

The interview process

An interview works both ways, not only enabling the company to determine whether you have the personal attributes and qualifications that are right for the job, but also allowing you to decide whether the particular company is the place for you and whether the position holds the growth and development opportunities that you are after. In effect you are interviewing each other to decide whether a mutually rewarding professional relationship can be formed.

Think of the interview as a business meeting. Highlighting your relevant skills and abilities and asking intelligent questions will help both parties; allowing the hiring manager to evaluate your professional and personal needs and bettering your understanding of the company's culture and the job's responsibilities, helping you to better communicate your interest in the role.

Presenting yourself in the best possible light is going to maximise your chances of getting the job. This is best achieved by being you. Remember how you feel and act when you are 'at your best' and try to place yourself in the same frame of mind on the day of the interview. If you act differently or try to be someone you are not, you may find yourself in a job that does not suit you and will not give you what you are ideally looking for.

There are some basic, but important tips that can ensure that you make a great first impression:

- Put your best foot forward by dressing professionally and appropriately for the company (we can give you an insight into the type of culture the company has). Taking precautions such as bringing an umbrella if the weather looks threatening will make sure you look your best when you step into the interview room.
- Arriving on time is very important. Better still, if you arrive a few minutes early, you will have a moment to take in your surroundings and prepare yourself. If you are late for reasons beyond your control, don't panic. A sincere and simple explanation and apology will minimise the impact of your late arrival (though prevention is always better than cure!).
- If you are interviewing in a foreign country, take note of local customs such as how you should greet the interviewer (by their first or last name and/or title) and ensure that you know the pronunciation. If you are not certain, ask them to repeat it.

During the interview your aim is to get the interviewer to see why you are the perfect candidate for the role:

- Show your confidence and that you are happy to have the opportunity to meet them by smiling, shaking hands firmly, making eye contact, listening and maintaining interest at all times.
- If you feel nervous, as long as you explain that you are nervous and try to relax and overcome it, nervousness will not generally be seen negatively. It can show that you are extremely keen to impress and that getting the job is important to you, but try to bring your nerves under control as the interview progresses.
- Follow the interviewer's leads, but be sure to ask them to describe the position and the duties to you clearly and early in the interview. With this knowledge you will be able to emphasise your strengths and explain how your background, personal characteristics, skills and accomplishments complement particular situations and aspects of the job.
- You can display your passion for the industry and enthusiasm for the role by doing your research - Learn pertinent facts about the company such as principal lines of business, locations, number of employees, technology, etc. The company's website can be a useful source of information.
- Discuss and consider what the opportunity could mean to you in your immediate and long-term career development.
- If the interviewer asks what salary you are seeking, it is often best to mention what you are currently being paid and emphasise that while a suitable level of remuneration is important, you are primarily interested in a career development opportunity and that the final salary is negotiable depending on the agreed level of responsibility and future career path.
- Conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job. That is why you are there! If you are interested in the opportunity, let them know! This will enhance your chances of eventually being offered the position. If you have decided that you are not interested, maintain your enthusiasm, as this will demonstrate a professional approach and leave a positive impression.
- You can bring a copy of your résumé, written references, and any relevant documentation relating to your previous work (the latter only if you are authorised by current or previous employers to have such material which you can introduce when and if you feel it is appropriate, or if you are specifically asked by the interviewer to do so.

We could give you a long list of all the things not to do, but we like to focus on the positive. So long as you conduct yourself in an assertive and respectful manner and approach the interview with integrity and enthusiasm, you can be confident that you have given it your best shot. The employer will focus on your strengths and competencies when considering you for the job and not get side tracked by any unprofessional behaviour. Similarly, the interviewer should act in a

professional manner towards you and if you at any time feel they are not, you should feel free to politely advise that you do not wish to proceed and withdraw from the interview.

You should be prepared to answer common questions such as:

- What interests you about our company?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your background and accomplishments.
- What are your strengths and your weaknesses?
- How would you describe your most recent job performance?
- Can you tell us about an interesting project that you have worked on that is relevant to this role?
- Can you give me an example of how you have managed a particularly difficult client and/or technical problem?
- Can you think of a time when you faced a conflicting situation in the office and tell us how you handled this?
- Are there any outside activities that are relevant to your personal development?
- How do you keep your professional qualifications and knowledge of technology current?
- Have you suggested any improvements to processes or procedures that have been adopted by other organisations, and if so, can you describe?

Being prepared for questions like these can be vital to maintaining your composure during the interview. Rehearsing responses to questions in the days leading up to the interview means you are less likely to be caught by surprise or become confused and also that you will give more thoughtful and impressive answers.

Asking questions shows that you are interested and well prepared for the interview.

Some questions that you might like to ask the interviewer include:

- What would I be expected to achieve in this position?
- What would my responsibilities and duties be?
- Can you describe a typical day in this job?
- What are the most difficult aspects of this position?
- What are the department's plans for the next two years?
- What is the commitment to training and development?
- What projects would I be involved in within the first year?
- Do you think I am suited to your plans and the position?

Closing the interview and providing feedback:

Don't be afraid to let the interviewer know if you are interested in the position. If you feel the position is for you and you want it, let them know that you are impressed with what they have had to say, that you feel that you are well suited, and would do an excellent job for the company in the position. Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration.

The interviewer may be non-committal at this stage, as they may need to discuss the outcome of the interview with other people in the company, or may have to interview other candidates before making a decision (even if he or she believes, at this stage, that you are the best person for the job). So don't be discouraged.

If you feel that the interview has not gone well and that you may have been rejected, try not to let this show; it is surprising the number of positions offered to candidates who thought that they had not performed well in the interview. We are often our own worst critics.

Following the interview you should give your consultant feedback on how you feel the interview went. If you have a positive view regarding the position, we will convey this to the client along with any other information that you feel is relevant, as well as asking the client for some feedback on your performance. Any extra information you may be interested in from the employer will also be sought (now is the time to suggest a second interview if you feel it would be appropriate).

If the outcome was that you were unsuccessful, your conclusions as to why this was the case are important, and by combining them with the client feedback, we can better target future opportunities.

Accepting a job offer:

If you are offered the job and wish to accept, Congratulations!!! Please let us know as soon as possible so we can convey your acceptance and arrange for you to receive the letter of offer and the employment contract.

If you are offered the job straight away, but need further time to consider your decision (for example, an interview with another company is scheduled), be open about this and commit to a time by which you will convey your decision (and ensure that this is definitely 'at the latest').