

Interview Advice

If interviews make you feel nerve-wracked, you're not alone. But, like it or not, job interviews are the primary method by which both employers and candidates judge each other.

For employers, the objective of the interview is to qualify candidates. For candidates, the goal is to assess whether the company and their role will meet your career aspirations and needs and therefore ultimately, receive an offer of employment. It's key you make the right impression.

Preparation

Make sure you know exactly where the interview will take place and the name and position of the person you are due to meet. Work out your route in advance and allow a generous margin of error in case of unforeseen circumstances. Have the telephone number of the company handy as well as the contact details for your CWP Consultant so that you can let them know if you are running late - this is generally forgiven where as unannounced lateness generally isn't. You will be informed of roughly how long the interview will take so arrange other appointments accordingly - don't leave your car on a meter and end up worrying more about being clamped than getting the job offer. Although your Consultant will provide you with in-depth information, it is vital you do your own preparation and have a list of areas ready which you wish to question further in the interview.

Research the company

Candidates who arrive at interviews completely unprepared are remembered for all the wrong reasons. Instead of demonstrating their competence and thoroughness, they give the perception of disinterest. Use the Internet and the company web site as a starting point for your research. Using a reliable search engine, conduct a keyword search on the company name. Ask your consultant to provide you with any further information you feel necessary.

Learn about the products and/or services offered by the organisation.

Gain an understanding of the employer's history, ethos, objectives and policies relating to its history, its current situation and its future. Cultural fit is as important as your technical fit.

Prepare yourself

Interviewers ask the same general questions in addition to those of a more technical nature. Learn them, prepare your answers, and practice them on friends. Common questions are "Why are you interested in this position?" "Tell me about your current boss". "What are the most satisfying/frustrating things about your current employment?" "What are your strengths/where do you think your weaknesses lay?" "Why do you think we should give you this job?" "Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years time?"

In order to answer some of these questions you need to prepare yourself and conduct a Self-Assessment. Organise information about yourself in the areas of education, work and personal experiences in order to be able to relate to the position you are seeking.

Become aware of your strengths and weaknesses; be able to present them in a positive manner. Don't pretend you have no weaknesses because everyone has some but on the other hand don't put your self down. You need to discuss your weaknesses as though you have recognised them and addressed them. "I used to take on so much work, my time management was poor, now I prioritise my workload first thing every morning and have learned to delegate particular pieces of work". It is very likely that you will be asked to provide specific examples of how you would deal with a particular scenario, or how you have acted and what the final outcome was in a particular instance.

Think about your career goals: How do your aspirations relate to the employer and in the future? What can you offer the employer? How can you contribute to the employer in a way that will benefit the organisation? What unique skills, abilities, and interests can you offer?

Have in mind the characteristics that you would like to get across in the interview and review everything you've done in the past for evidence of these characteristics and be prepared to address weak areas or gaps in your CV.

Ensure that you know you know your CV inside out and anticipate the questions you'll be asked. Then put in the time to make your responses flow. Aim to sound natural and conversational, not as though you're reading from a script.

Sell yourself. Try to avoid giving clichéd answers to interview questions (it is likely your interviewer has heard these responses more than you care to imagine). Use examples from your own experience, give your opinion.

Typical Interview Dynamics – Content and process

Non Verbal Communication

Consider your dress and personal hygiene - what does your appearance say about you? Remember that many employers form initial impressions based on an applicant's appearance (not attractiveness). Be sensible about how you dress. Experts on interviewing give tips on what to wear, which colours to shy away from, what to carry and all that. The real rule for how to dress and what to carry is to use common sense. Look neat and clean – would you fit in with the company's target market/ can you represent the company at a meeting?

Offer a firm handshake - Your handshake says much about your personality. Give a firm, "full" handshake and use eye contact. Your handshake should be the same for both male and female interviewers.

Think about your eye contact – Don't stare at the interviewer, but eyes should not wander around the room or be fixed on the floor. Good eye contact can communicate confidence and enthusiasm.

Be attentive - Signals that show attention include nodding, smiling, eye contact, and "minimal affirmations" such as "yes," "mm-hmm," and "I understand."

Be aware of your tone of voice - Monotones or soft speech may cause the interviewer to lose interest.

Consider your posture - Good posture is important; be relaxed, but don't slouch or be so laid back you're horizontal!

Use gestures appropriately - If hand gestures come naturally, and are not overused, they can be used to emphasize important points. Be aware of fidgeting, playing with jewellery, and foot shaking. A practice interview helps and your Hunter Selection Consultant will be happy to assist.

Four stages of a typical interview

- **Breaking the Ice**
- **Exploring your Background and Qualifications**
- **Matching Personal Qualifications with the Prospective Job**
- **Summarising the Interview**

Characteristics employers typically seek

Ability to Handle Pressure	Assertiveness	Communication Skills	Flexibility
Initiative	Intelligence	Leadership	Motivation
Organisational Skills	Self-Confidence	Enthusiasm	Interpersonal Skills

Tips for positive Interview Behaviour

BE:

Yourself. Present yourself in a confident manner.

Enthusiastic.

Assertive, not aggressive. You can sell yourself without being overbearing.

Aware of the interviewer's body language. Follow his/her lead with appropriate behaviour.

SAY:

Give specific examples of your skills. Tie them into the position. Prove how valuable you are.

Express your interest in the organisation.

Ask questions to gain information and demonstrate your interest.

Ask for feedback if it is not offered.

DO:

Shake hands before and after the interview.

Keep track of your nonverbal behaviour.

DON'T:

Discuss salary – leave it with your CWP Consultant who is more experienced at salary and package negotiation than you are. This also protects you from being seen in a negative light.

Reasons Interviewers reject candidates

- Poor personal appearance
- Failure to maintain appropriate eye contact
- Lack of solid career planning- vague objectives and goals
- Being late to the interview
- Overbearing, "know-it-all" attitude
- Not listening to the interviewee (don't be afraid to ask for clarification)
- Talking over the interviewer
- Lack of interest/enthusiasm and/or perception you will move on quickly
- Failure to appear confident
- No insight into the nature of the company
- Lack of questions (i.e. lack of interest)
- No understanding of personal strengths/ weaknesses
- Interviewee "assumes" interviewer will figure out why he/she is the best candidate
- Inability to clearly express oneself

The interview on the day

Answering Questions

An interview involves an exchange of information. Improve the quality of your answers with a few top tips:

- Answer the question that's asked
- Answer questions honestly and directly
- Organise your answers
- Be brief (interviewers do not like waffle)
- Answer questions with interest and enthusiasm
- Be positive about your reason for leaving your current position
- Quantify the confidence other employers have placed in you
- Never speak badly of past supervisors or employers
- Make the position you're interviewing for your chief objective

If you don't know the answer to the question, don't try and answer it. Instead say how you would approach the

problem/answering the question.

Handling Obstacles – turn weaknesses into strengths

There may be aspects of your career that could present obstacles to employment if not handled correctly. Even the most common causes of concern for employers can be turned into positives:

You were dismissed from your last job:

Terminations are emotional. Be sure that when you discuss your termination during the first interview, you can provide emotionally neutral answers. When you respond to questions about terminations, always include some lessons learned that will benefit future employers.

You were made redundant:

By now, just about every interviewer has had some experience of redundancy situations. The good news is that the stigma of unemployment is disappearing, especially when the reasons for job losses are not performance-related. Emphasize that the redundancy was unrelated to you as a person and as a worker. Employers are curious about how you will react to adverse situations if hired, and here is a good opportunity to show that you're a survivor who makes the best out of every situation.

You don't have enough experience:

When employers raise objections, you must be able to identify related experience or transferable skills that will convince the interviewer of your ability to do the job. If the interviewer feels you don't possess the right degree, stress the quality of experience that you do have and how it is a strong foundation for meeting their needs. Remember, the fact that you are being interviewed at all means that despite perhaps not having the ideal degree you are still a viable candidate.

You're over-qualified:

If you're deemed as being over-qualified, your first response should be to reiterate your best qualifications for the position. In other words, view the objection as another opportunity to sell your qualifications. If the interviewer is still unsure, probe more deeply into the resistance as it is more likely that they feel you will become bored with the role and leave or disrupt the team.

Salary questions

This is probably the most uncomfortable part of the interview process for both parties. **It is not advisable to ask about salary and package details at the interview** but if you are asked, you need to be realistic and give an honest overview. You will have been briefed by your Hunter Selection consultant as to the salary that your CV was presented to them with, so please remember what was agreed. The interviewer will most definitely know the salary that you were forwarded at so tread carefully if this is brought up.

Your consultant will play a key role in the negotiation process at offer stage. Your consultant is a trained intermediary, so talk openly with him or her. Share your concerns and expectations and call with comments or questions.

Above all, remember that the opportunity itself should be the single most important element of your decision. No amount of money will make a bad job good. A quality position and working with quality people in a dynamic work environment, offers rewards that money can't buy.

Attitude and demeanour

Be unaggressively assertive

Find the right tone in which to present your positive aspects. You have to talk about your achievements to show you are the right person but do it without being boastful.

Have a positive attitude

Above all, don't wait until after the event to decide that you wished you'd tried harder to get the position. Always go in with the intention of getting an offer, only then do you really have the chance to weigh up how this opportunity compares with others. Many people, with the benefit of hindsight, have regretted they didn't take a particular interview sufficiently seriously - don't let yourself be in this "if only" category!

Closing the Interview

There are only three important things you need to remember about closing an interview (besides the obvious thank you and firm handshake):

- If you have questions about the company that would affect whether you would want to spend further time interviewing, ask them now.
- If the interviewer has failed to elicit some important information about you, make that information known before you close and re-iterate your interest in the position.
- Find out what the next step will be and when it is likely to occur

Feedback

It is important to feedback to your consultant at Hunter Selection, after the interview process – whether it is positive or negative to ensure that we can manage your application appropriately from there.