

## INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

- **We want you to be fully prepared for the interview**
- **Be confident and in a very positive frame of mind**
- **Sell yourself effectively**
- **Give yourself the best possible chance of getting the job**
- **We want you to WIN!**

**Below are some guide-lines on preparing you for interview, assisting you through the interview and closing.**

## PERSONAL PRESENTATION

Even though you may be able to adapt your dress code to your chosen industry sector it is prudent to dress conservatively at the interview.

Ensure that there is nothing about your appearance that falls outside the “norm” for the majority of people in relation to clothing, jewellery, hairstyle, makeup, body piercing etc.

Guidelines:

### Men

- Dark, conservative business suit.
- White or light blue shirt.
- Plain or subtle patterned well co-ordinated tie.
- No white or novelty socks.
- No novelty ties

### Women

- Suit, dress, co-ordinated blouse and skirt – should be tasteful and business like.
- Wear tights or stockings.
- Do not wear anything that is too flashy or showy.

Make sure you feel comfortable in your outfit. If you know you look good, you are more confident and will normally perform better.

**Smart, clean, tidy and well groomed is definitely the order of the day.**

Always dress in a professional, business like mode, unless the interviewer tells you specifically to “dress down”.

Clothes, accessories, hairstyles, body decorations (tattoos and piercings) are a personal statement about who you are and can have both positive and negative interpretations.

Remember you need to look the part for the job you are looking to fill.

## COMPANY AND JOB RESEARCH

Preparation and research are essential – **“By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail”.**

Using knowledge gained through research enables you to:

- Convey your interest in the job and the Company.
- Convey your enthusiasm about working for the Company.
- Demonstrate that you have invested time and effort in finding out about them.
- Approach the interview with more confidence.
- Find common ground with the interviewer and gain credibility.
- Demonstrate that you are the best person for the job.

The more you are able to show that you want to work for the Company, the more that Company will feel that they want you to work for them.

## THE COMPANY

You should try to find out the answers to the following questions, whenever a Company invites you for an interview:

- What business or businesses is it in?
- What is it’s range of products and services?
- How long has it been established?
- How many people does it employ?
- What is the turnover in monetary terms?
- What are the names of any subsidiaries or specialist divisions?
- How many offices, factories, branches and sites are there?
- Where are they located?
- Who are the board members?
- Who are it’s main competitors?
- What is it’s standing in the market place?
- How does it market itself?
- Has there been any recent media coverage?
- Have there been any new products, services or innovations?
- Have there been any recent technological developments?
- What are the future plans?
- What is the Company Vision and Mission statement?

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Possibilities include:

- The library
- The internet
- Company literature
- The job advertisement
- A Company visit
- Company correspondence sent to you
- Annual report
- Trade journals
- Business directories e.g. Dun and Bradstreet
- Quality newspapers e.g. Financial Times, Daily Telegraph
- Chamber of commerce
- Companies house
- People who buy from or sell to the Company
- Friend, relatives and acquaintances

If a prospective employer sends you any information you must read it thoroughly. If you are questioned on it and you cannot provide



answers it will give the impression that either you are not particularly interested in the company ("any old company will do") or you were not motivated and dedicated enough to prepare. You will certainly not be expected to know everything, but there is absolutely no excuse for knowing nothing.

## THE JOB

Because you need to sell yourself against what the interviewer is looking for, you must be able to effectively match your skills, qualifications, experience and attributes to the duties and responsibilities of the job.

Sources of information are:

- The job description/specification.
- The advertisement for the job.
- A Recruitment Consultant
- Someone who has done that type of job before or is doing it now.

With knowledge gained about the job you will be able to prepare positive evidence to use at interview to prove that you:

- Are genuinely interested and enthusiastic about the job.
- Can do the job effectively.
- Are well suited to the job.
- Are the very best of those applying for the job.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How well you answer the interviewer's questions will obviously have a great bearing on the outcome of your job application.

Interviewers often ask the same questions, so there is no excuse for being unprepared for many of them.

Remember that the ability to listen is a key interview skill - to pay attention, to absorb and understand what the interviewer is saying without misinterpreting, assuming or jumping to conclusions.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

- Tilt head to one side to show you are listening.
- Concentrate.
- Look at the interviewer to demonstrate that you are listening intently.
- Pay attention to the tone and inflection of the interviewer's voice – where is the emphasis?
- Be careful not to mishear or misunderstand.
- Seek clarification if you are not exactly sure what is being asked.
- Don't decide upon your response until you have listened to the entire question.
- Don't focus so much on what you want to say that you lose track of what the interviewer is saying.
- Don't jump in if the interviewer is merely pausing.

## ADVICE ON ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- Practice your answers
- Identify the question areas from the job description and advertisement and consider what questions you would ask to confirm a candidate's suitability.
- Take your time before answering a question.
- Stay calm and collected.

- Talk at a comfortable pace and use the volume and tone of your voice to sound confident and believable.
- Avoid "Umm" and "Ahh".
- Do not ramble – be clear and concise.
- Be positive and enthusiastic.
- Frame your answers around actual experiences as opposed to opinions.
- Understand what the interviewer is looking to evaluate and sell your skills, experience, personal qualities and achievements in that area.
- Have examples ready to back up your assertions.
- Do not "wing it" – if you do not know an answer, it is better to admit you don't than give a wrong answer.
- Tell the truth.
- Watch the interviewer for signs of their feelings.
- Do not get downhearted if you are getting a hard time or are put under pressure.
- Deal with interruptions in a confident and relaxed manner – smile.

## POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself?:

- Will come at the beginning.
- Is the archetypal "Why should I employ you?"
- Is a blank cheque to fill in.
- Is a great opportunity to sell yourself and your abilities.
- Answer should be short, positive, concise and relevant.
- Do not say "What exactly would you like to know?"
- Do not begin with "I was born in....."

What are your strengths and weaknesses?:

- What are your strengths – "Why should I employ you?"
- What are your weaknesses – "Why should I not employ you?"
- Question is about self awareness – Do you know what you are good at and in what areas you need to improve?
- Focus on the strengths that are relevant to the job.
- Do not undersell yourself.
- Do not mention more than two weaknesses.
- Do not state weaknesses that clearly relate to the job.
- State weaknesses that can be viewed positively:

Perfectionist:	Paying attention to detail is viewed more positively.
Workaholic:	Being dedicated is viewed more positively.
Bored easily:	Need to be challenged is viewed more positively.
Don't suffer fools gladly:	Having high standards is viewed more positively

Why did you choose the A Levels/Degree that you did?:

- Question used to evaluate your decision making process.
- Finds out about your motivations and approach to learning.
- Discovers whether there was a logical and sensible reason for your choice.

Reasons for leaving current or last employer?:

- "Are there any reasons that might make me not want to employ this candidate?"



- Do not openly criticise colleagues, manager or company.
- If your reason for leaving is money talk about your skills, attributes, and experience in terms of market rate. Employers like value for money – you do not want to appear greedy or mercenary.
- If you were made redundant do not react defensively or negatively. Give the interviewer a full picture – restructuring, number of jobs affected, timeframes etc.
- If you did not get on with your boss be constructive and talk in terms of management style providing examples.
- Remember the best reason for leaving is to broaden your experience.

#### **What is your biggest achievement?:**

- Your answer will give an indication of what motivates you and what is important in your life.
- The interviewer will be looking for evidence of the skills and positive characteristics you displayed which will be useful in the job.
- Select only one fairly recent example, which wasn't particularly easy to achieve.

#### **Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?**

Question used to find out:

- How ambitious are you?
- Do you have a vision?
- Will you stay with the Company?
- Are you realistic?
- Do your plans fit in with the Company's plans?

The safest answer is probably to highlight that your first priority is to attain a high level of achievement in the role you are considering, before assessing where your skills could be effectively utilised next.

#### **What was your biggest mistake?**

- Are you honest and objective enough to recognise and admit a mistake?
- Could it have been avoided?
- Is your judgement sound?
- Have you learnt from it?
- What would you do/have done differently?

#### **Why are you interested in this position?**

- Best opportunity to "make the match."
- Sell what is relevant and important to them.

#### **How much do you know about our Company?**

- Opportunity to demonstrate that you have taken the time and effort to properly research the Company.
- Prioritise to show you have a good general knowledge of the Company and an insight into any challenges and issues it may face.

#### **What did you do in your last job?:**

- Talk enthusiastically and in detail.
- Emphasise those elements of your last job that are relevant to the requirements of the job for which you are applying.
- Remember to talk about levels of involvement and achievements.

#### **Why should we employ you?**

- The effectiveness of your answer will depend on how knowledgeable you are about the needs of the job and Company, how well you have analysed your skills, experience and attributes and how well you match up the two.

#### **OTHER QUESTIONS**

What did you like best about your last job?

What did you like least about your last job?

What was your greatest challenge in the job?

How successful would you say you were?

How do you like to be managed?

How would you describe your relationships with your colleagues in your last job?

What did you learn from your time in your last job?

How were you targeted?

How was your performance assessed?

What is it about our Company that appeals to you?

What do you think you can bring to this Company?

Do you consider yourself a team player?

What would your last manager say about you?

What would your previous colleagues say about you?

What would your friends say about you?

How would you describe yourself?

How satisfied are you with how your career has advanced so far?

What are you looking for from your next employer?

What is your biggest disappointment to date at work?

What has been the biggest problem you have faced and how did you solve it?

How do you deal with conflict?

Give me an example of when you feel you have coped well under pressure at work?

Given me an example of when you have been criticised and talk to me about how you responded?

How well do you manage your time?

What motivates you?

What demotivates you?

Give me a recent example of when you have shown initiative at work?



Give me an example of when you felt particularly enthusiastic about a task you had to complete?

Give me an example of when you have been required to show a sense of urgency at work?

How do you react when you are left to work unsupervised?

What salary are you looking for?

When can you start?

What do you like to do in your spare time?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do not say “No I don’t have any questions”.
- Always write down your questions – this is evidence of your preparation and interest.
- Even if you believe all your questions have been answered during the interview, still double check your list in front of the interviewer.
- Ask a maximum of 4/5 questions.
- Be careful not to talk too much and outstay your welcome.
- Do not have questions about salary, holiday, sick pay etc at the top of your list.
- Genuinely seek information to assist in your decision making – do not ask questions just for the sake of it.

## QUESTION AREAS:

- Company structure and reporting lines.
- The team.
- Company plans and how the job fits in with those.
- Industry outlook and competitive challenges faced.
- Current Company performance.
- Existing or new products and services.
- Reason for the vacancy.
- Focus of the role.
- Performance appraisal.
- Success indicators.
- Training and development.
- Future opportunities.
- Interviewer’s own career history with the Company.

## BODY LANGUAGE

Body language is:

- Posture
- Body position
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Body movements

Recognising and interpreting body language offers an insight into what people are thinking and feeling. Some interviewers may take body language into account when considering and forming an opinion of the interviewee.

Non-verbal signals include:

- Crossing arms, doing up jacket – defensive, resistant
- Avoiding eye contact, rubbing eyes – lying, embarrassment
- Touching collar/mouth/nose – lying

- Persistent, hurried nodding – impatient
- Tense facial expressions – nervous
- Nodding as a natural gesture – agreement
- Sitting forward – agreement

Although it is helpful to be aware of your body language, you should not become too self conscious – just be yourself.

## GESTURES

Avoid using gestures that might irritate or distract the interviewer:

- Fiddling with jewellery
- Repeatedly pushing glasses up on nose
- Running hands through hair
- Twiddling bits of hair
- Picking at fingernails or ears
- Biting fingernails
- Blinking incessantly
- Continually clearing throat
- Scratching a lot
- Tapping fingers or feet
- Fidgeting in chair
- Putting hands in and out of pockets
- Flapping arms around when talking
- Jangling loose change in pockets
- Repeatedly clicking pen
- Laughing at inappropriate moments

You may not do these things because you are nervous, but they are likely to make you appear nervous.

Nerves are normal and help you to give of your best during the interview, however, it is important to feel and appear as relaxed as possible. The following will help:

- Get a good nights sleep before the interview.
- Consciously slow everything down on the day of the interview.
- Remember you have prepared well and can only do your best.
- Remember most interviewers want you to perform well.
- Smile
- Be positive and imagine the interview going well.
- Feel confident about your appearance.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the interview.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before the interview time.
- Breathe slowly and calmly.

**1/3 of your message is conveyed through your words**

**2/3 of your message is conveyed through your non-verbal communication**

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression”.

Most people, including interviewers, make initial judgements about others based on their appearance. Interviewers form up to 90% of their opinions within one and a half minutes of meeting people.

If you make a poor first impression you have built a hurdle that you have to get over during the interview, in order to convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the job.

Psychologists’ research shows that the % contribution to first impression judgements is:



- 55% What people see – appearance, posture, body language, facial expressions, eye contact.
- 38% What people hear – tone, pace, volume, pitch, clarity of speech, hesitation.
- 7% The words people use

What you look and sound like are initially far more important than what you say.

## ARRIVAL

Your interview effectively starts when you enter the Company's premises and you should act accordingly.

The receptionist and other staff you meet in the reception area are part of the organisation you are looking to join. The interviewer may seek their opinions about candidates and you have a good opportunity to create the right first impression even before you meet the interviewer.

### Do:

- Be pleasant and polite to Company employees.
- Smile.
- Read any Company literature available.
- Look over your preparation notes and mentally prepare.
- Be patient and calm if the interviewer is running late.
- Prepare your introduction/greeting.
- Relax.

### Don't:

- Smoke, eat or chew gum.
- Wear sunglasses.
- Bring shopping bags or gym bag to the interview.
- Use your mobile phone or ask to use their phone.
- Check your appearance in public.
- Bring anyone with you.

## GREETING THE INTERVIEWER

- Smile
- Stand up when the interviewer approaches.
- Stand up straight with shoulders back, don't slouch.
- Make eye contact.
- Offer a firm, "dry" handshake.
- Project your voice, don't mumble.
- Walk alongside the interviewer.
- Be prepared for the small talk – Did you get here OK? Did you find us OK? How was your journey? How did you get here? The Weather!
- If the interviewer is not talking, initiate the conversation with your positive first impressions of the Company.

## THE CLOSE

You must ensure that you end the interview on a positive note to reinforce the good first impression you made at the beginning.

It is very important to make best use of the closing moments in an interview. If an interviewer is seeing a number of candidates with similar qualifications and experience, their decision regarding appointment may be greatly influenced by the candidates' behaviour at the end of the interview.

Remember the more you show how interested you are in the

company, the more interested they will become in you.

Always make the interviewer aware of how enthusiastic you are about the job.

Playing it cool may work in poker, it doesn't work in job hunting:

"Thank you for seeing me today, I've really enjoyed our meeting. This is exactly the type of organisation I'd like to work for and I would love to have the opportunity of proving myself in this role."

Things you should never do at the end of an interview:

- Bluff – pretend you have another offer
- Ask the interviewer how well you have performed
- Try to pressurise the interviewer into a decision
- Ask the interviewer when they are expecting to make a decision.

