

Interview Tips

Being well prepared is the best way to make the most of an interview. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so here are some valuable tips.

Do your homework

Your consultant should be only too happy (and impressed) to help you do your homework, and may have a file of information they can supply to you. Research the company by visiting their website and browsing through all of the sections. Take notes about the various sections i.e. background to the company; company news or newsletters; products; about us; about our people. Read and reread the relevant details to familiarise yourself and commit to memory. Annual reports and brochures can also be helpful and are a good source of information. These are often available at the reception desk of the company you are interviewing with, if it's not included on their website.

Don't be afraid to tell the interviewer that you have researched the company – they will be impressed!

Practice your interview techniques

Practicing interviews with friends or family members, and recording yourself is a proven way to improve communication skills. It will build up your confidence and help you get your thoughts clear in your mind. You will hear whether you're speaking too quickly or if your sentences are too long or your answers are hard to follow. Practice until you feel confident with yours points and answers.

Learn to handle behavioural interview questions

This is where the questions require you to provide an actual example from your work or life experience. Questions will start with words such as "tell me about a time when..." or "give me an example of..." The technique is built on the theory that the best indicator of future performance is past performance. It is good to have some situations in mind as preparation. Your consultant should be able to help you with examples.

Pre-interview check

Always make sure you have the correct name and position for each person you will be meeting with. Check that you have the full correct address and confirm the time. Read the details back to the person giving them to you to ensure that they are correct. Again, your recruitment consultant should provide these. If you are dealing directly with the company, it's perfectly acceptable to ask its HR department to provide these details.

Appearance

It is really important that you feel comfortable and confident, so wear something that you know makes you look good, but that is also comfortable. Check that your clothes are clean and well ironed. Avoid visual distractions such as loud ties, chipped nail polish, heavy makeup, jewellery that jangles, overpowering fragrances and unwashed hair or hair that flops into your eyes or needs constant pushing back.

Be punctual

On the day of the interview, relax – make sure you allow plenty of time to arrive at the interview without being stressed or rushed. On the way to the interview, take your time and smile, the receptionist at the interview firm will be nice to you and you'll feel good. Remember it's normal to feel nervous, it means that this interview is important to you.

During the interview

- Listen to every question
- Be honest about reasons for leaving previous roles but don't say anything negative about a past employer, it can reflect badly on you
- Don't interrupt anyone while they are speaking
- Keep your answers short and to the point but avoid answering with just a "yes" or "no". If the interviewer wants more information, he or she will ask for it
- Maintain good eye contact
- If there is more than one person at the interview, address all of them no matter how junior or seemingly incidental.

Prepare something for when you are invited to ask questions – two to three questions is enough. Some questions could include:

- Who you will be reporting to
- Questions about the team you would be joining
- Career path options
- Projects you could be working on

Be careful not to ask a question that they have already answered, unless you are asking for further clarification or information.

Never ask a question about salary and benefits at initial interviews, unless you have been offered the job. They are best saved up until you have ultimate bargaining power, at the very least, second interview stage. The most appropriate time and your strongest bargaining point is between being offered the job and accepting it.

Enjoy the experience and.... Good Luck!