

Face to Face Interview Preparation Techniques

Interviews need not be endurance tests. Instead, they can be relatively relaxed two-way information exchanges. Remember, the interview exists for your benefit too, so that you can discover if this is really the job for you. Good preparation beforehand and a confident performance on the day can turn the interview into the subsequent offer of an Opportunity.

Background

Success with Opportunities is dependent on the thoroughness of the preparations you make before an interview. The Interview Panel have gone to a great deal of trouble drawing up the Opportunity description and person specification. It is important to select the correct candidate; therefore they put considerable effort into their selection procedures.

Pre-conditioning the interviewer

It is well established that if interviewers have formed an opinion about applicants before the interview then they will expect this to be fulfilled during the interview. Consequently, anything you can do or show to impress will be valuable. You will have already begun by submitting a professional-looking CV that focuses on your achievements.

Think Positively

It is surprising how many people prepare themselves to fail the interview. Remember you have obtained the interview on the strength of your CV and telephone interview.

Think - and be - positive.

Background Information

Before attending an interview it is important that you find out as much as possible about the Opportunity and the partners involved.

Things you may need to find out:

- The background to the Opportunity
- The range of goods or services they provide

It is very valuable to show the interviewer that you have taken the trouble to find out about the Opportunity and it suggests that you are organised and have initiative. It also puts you in a much better position to decide whether or not the Opportunity is for you.

Practice possible questions and answers.

The better you prepare and practice your answers, the better you will perform on the day, however do make sure you listen to the question asked and do answer that question, not the one you have rehearsed!

Practice your answers out loud. This could be with a friend or relative.

Go through each **selection criteria** and think of questions you may be asked based on these. For each, think of an example of where you have demonstrated the skill and how you were successful in doing so.

Keep asking yourself those open-ended questions that interviewers use: 'How..?', 'Why... 'What ... ?' etc.

Follow this basic **structure for interview answers**. It helps you get across all the relevant information concisely:

Situation-a brief outline of the project-the aims and some background information

Task-what you had to do to achieve your main goal

Action that you in particular took to deliver that task

Result-was the goal met? Was it successful and to what extent? Try and use both qualitative and quantitative feedback-for example 14% increase in sales and good customer feedback

Learned-what you learned-be positive and use buzz words from the Opportunity Description. For example, if the question asks about your IT skills and you learned to use a specific type of software mentioned in the selection criteria, emphasise this

Link-say how you would apply what you learned and the skills you gained to the job. It's not necessary to do this for every question, but doing this once or twice shows you understand what is needed for the job and how you match the criteria

With this in mind, you will give a **much better impression at interview, and will clearly show the interviewer that you have really** thought about the Opportunity and what you have to offer.

Question and answer tips for the day

Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.

Some questions have **two parts** to them, so make sure you address both

Prepare your own questions for the interviewer

It is important that you do not freeze when the interviewer says "and have you any questions for me?"

Think of a list of questions before the interview.

Asking questions shows that you have thought about the job and demonstrates an intelligent and enquiring mind

If in doubt, keep your questions to safe areas such as "What will my induction programme entail?"

The more you prepare beforehand the better your chances of success

Do take that little extra time and trouble that will enable you to perform with confidence and do well on the day.

Create a favourable first impression

There is no substitute for face-to-face contact which can either confirm or contradict the impression already created by your CV. You have a short time in which to make a positive impression on someone. Increase your chances by following a few basic rules:

- Arrive 15 minutes early as this enables you to compose yourself and be on time!
- Check times and routes of trains or buses beforehand and don't plan for a tight schedule, this may cause you unnecessary stress on the day
- If feasible do a run through of your journey the day before
- Save all your energy for the interview

Many people will argue that you should not be assessed on how you look but on who you are and what you can contribute. However, in practice appearance really does matter. It is in your interest to look smart, it gives the impression that you are serious about the Opportunity and that it is important to you.

Here are some basic rules for dress:

- Be smart
- Choose an appropriate style with the organisation in mind
- Make sure you are comfortable

Be friendly

- Try and be as relaxed as possible
- Greet the interviewer with a friendly smile and a firm, not vice-like, handshake
- Don't smoke just prior to your interview

Remember that some interviewers may be nervous too and will welcome talking to a relaxed, friendly person.

Trained interviewers will try and help you to relax as they realise what a nerve-wracking process interviews can be.

Body language can say more than words.

- Make eye contact with the person you are speaking to
- Find a relaxed but alert position to sit in and try not to move too much
- Listen to what the interviewer is saying - don't try and jump in.

What we say with our bodies is very powerful, and you may increase your likelihood of success by ensuring that you give out positive non-verbal clues.

The major ones are:

- Smiling often
- Nodding the head when the interviewer is speaking
- Leaning forward while listening and
- When replying maintaining a high level of eye contact.

Be positive

Be positive and enthusiastic about yourself, your achievements and your experience.

Even jobs or situations in which you feel you were not highly successful can, with a bit of thought, be put in a positive light.

It shows a certain amount of strength in being able to admit that you made a mistake and learned from it.

Remember that the interview is a two-way process. Although you are selling yourself, you are not the only one under scrutiny. The interviewer is looking at you to see if you have the relevant qualifications, experience and personality, to fit with the Opportunity. You are looking at the interviewer and the surroundings to decide whether or not you like what is on offer. Ask yourself... "Is this really what I want?"