer the question succinctly. Be aware of rambling in your answers. Stop talking when you have answered the question.
- Do not fidget and be aware of your physical communication throughout the interview and at the same time monitor your interviewer's body language. This may give you a clue as to how you are doing e.g. if the interviewer is looking bored or restless perhaps you are digressing too much!
- Do not overly criticise your current employer (despite the fact that you are looking to leave).
- Do not reply to a question with monosyllabic 'yes/no' answers.
- Be positive and enthusiastic about the role for which you are being interviewed. Any reservations you may have should wait until you have received the offer and/or discussed it with your recruitment consultant.
- Do not mention salary in the first interview unless expressly asked. Try and leave salary discussions until later interviews.
- Always ask questions if you have the opportunity to do so.
- Do not say anything that cannot be supported by examples.
- Be natural. If you obtain an offer by acting then you'll have to 'act' for the duration of your employment.
- Respect the interviewer, even if they are a relatively junior HR specialist. Do not be overconfident, because first interviews will often have the power to say no.
- They will often be judging not only your technical ability, but also whether they would feel comfortable putting you in front of clients, so be professional, friendly and succinct.

Closing the interview

It is important to leave the interviewer with a positive impression - thank them for the opportunity to meet with them and for their time. If you are still interested in the position make sure that they know. If they ask if you are interested - don't say 'I'll think about and get back to you'. Be positive and say yes.

Immediately afterwards, note down your thoughts on the interview and any questions that you might have, while they are still fresh in your mind.

Call your recruitment consultant as soon as you can with honest feedback. The sooner you do this, the sooner your recruitment consultant can speak to the organisation to find out what they are thinking.

At all times stay in touch with your recruitment consultant who should relay positive or negative feedback. They will prepare you for the next meeting and give you help and advice at all stages. Remember that recruitment consultants will be highly experienced in the complete recruitment life cycle from interview through to offer, acceptance / rejection and resignation. Use all their knowledge and experience to help you make the most of the recruitment process.

Typical questions

These are all deliberately 'open' questions, in other words you cannot answer them with a 'yes' or 'no'.

- Why do you want to leave XXX organisation?
- Why are you interested in joining YYY organisation?
- What will you miss most in your current position?
- What types of people do you work well with/not work well with?
- What would you say have been your greatest successes in your current position?
- What would you have done differently in your current position?
- Give us examples of how your management style has been effective?
- What have you learnt over the course of the last 5 years?
- What have you done that shows initiative in your current position?
- How would your team describe you?
- What are your career goals?
- How are you at prioritising?
- Give examples of your delegation skills?
- What are your hobbies?
- What is the most difficult thing you have ever done at work?
- Will you be available to travel during the week?
- What would your colleagues say about you?
- What do you think your current firm will do when you resign?
- What are your long-term aims?

Questions to ask

These are examples of some great questions to ask at an interview.

- Why has the position become available?
- What is the culture of your organisation?
- What is the policy of your company on training and development?
- What are the future plans of the company?
- Who do you regard as your main competitors?
- What type of employee is historically successful in your company?
- How do you appraise the performance of your employees?
- What would I expect to be involved in during my first 3/6/12 months?
- What are the long term prospects for the successful applicant?
- Is there a possibility of working overseas?
- Ask about the interviewer's background. People always like to talk about themselves and this gives you the chance to gather your thoughts.

Good Luck!

