

Succeeding In Interviews



A Spring Professional Candidate Guide



You've done a lot of the hard work getting yourself in front of a potential employer. The interview is where you get the chance to really shine, to show your experience and expertise and how you are the only person for the job.

Although each interview is unique and will be structured based on the type of role recruited for, the level of the hire and the organisation recruiting, one thing is consistent across all interviews: the interview is a two way process; as well as the company deciding whether you are the right person for the job, you are deciding whether the company and the job is right for you.

Although there are no hard and fast rules to interviews, by following these few simple guidelines you'll give yourself the best opportunity to shine as well as having the confidence to know whether you are making the right decision.

1 Be Prepared

Interviewing is a skill and like all skills you will inevitably get better with preparation and practice. When referring to preparation there are a number of key areas you need to think about:



Know Yourself

The majority of job interviews will use your resume as a basis for the meeting. It's therefore crucial you know what is covered, understand why you included each statement

and make sure you can talk around each of them fully. Employers will want to know why each point is pertinent and dig further into the action, result and your role within it.

Know The Company

Once your interview has been confirmed, find out everything you can about the company you are meeting. Carrying out good and relevant research is the single most powerful thing you can do to improve your chances of getting a job. It distinguishes good interviewees from bad ones and you can be sure that the most prepared interviewee will stand out from the ill-prepared.

Researching a company is not just about how many offices they have and what products or services they sell; it's about understanding what their challenges and opportunities are, where their business is going, and how the role fits into this plan.

2 Wowing At The Interview

Positivity

Adopting a positive mindset is probably the most important factor in an interview. Not only should you use the interview as an opportunity to show you have the technical skills necessary, but you also need to show you are sufficiently motivated to get the job done and have the right personality to succeed. Focusing on your positive attitude toward work, excellent communication skills (oral and written), strong interpersonal skills, confidence, flexibility, leadership and self-motivation will ensure you give your all and make you difficult to refuse. No matter how you feel about your current or previous employer, don't be tempted to show negativity about your current role or company; it could reflect badly on you. If an employer sees you as someone who is quick to criticise, they could be mindful of your attitude, so make sure you focus on the good.

Good Answer

Interviewers are not there to try and trip you up or make you look stupid; in fact a good interviewer will want to put you at your ease and make sure they get the best from you. It's their job to ask challenging, probing questions so they get to know you better and how your mind works.

Whenever you are asked a question don't be tempted to rush into an answer. It will not reflect badly if you take a few moments to compose yourself, think of what you'd like to say and compare that to what you think they want to hear. Then and only then is the right time to answer.

When answering questions make sure you use convincing STAR examples (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to show what you've previously achieved and how these achievements can contribute to this role. Talk positively about results and benefits, profitability and productivity to show you are determined to succeed, making sure you are factual, sincere and clear in the points you are making.

Good Question

Preparing incisive and relevant questions to ask at interview shows you to focus on the priorities and scope of the role, on the structure and nature of the organisation and examine ways of making a difference or an improvement. The key is to impress the recruiter and avoid those run of the mills subjects that you should know or that will come out during the recruitment process. Asking questions that could easily be answered by a quick website or Google search will not stand you in good stead and instead may you look ill-prepared and uninterested. Consider what questions the successful candidate would ask...then make sure you are that candidate!

Know The Role

Before every interview you should have received a job or technical specification whether within the original advert or as a separate document. If you are applying for the job via a recruitment consultant, then they should have briefed you before the meeting to talk about what the company wants and how to manage the interview.

All of this information will enable you to structure your experience and expertise to maximise impact. Rather than just going into an interview and reeling off key facts from your resume, use the job spec and/or briefing to relate your experience to the role. This will inevitably include facts from your resume but could also include other pertinent information not covered.

Know The Industry

Researching the company is a good way to impress an interviewer but if you want to really make yourself stand out then find out about the environment in which they operate. You should show an in-depth understanding of their industry/sector and their competitors to show you are reading around the subject and understand the environment you are looking to work in.

Websites can provide up to the minute facts and figures about companies from around the world, while sites such as www.channelnewsasia.com and www.ft.com are a good starting point for the latest company and industry news. Trade publications also offer a wealth of industry specific information and will highlight the issues that affect, or have the potential to affect, the company you are looking to work for. Many trade publications also boast their own websites where you subscribe to receive email alerts or read the latest news.

Know How You Will Add Value

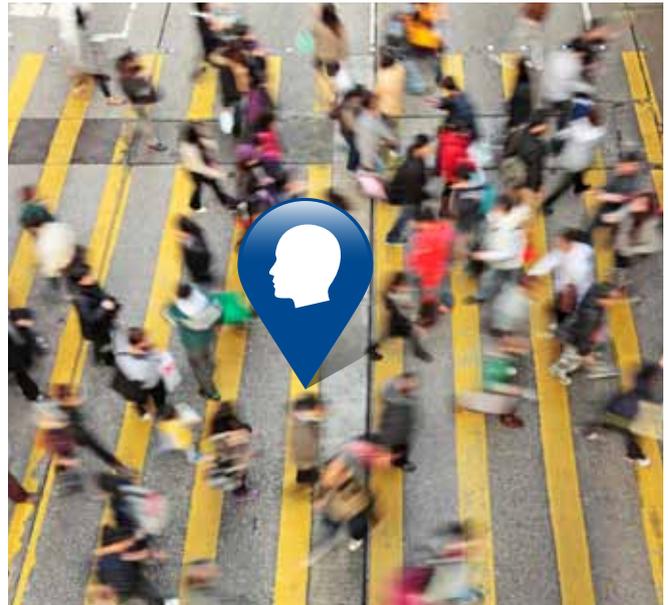
Employers and recruiters alike will look to the interview to show how your experience and expertise can meet their unique challenges. They will expect you to show your understanding of their business and their industry and prove how you can help them meet their immediate and future requirements. Both of these will be explored using a series of key questions which are designed to understand why you want the job, what your strengths are, how you would do the job and how you'd make a difference. To answer these questions effectively you'll need to provide clear and concise evidence of how your past achievements are related to the role and the company interviewing. Facts and figures will be particularly valuable.

And finally

So you've had a great meeting; positioned yourself perfectly, asked insightful questions, made inspiring comments and shown that the role was made for you. Now you could just walk away after a firm handshake and an appreciative "thank you" and leave it at that. If on the other hand you are particularly keen on a job and would like to increase your chances of securing an offer, you could follow up the meeting by sending an email to the people interviewing you to reinforce your commitment. If you do decide on this course of action, use the opportunity to show your eagerness to take the job, to show your determination to succeed and address any issues raised during the interview.

If you don't get the job, don't get downhearted. The truth is you will not be offered every job you interview for, no matter how perfect you think you might be. If you do get turned down, treat it as an opportunity to improve your future performance. If unsuccessful, take the opportunity to ask for feedback and take on board any comments made when applying for the next job.

Remember interviewing is a skill and preparation and practice will make all the difference.



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