

TIPS for a SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW with the CLIENT



The advice below is intended to assist candidates in their preparation prior to a first interview with a client. Candidates should bear in mind that this advice is not binding and a general guide only and that other factors, most especially their “fit” to the job specification will determine their success or otherwise at a job interview.

A successful interview is the result of thorough preparation and research. No matter how well-qualified you think you are, it is not advisable to walk into an interview with the intention of “winging it”. Preparation breeds confidence – you present yourself and communicate better. When you communicate well, you have a better shot of convincing the client that you are what they are looking for.

Before the Interview

1. Make sure you confirm your interview details.

- Check that you have the exact time, date and location of the interview.
- An interview is an important commitment of time for both you and the interviewer. Do not reschedule at the last minute or reschedule more than once if possible. From the interviewer’s point of view, if you are a serious candidate, you will attend the interview at the scheduled time and date.
- Plan how to get to the interview beforehand. If you’re driving to an unknown location, take the time out to do a trial run the day before. If taking public transport, familiarize yourself with the schedules. Make allowances for delays and bad weather when scheduling transport.

2. Do some research

- Find out all you can about the company and the industry they belong to. Familiarize yourself with the organization’s products, services, history, performance, market, location, size, structure and competition. It will be easier to answer questions such as “Why do you want to work for us?” and “What do you know about the company?” if you are armed with well-researched information.

3. Study the job specification.

- Make a list of your skills and achievements that match the company’s selection criteria.
- Prepare specific examples that demonstrate a particular skill or attribute and that show the client that you have what they are looking for.

4. Reread your copy of your job application.

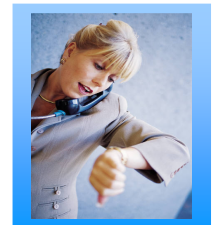
- The client has chosen you to come for an interview on the basis of your job application. A good part of the interview would probably be expanding on the information you provided. It is important that your answers to the interviewer's questions (for example those related to previous employment, dates etc) are consistent with the information in your resume/ job application.

5. Prepare a list of questions you may want to ask the interviewer.

THE INTERVIEW

1. Punctuality

- Be on time. It is ok to arrive 10 minutes early to your interview but don't be too early and, above all don't be late. Arriving late with excuses (e.g. delays in public transport, road works, foul weather) gets your interview off to a bad start.



2. Appearance/ Presentation

- Dress in appropriate business attire. Do not dress casually or business casual, even if it is Friday. Dress conservatively – wear minimal makeup and jewellery. Your appearance should reflect your professionalism and attention to detail.
- It is best not to wear cologne or perfume. You never know if the interviewer is allergic or cannot tolerate your scent.
- Do not walk into the company premises chewing gum – if you have a breath problem, use mints instead.
- Be very polite to receptionists and secretaries. Some employers ask their staff how they felt about the candidate so take care of the impression you make on others.
- Try to relax. Walk with confidence, shake hands firmly. Smile and keep eye contact.
- Switch off your mobile phone or put it on silent mode.

2. Answering Questions

- To project confidence and authority, control your tone of voice, speed of delivery and volume.
- Answer questions as concisely and clearly as possible. Do not take more than 2 minutes in answering a question.
- Use examples when necessary to stress a point, expound on an idea or support a statement.
- Ask for clarification of questions you do not understand.
- If asked about job-related knowledge or experience you don't have, do not panic. It is okay not to know everything. Stress other attributes and provide examples that show your ability to cope with new challenges and learn new tasks quickly.

- Be truthful. Most information can be verified. Do not try to hide gaps in your work history, instead explain them.
- Don't run down your existing company. Don't tell tales or make damaging remarks about your present/ previous colleagues. Emphasize that you have positive reasons for leaving that job.

3. Asking Questions

- Asking questions allows for a better understanding of what the role requires and your suitability for the role.
- Asking questions about the role and the company also demonstrates enthusiasm and career motivation.
- Examples of questions you may want to ask are:
 - How is performance measured?
 - What encouragement is given to undertake further training?
 - Expansion plans?
 - What are the company's goals in the short/ medium-term?
- Do not ask too quickly about money and benefits. That is for the second interview only, unless you are asked your current salary.

AFTER the Interview

- Do not leave the interview without asking potential employers how you did or asking what information they might need from you to keep moving forward.
- Never fail to have a professional, mature conversation after an employer extends you an offer; you can indicate that you want some time to think things over.
- Normally, the offer will be made via the recruitment consultant. If the employer makes a direct offer, it is better to ask for time and to then ask advice from your consultant.
- Under no circumstances should you telephone the interviewer directly to follow-up your application. Get in touch with your recruitment consultant if you want feedback. They are better trained to discuss details and offer advice and will always negotiate with the client on your behalf.
- Write a Thank You letter or email to the interviewer. This small gesture is appreciated by most people.