

## **Interview Techniques**

### **Pre-Interview**

Before attending an interview, certain steps can be taken to ensure, as far as possible, that the interview is a success.

Find something out about the company.

Prepare a list of suitable questions for the interview.

Prepare answers for commonly occurring questions such as:

What do you know about the company?

What do you have to offer?

Why are you looking for a new position? (don't be negative about your current employer)

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses? (never so none?)

### **Start of the Interview**

Ensure that you are well presented, punctual and friendly

A firm handshake and a smile are good openers

Attitude is important, even if you have reservations about attending, be positive. The position may turn out not to be what you want, you can always turn down a position, you can never retrieve an interview if you fail to give the best of yourself.

Never sit back and expect your experience/qualifications alone to secure employment, personality is as important. Be positive, confident, honest and open! Be confident about the experience you have gained but don't attempt to make out that you have more experience than you really have!

### **Asking Questions**

Prepare your questions well in advance, ensuring they are positive relevant and knowledgeable.

Do not ask about the salary, benefits or holidays. If you are asked what salary you are looking for never give a range, as they are likely to offer you the lowest end!

### **At the end of the Interview**

If you are asked whether you are interested in the position – unless you are definitely not, always answer yes

Try to impress on the interviewer that you have enjoyed your meeting and are interested in taking things further.

Thank the interviewer for their time and ask when and how you will receive feedback.

## Body Language

Your body can betray what your feelings are at an interview. Different candidates will give different impressions to the interviewer by the way they behave. Examples are:

1. A person who sits with their arms and legs crossed and their head down. No eye contact with the interview panel.

**Message – I'm scared**

2. A person who slouches in their seat, with their legs outstretched, their hands in their pockets, looking out of the window.

**Message – I'm not interested**

3. Sitting up straight, arms resting in lap, looking straight at the interviewer and smiling

**Message – I'm interested and alert**

4. Leaning forward and stabbing a finger at the interviewer. Angry expression on face.

**Message – I'm aggressive**

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

- 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 your 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. Its naturally but your interviewer will not attack!
- Maintain natural eye contact with the interviewer – that is maintain eye contact, but don't stare like a snake
- Don't over use your hands, if you are a natural gesticulator
- Don't squirm or fidget
- Do nod and Mmm to show them you are listening
- Above all try to be you, try to be natural, unless you're naturally offensive!

## **Do's and Don'ts**

Don't wear anything new – wear something that you are familiar with

You shouldn't wear a skirt which is too short or has a split up to your bum!

Don't leave your mobile phone switched on

Don't chew gum

Try to avoid saying 'um' and 'so...'

Do try to use correct grammar

Do make sure you know where the interview will be held. Make sure you know how to get there. If you go by car you need to research where you can park

## **What not to Say**

I've had a few interviews and I usually know more than the interviewer

(When asked about working in a small team and coping with personality differences) I've sued some people!"

## **Preparation**

Confirm you will be attending, ring up and use it as an opportunity to check practical stuff like parking or directions

Find out who will be interviewing you, are there any additional tests?

Look at your application again. Pick out points interviewers are likely to want to talk to you about i.e. qualifications, training. Think about gaps in your experience

Do more research

Anticipate questions you are likely to be asked

Plan what to wear. If you know you look good you will feel more confident. Clean, smart and simple is best whatever the job. You need to look like you made an effort, even if the job entails you wearing oily overalls.

Make sure you know where you are going, how long you need to allow to get there. If you park on an employers premises, remember your car says a lot about you – so make sure its clean

## **Types of Interview**

### **Unstructured**

This is where an employer might ask you questions about your interests, background, previous work experience and any other subject that they feel is important to their organisation or the job.

In an unstructured interview the interviewer normally has personal opinions about right and wrong answers. If you give reasons to support your replies, it will help your interviewer see that you are intelligent, not just opinionated.

### **Structured**

These are where an employer will ask you about your skills, knowledge and experience in areas that relate to the job you are being interviewed for.

Employers want to get an idea of whether you have the necessary skills to do the job.

Example question – give me an example to a time when you had to plan and organise your own work?

Here they want to look at how you assess your workload, plan and prioritise it.

## How to Impress at Interviews

- Be a good listener – let your interviewer know that you are listening attentively by nodding, using facial expressions that make you look interested, leaning towards the interviewer, picking up on key words they've used and asking them to expand on subjects that interest you. But never interrupt the interviewer.
- Be honest – if you don't understand a question ask for an explanation. If you're faced with something that you really can't deal with be truthful – it's more impressive than pretending to have the answer to everything. Use get out phrases like 'that's something I'd need to think about' or 'that's outside my present experience' to give yourself a bit of a breather.
- Be consistent – many interviewers ask the same things in different ways as a means of checking you. Listen to yourself as well as to them. If you feel you made a mistake, put things right by saying 'what I really meant was ....'
- Avoid the temptation to talk too much – if there are awkward silences when you've finished speaking, don't fill them with nervous chatter. Some interviewers use silence to see how you react. Take the lead back to them by pleasantly saying 'Does that answer your question. But stick to the answer requested, don't inundate the interviewer with information they don't need.
- Be aware of your body language – stillness is reassuring and fidgeting is a distraction. Looking your interviewer in the eye is essential, but don't overdo it. A smile puts everyone at ease, but a constant grin is unnerving! Try to sit up straight. Leaning forward makes you appear attentive – being slumped conveys boredom.
- Be positive – even if your last job was the pits, if asked for your reasons for leaving don't let a negative word pass your lips. Never say anything unfavourable about your colleagues, boss or job – it'll just make you look bad. Instead say, 'I genuinely enjoyed my last job, but I'm eager to move onto a different challenge and use the skills I've gained.
- If you're not asked about something that you feel is important, raise the subject yourself. This is your chance to sell yourself so don't waste the opportunity.

## Interviewer Questions

- Tell me about yourself – leave out the life history – this is a chance to show them you are normal and break the ice.
- Why do you want this job? – Enthuse about how your skills are a perfect match
- What are your long term aims? – Keep them relevant to the job your are after. Ambition is a good quality, don't hold back.
- What are your strengths/weaknesses? –
- What do you enjoy most/least? – what you enjoy most should be relevant to the job. What you enjoy least should be something that you have no power over, such as those days when you achieve very little due to cancellations, interruptions, circumstances beyond your control. However. Let them know that, though you dislike it you can handle it.
- What's your greatest achievement so far? – keep it relevant to the job, leading your pub quiz team to victory may not be relevant!
- What would you like to be better at? – let them know you're open to developing your skills in relevant areas.
- How would your colleagues describe you? – Don't be bigheaded, but don't put yourself down. Be honest – and try to use real positive examples from your last appraisal.
- Why should we give you this job? – Unless this is the opening question, think about how your answers have gone down so far, and what you've been asked. If they've asked a lot about your teamwork skills, make these one of your strengths you highlight in your answer
- What do you know about our business? – show them you've done your research
- How would you fit in with our culture? – if you're stuck, answer with a question – ask them how they would describe their culture and then match yourself to the company.
- What do you think are the most important qualities for this job are? – show you know what's actually involved in the post you're are going for on a daily basis. Match up your qualities to everyday tasks – you want them to almost be able to see you doing the job.
- What can you contribute – this is your chance to shine . Tell them about your achievements which are relevant to the position you are applying for.
- What has been your biggest failure – try to pick a failure which you were later able to correct or something that is not really important.
- How could you improve yourself – do not mention anything negative about yourself
- Can you act on your own initiative – you should say yes. You could ask how much responsibility you would have.
- What do you dislike doing – say that you are prepared to do whatever it takes to get the job done well and on time and try to do disagreeable things first to get them out of the way rather than putting them off.

### **Your Questions**

- Can you describe a typical day?
- What training do you offer?
- What kind of opportunities are there for growth in this company?
- What's happened to people who did this job before?
- I read about your new opportunities/take over etc – can you tell me more about that
- When can I expect to hear your decision?
- What is the next step

### **Bad Questions**

- How much holiday will I get? When will that increase?
- What is your grievance procedure?
- When will I get a pay rise?
- Has your long-standing dispute over working conditions been resolved?
- Do you deserve all the bad publicity you get?
- What was the truth about your managing directors sudden retirement?

## **After the Interview**

On the way home try to think objectively about interview – how would you have rated your performance if you were the interviewer? Ask yourself:

- What could you have done differently or better
- Did you feel as well prepared as you could be
- What did you answer well (Lets not be too hard on ourselves)
- Are they someone you want to work for
- Does the job live up to your expectations

If you don't get the job, learn from this and use it to improve your future performance. Reasons for employers give for rejecting candidates at this stage are:

- Inappropriate appearance
- Being late
- Appearing disorganised
- Poor communication skills
- Lack of insight into the organisation or job
- Lack of energy or enthusiasm
- No clear career aim
- Over familiarity
- A defensive attitude
- Criticism of past employer
- A tendency to make excuses or blame others
- Coming across as only interested in what you can get out of the organisations
- Sarcasm, aggression or rudeness
- Lack of confidence
- Poor references