

Best Tips for Succeeding at Job Interviews



By Carole Brown

The three P's – Planning, Preparation and Practice - are key to interview success. Here are some tips to ensure you are on the right track to success.

Do your homework

Research the organisation and the position. Find out who the interviewers are and what their particular interest could be. Think about what the position really requires and revisit your application, focussing on how your experiences, strengths and achievements are relevant.

Anticipate questions and practice responses

Most questions can be predicted from information contained in the job description, research about the role and the organisation; and information from the contact person. Prepare and practice responses to possible questions, ideally with a friend or colleague who can provide objective feedback.

In a nutshell, this is what interviewers will be looking for:

Can you do the job? Do you have the qualifications, experience, attributes and skills to do the job well? Chances are you would not have gotten to interview if they didn't think you could do the job.

Will you do the job? Do you have the necessary personal characteristics to do the job effectively? Are you motivated, enthusiastic, and able to handle stress and do you learn from your mistakes?

Is the fit right? How well do you get on with others? Could they work with you?

Use your best examples

Examples are a potent way to illustrate why you can do the job. Many interviews include behavioural questions where past behaviour and achievements are taken as predictors of future success. Your ability to

provide specific examples that clearly relate to the requirements of the job will provide a massive boost to your chances of success.

Expect difficult questions

Despite your preparation, there are likely to be questions that come out of left field. Take a breath and ask for clarification if you really don't know how to respond. Often when interviewers re-frame a question there is something that you can find to respond to. Never say "I don't know" without also suggesting a way that you would find out or address the problem/situation they pose. As well, don't try to bluff your way through or make things up. A question that commonly traps people relates to weaknesses. Use this question to give a sensible assessment of what your learning needs will be for this particular job. Never comment on personal habits or lifestyle.

Always have questions to ask

Think about what else you would like to know about the job or the organisation. Perhaps there is something you noticed in the newspaper or in their annual report that has triggered your curiosity. By asking informed questions, you are demonstrating research, knowledge, interest and initiative.

Think about what you will wear

It may sound obvious but many people get noticed for the wrong reasons at interviews by wearing inappropriate clothing, too much jewellery and by overdoing the perfume or aftershave. You generally can't go wrong with a professional, neat and understated approach.

Be the best you can be

Arrive at the interview ready to give a good first impression. Any decision to hire will be greatly affected by the rapport you strike up with the interviewers. Try to remember their names, maintain an enthusiastic tone, listen well and answer in full, avoiding any tendency you may have to ramble (particularly when you are nervous). Don't think however that it is only first impressions that count as there are many opportunities to impress throughout the interview, even when you think you have "blown it". Try to avoid thinking that you have messed the interview up because you just don't know what the interviewers are thinking.

Leave your nerves at the door

Anxiety is a common experience at interviews. Find the best way for you to deal with it, whether that be meditation, deep-breathing, exercise or other methods you use to de-stress. The best anxiety reliever is excellent preparation! It's also useful to know that often times interviewers themselves can be nervous – perhaps due to their own lack of preparation or pressure on them to find the right person. Make the job easier for them!

End the interview on a positive, confident note.

Aim to finish the interview as strongly as you (hopefully) started it. Ending on a positive clear note can only help your chances of success. There may be an opportunity to say a few words in conclusion – if so, summarise your strengths and re-affirm your interest in the job.

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