

Interview Advice

The ultimate aim of any job interview should be to secure an offer. Obviously, it's important to gather as much information about the company and position, in order that you are well placed to accept or decline, but always remember to be positive and sell yourself. In this section you'll find some general guidelines, and more specific ideas that you might find helpful.

Being articulate during an interview is of paramount importance, and the interviewer will probably ask some questions that feel like they are meant to trip you up. No one can possibly have all the questions, or even respond with the best answers all the time. There will be moments on the journey home where you will say to yourself, "Why did/didn't I say that?" it's perfectly normal to evaluate your performance, and learn from your mistakes. But if you prepare correctly, you'll give yourself the best possible chance of ensuring a successful interview.

The obvious stuff...

We don't need to tell you any of this, but as a reminder:

- Know the location of your interview;
 - You may have been past a hundred times, but check the location, the route, and parking if appropriate.
- Be early, five or ten minutes is ample to give a good impression;
 - If you arrive in plenty of time, go for a coffee and prepare yourself.
 - Take some information on the employer with you to read.
- Dress smartly, and appropriately;
- Take our contact details with you in case of delays or problems.

Preparation...

- Research both the company and if possible the interviewer themselves;
 - Try LinkedIn.com for a background of your interviewer.
 - The companies own website will provide valuable information, also look in trade press and industry magazines for useful insights.
 - Ask your consultant if you don't feel as though you have sufficient information.
- Review the job description; look at the role and think of examples to demonstrate how your skills and attributes match those of the position;
- Prepare a portfolio including examples of your work, this will provide an excellent prompt during an interview, and will allow you to demonstrate your experience to an interviewer very clearly;
- Be sure your familiar with the version of the CV the interviewer has;
- Think about what you would ask if you were the interviewer, and be prepared to answer those questions.

Some common questions:

Tell me about yourself?

For this question, always refer to your "business self" give a brief overview of your career goals, qualifications, skill sets and areas of expertise, and describe a couple of examples of professional accomplishments.

What are your strengths?

This question is about skills and what you are able to bring to the organisation. You should make this answer about a how you handled a particularly difficult situation.

What is your greatest weakness?

Don't admit to being late to meetings, not getting along with a particular type of person or style of management. In answering this question, it's best to choose something that you had to learn to improve. That way you can take this lack of knowledge and turn it into something positive for both you and the company.

Why are you leaving your job?

This can be a huge trap. Do not fall in. Something such as, "...There wasn't room for growth...", or, "I was laid off by new management who did some restructuring," and similar is best. Don't blame anyone else, act angry, or sound vindictive. The business you were in may have connections with the people who can hire you now, remember that. A re-location, less commute time, or a change in personal circumstances are all viable answers.

How did you prepare for this interview?

Preparation and planning is a plus, No one wants to have an employee who "wings it." Someone that has done research into the company is someone that appears to be interested and has their act together.

How did you handle a particularly challenging situation?

This question is to get you to reveal how you solved a problem. Write some examples down ahead of time so they will be fresh in your mind.

Our senior members of staff often have to put in longer hours, is that a problem?

In answering this question you can explain that you have worked hard in the past to meet deadlines and don't mind doing it again if necessary. Your goal though, is to get the job done, of course, but with the most efficient methods.

Why do you want this position?

What is it that appeals to you? This answer shouldn't ever be about money. How about providing a meaningful service? Maybe the company seems particularly innovative or has interesting projects? Perhaps you'll be afforded more exposure to clients, or you feel that your career prospects will be improved?

Why should we hire you?

Don't be afraid to state why you feel you are the best candidate. The hiring manager is looking for a memorable answer. If you truly understand the expectations of the job, that is where your mind should head to craft your answer. Match your skill sets to their requirements and prepare a story that will help to illustrate.

What is your salary expectation for this job?

This regularly comes up and can be handled in a number of ways. You should have an idea of at least the salary/rate range from conversation with your consultant, and we'd always recommend deferring to us as we're best placed to negotiate on your behalf.

How to handle technical questions

When asked technical questions, if you have extensive practical experience in the particular area you're asked about, you should be in a position to answer about the possible problems and their solutions, along with examples of how you've produced successful outcomes in these situations in the past. If your knowledge in a particular area is limited, you'll need to answer in such a way that demonstrates your ability to find solutions to problems through research.

- Plan your own questions for the interview, some things to think about:
 - What would you like to know about the company?
 - What would you like to know about the role?
 - Culture Fit – Do they have outside office activities?
 - Training & Future Development.
 - Ask if there are any weaknesses in your application.
 - Ask about your chances of landing the position, or when you're likely to hear.
 - What were you looking for in an employee for this position?
 - You can always inquire as to how long they (the interviewers) have been with the company and what do they like about their job.
 - Is there any question that I should have asked but didn't?
 - Is there anything regarding my suitability for the position that you're unclear about?

On the day...

- Imagine that the interview has started from the moment you arrive; anyone you come across may form an opinion of you;
- Listen and engage with the interviewer;
 - “Being present” can help to build rapport and you can only benefit.
 - Make eye contact, have a firm but not scary handshake, and remember to smile!
- Always be respectful to your current employer;
 - tact and discretion are valued by employers.
- Ask questions, show enthusiasm;
 - Try to choose the right moments to ask your carefully thought out questions.
- More than one interviewer?
 - Try to make each one feel as though you have spoken with them, engage with them individually and as a group if you can.
- When answering questions, try to use actual examples of what you have done;
 - “An example of a time when I”
 - “ I had success in....”
 - “Whilst working on.....”
- Be honest;
 - You will have thought about your strengths and weaknesses previously,
 - acknowledge your weaknesses as something that you are working on.
- Be clear about the next steps and stage in the process. Express interest clearly;
- Thank your interviewer (and others that you may have met along the way).