

Interviews - how to make yours a success

You rarely get a second chance to make a good impression on a prospective employer, so at your interview it is important that you get it right first time. This leaflet contains some advice on how to prepare and tips on how to succeed in that all important first meeting.

Prepare yourself

Interviews are two way meetings. Not only are they an opportunity for the interviewer to find out about you and if you are a suitable candidate for the position but they are also an opportunity for you to find out about the organisation and if the position will provide you with the challenge and job satisfaction you are looking for.

Think about your skills, qualifications and experience and ensure that you can talk confidently about what is written on your CV.

Particularly ensure that you can talk about those skills that are relevant and valuable to the position you are going for.

Prepare some questions to ask at the interview. At the first interview it would be wise to restrict your questions to the details of the job and the organisation. Salary and benefit discussions are best left until a second interview or a job offer is made.

Do your homework

Find out as much as possible about the company prior to the interview. A good starting point is to look up their website and find out about the products and services they offer, the location of the office/s, and the number of employees. Ask the consultancy if they have any extra information on them. You could also phone the company and ask them to send you an annual report.

Dress code and appearance

Ask your consultancy what the client's dress code is. For office work, smart business dress is a must. Ensure you are well groomed with tidy hair, clean shoes and clothing. Do not wear too much perfume or aftershave and keep make-up, jewellery and nail polish simple.

Travel and timing

Plan your journey beforehand to ensure you arrive a few minutes early. Allow for possible travel delays. Just in case of a major hold up, make sure you have your contact's telephone number so that you can call if you suspect you will be late.

What to expect

Interviews come in many forms - panel interviews, one to one interviews, group interviews etc. Ask your consultancy what form of interview it will be before hand.

You may be asked to take a test before the interview, depending on the type of organisation. These might consist of psychometric or aptitude tests.

There are many different interview styles and each interviewer will have their own personal style. Some interviewers will fire questions at you while others will start off with an open question such as "tell me about yourself" leaving you to do most of the talking. The majority of interviews will be somewhere between the two. Be prepared for any style of interview.

Two-way communication

- Make sure the employer knows the benefits of employing you. It is important to sell yourself by telling the employer details of your relevant skills and experience that you have to contribute to the organisation.
- Try not to monopolise the meeting - let your interviewer talk.
- Find out what the key parts of the candidate specification are so you can show how you meet them.
- Ask how the job contributes to the success, efficiency and profitability of the organisation.
- Show that you have done some research.
- Don't give negative information or bad news if you are not asked for it and don't criticise previous employers or jobs. The key is to turn negative information into positive information.

The next steps

Agree exactly what the next steps will be, such as who will contact you to let you know if you have been successful and by when. You should also find out whether there will be second interviews and who will conduct them. If you are really interested in the position make sure you tell the interviewer.