

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE AT INTERVIEWS

Your CV has landed you the interview, and now you must make the most of the interview. No matter how good your career record is to date, the interview is critical to actually landing the position. These hints, combined with the guidance provided by our consultants, will equip you with valuable information on how to conduct yourself during interviews.

Preparation for the interview:

Preparation is the essential first step towards a successful interview. Interviewers are continually amazed by the number of applicants who drift into their offices without any preparation and only the vaguest idea of what they are going to say. To prepare for your interview, it is important to:

1. Assemble relevant information about yourself beforehand, such as the documentation of your qualifications.
2. Research the organisation, such as where its offices are located; what its products/services are; what its growth has been; and what its growth potential is for the future.
3. Refresh your memory on the facts and figures of your present employer and former employers, as you'll be expected to know a lot about a your previous employers.
4. Prepare the questions you want to ask during the interview. Remember, an interview is not all one sided. While the employer is trying to determine whether you're the best person for the position, it is also an opportunity for you to determine whether it's the right position for you.
5. Probing questions you might like to ask:
 - > What is the position entailed?
 - > Why has the position become available?
 - > What is the organisational culture?
 - > What is the induction and training program?
 - > How do I ensure I am successful in this role?
 - > Are there advanced training programs available for those who demonstrate outstanding ability?
 - > What are the earnings of successful people in their third to fifth years?
 - > What is the organisation's growth plans?
6. Dress conservatively and preferably in darker colours. Pay attention to all facets of your dress and grooming and ensure it's an appropriate fit to the culture of the organisation and the image you wish to project - if you're not sure, ask your consultant.
7. Know the exact place and time of the interview, the interviewer's full name, its correct pronunciation and his/her title.

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Be prepared to answer questions such as:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose this particular position?
3. Why would you like to work for our organisation?
5. What do you want to be doing in your career five years from now? Why?
6. What was your last salary and bonus?
7. What management style gets the best from you?
8. What interests you about our products/services?
9. Can you get recommendations from previous employers? What would they say about you?
10. What have you learned from some of the positions you have held? Which did you enjoy most? Why?
11. What have you done that shows initiative in your career?
12. What area would you like to improve?
13. What do you think determines a person's progress in a good organisation?
14. Are you willing to relocate?
15. How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
16. What does teamwork mean to you?
17. What entrepreneurial activities have you been engaged in?
16. What type of books do you read? What was the last one?

If the employer asks questions seeking practical examples of past behaviour (refer to 9 and 10 above), be prepared to give examples, by stating the situation in which it occurred, the action you took and the results/outcomes of your actions.

Negative factors to look out for:

During an interview, the employer will be evaluating your negative attributes as well as your positive ones. Listed below are negative attributes frequently

examined during an interview and those that can cause you to be unsuccessful.

1. Poor personal appearance.
2. Overbearing, aggressive, conceited; superiority complex; know-it-all attitude.
3. Inability to express thoughts clearly, poor diction or grammar.
4. Lack of career planning – no purpose or goals.
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm – passive and indifferent.
6. Lack of confidence – nervousness.
7. Over-emphasis on money – interested only in remuneration.
8. Evasive – makes excuses for unfavourable factors in record.
9. Lack of tact/maturity/courtesy.
10. Condemnation of past employers.
11. Failure to look interviewer in the eye.
12. Limp, fishy handshake.
13. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.
14. Failure to ask good questions about the position and organisation. This is important!
15. Persistent attitude of “What can you do for me?”
16. Lack of preparation – failure to get information about the organisation, resulting in an inability to ask intelligent questions

Arrival:

The interview process begins the minute you walk through the door. You just never know, whom you could meet while waiting for your interview, what influence he/she may have on your application, or what feedback he/she can provide your interviewer with.

1. Plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the interview. Late arrival for an interview is never excusable.
2. Be nice to the receptionist or anyone you meet.
3. DON'T arrive with your “baggage”

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4. If presented with an application, fill it out neatly and completely. If you have a personal resume, be sure the person you release it to is the person who will actually do the hiring.

The interview:

The interviewer will be searching for your strong and weak points by evaluating you on your qualifications, skills and intellectual qualities. He/she will probably probe deeply to determine your attitudes, aptitudes, stability, motivation and maturity.

The DOs and DON'Ts:

1. **Greet** the interviewer by his/her surname if you are sure of the pronunciation. If you are not, ask him/her to repeat his/her name.
2. Remember to smile and give a firm handshake
3. Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright in your chair. Look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good talker. Smile.
4. **DON'T** smoke even if the interviewer smokes and offers you a cigarette.
5. Look your prospective employer in the eye while you talk to him/her.
6. Follow the interviewer's leads but try to get the interviewer to describe the position and the duties to you early in the interview so that you can relate your background and skills to the position
7. **DON'T** answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Explain whenever possible by using the **STAR** interviewing response technique. That is:
 - **Situation or Task:** describe a specific situation or the task you needed to accomplish. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand
 - **Action:** describe the action you took, ensuring that you keep the focus on you. If

you are discussing a group project, describe what you did, not the efforts of the team.

- **Results:** What happened? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?
8. Ensure that your good points get across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner. Bear in mind that you alone can sell yourself. Make him/her realise the need for you in the organisation. Smile.
 9. Be prepared to answer questions such as:
 - > What kind of position are you looking for?
 - > What are your strengths?
 - > What are you really good at?
 - > What are your weaknesses?
 - > What are you doing about addressing them?
 - > What do you know about our organisation?
 - > Why did you choose your particular career?
 - > What are your qualifications?
 12. **DON'T** lie. Answer questions truthfully, and to the point.
 13. **DON'T** ever make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers.
 14. **DON'T** "over-answer" questions. The interviewer may steer the conversation into politics or economics. Since this can be ticklish, it is best to answer the questions honestly; trying not to say more than is necessary.
 15. **DON'T** initiate discussion about **SALARY**, **HOLIDAYS**, **BONUSES**, etc at the first interview, but be open and honest if the interviewer asks.
 16. Always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the position. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in the position where you can choose from a number of positions rather than only one.
 17. If you feel your body language is conveying anxiety it is usually best to verbalise it.

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Verbalising your nervousness often reduces it and interviewers are usually empathetic.

> What can you offer and can you do the position?

Closing the interview:

1. If you are genuinely interested in the position, say so. Ask for the next interview if the situation demands. If he/she offers the position to you, and you want it, accept on the spot. If you need some time to think it over, be courteous and tactful in asking for that time. Set a definite date when you can provide an answer.
2. Ask (if you haven't been told) what the process will be after the interviews have been completed.
3. Have a couple of positive comments to make that "re-cap" some of the positive highlights of the conversation. Reiterate your strengths.
4. DON'T be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with his/her office first or interview more applicants before making a decision.
5. If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you've already been unsuccessful, don't let your discouragement show. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in your possibilities may seem to discourage you in order to test your reaction.
6. Leave the interviewer with a good impression; thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration of you with a smile and a firm handshake. Don't blow by relaxing too soon.

You have done all you can if you have answered these two questions:

- > Why are you interested in the position and the organisation?

After the interview:

Last, and most important, call the consultant at Mindworx People who represented you for the position immediately after the interview and explain what happened. Our consultant will want to talk with you before the interviewer calls him/her back.

If you are interested in progressing further it will assist if your feelings towards the position are known, together with your perception of what the client's reaction is likely to be.

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