

Tips for success at interview... and have a brighter future

'You matter – we care'

Believe in yourself -shine at an interview

Everyone approaches a job interview with some degree of trepidation. It is natural to be nervous -the secret is not to let those nerves get to you. Remember -the employer has asked to see you because they think you are capable of doing the job. Their time is precious and they will be hoping, just as eagerly as you, that you are the perfect solution to their staffing need. The application process was the first stage in the selection process, you have passed that one, and now you want to be able to demonstrate just how good you are at the interview. However, the successful interviewee will not want to be stuck for words, so it is important to think about what you are going to say, how you are going to say it and how you are going to act, beforehand.

Here are a few proven strategies that will help you take control of the interview and ensure that the whole process goes smoothly.

- Do your homework
- Making a good first impression
- Body language
- Sounding positive
- Handling tough questions with confidence
- The interview is a two-way process
- Finish the interview on a confident note
- You are almost there – the end is in sight

Do your homework

You can never underestimate the importance of a bit of research. It's always worth 'going that extra mile' -you can never have too much information. Try logging on to the organisation's website, get hold of company literature and find out about their services and what they do. If the opportunity to use this knowledge arises, you'll be able to demonstrate an impressive level of interest in the organisation.

Making a good first impression

Look smart and professional. When it comes to dressing to impress, always err on the side of 'traditional' rather than 'trendy'. Take a copy of your CV or your training file with you. If you have any evidence of research or practice based learning – bring that along too! Plan your route and allow plenty of extra time to get to the interview. Be courteous, smile and shake hands firmly.

Body language

You may be superbly qualified for a job, but you must also look motivated and interested. The way you act, your posture, gestures and facial expressions, will reveal a lot about you. Look the interviewer in the eye and don't be afraid to smile when it is appropriate. If you are being interviewed by more than one person, always look at and address the person who posed the question, then glance at the others when you have finished your answer. Adopt a good posture. Don't cross your arms, fidget, tap your feet, sprawl or lean forward anxiously. And don't giggle – it will make you look nervous.

Sounding positive

Your application form was the first step in the selection process, and now it is time to further demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge and experience, not simply reiterate the information on your form. Be objective – try to anticipate the route the interviewer might take. No one fits a job perfectly so emphasise your most relevant skills. If you have never worked in that particular environment – role play how you would deal with a particular situation. No one is expecting you to have all the answers or experience. They will want to see how you may approach a problem though.

- Don't use faltering language. Phrases such as 'I feel I could', 'I think I can'. 'Perhaps I would' -dilute the strength of your case and make you sound under confident.
- Use expression and look a little animated. Don't confine your answers to monosyllabic 'yes' and 'no' which make the interview more like an interrogation.
- Be enthusiastic but don't constantly interrupt.
- Practice makes perfect. Before the interview, test your fluency by talking out loud or presenting to partners and friends. Even in front of the mirror!
- If there are any gaps in your career or experience, don't be evasive, be honest and explain. Make a virtue of any career gaps on your CV.

Handling tough questions with confidence

Employers will ask questions deliberately designed to see how you behave and react in certain situations. Giving a positive, fluent answer isn't as difficult as it might seem. With a little advance planning, it's perfectly possible to anticipate common general enquiries and prepare a coherent, effective response. In fact, you can turn these questions into an opportunity to take the initiative and 'sell' the exact message you want.

Never answer a question you don't understand with a knee-jerk response. Always seek clarification before answering and if you don't know an answer, it's much better to admit this than guess. It is okay to say that you have not experienced a given situation, but explain how you might react, or who you might speak with to resolve the problem.

Be prepared for the following questions

- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your manager describe you?
- What is your career path for the future?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- What motivates you to be successful?
- How do you react when you are left to work without supervision?
- Give me an example of when you feel you have coped extremely well under pressure at work?
- Plan for 'situational' questions
- What clinical situations or problems might be key to that particular role or service?
- What about working independently? In a team?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

This final question is particularly tricky. Obviously, you can't claim to have no weaknesses, but you don't want to stress anything too negative. The best solution is to admit to one weakness and then turn it around and show how you have constructively overcome it.

The interview is a two-way process

At the end of the interview, the employer will usually ask if you have any questions about the job or company, so always prepare a few in advance. This is a good chance to clarify any points of doubt - after all, you need to make sure that the job is exactly what you expected and what you want. It also shows that you are interested and keen. If you have no questions or if they have been addressed during the course of the interview, then it's really okay to say that.

Suggested questions to ask

- What are the opportunities for career progression?
- What are the training opportunities?
- What are my precise responsibilities?
- How much travel is involved?
- What are the key challenges for the first 6 months?
- When do you hope to make a final recruitment decision?

Finish the interview on a confident note

Leave the interviewer with a good final impression. Smile, thank them for their time, say you enjoyed discussing the job and that you look forward to hearing from them soon. Don't add any afterthoughts as you leave the room.

The end of the journey -you are almost there

Some people always seem to succeed at interviews. They're not lucky, their secret is careful preparation. The better prepared you are, the more confident you will be and the more success you will have. Remember, if you have prepared properly then when you go to an interview you will already have beaten most candidates, the employer wants you to succeed -that job is yours!

Good Luck!

Believe in yourself, your skills and abilities. You wouldn't have been selected for the interview in the first place if the organisation didn't think you could be 'the right person for the job'