

HANDLING AN INTERVIEW – STAGE 1

So, you have an interview or have been made a job offer! Here are some tips to help you through the process.

Interviews are a necessary evil when it comes to job hunting.

No matter how well-qualified you are for a job, your personality and personal presentation will still count when your prospective employer sizes you up.

Whatever your confidence levels, you can develop and work on the skills required to make the interview process more productive.

Be Prepared:

-  Know who it is you are meeting, where the building is and how to get there.
-  Bring your contact details, spare CV, pen and notepad.
-  Have information at the ready to impress the interviewer with your research.
-  Do your homework – find out about the company, read trade magazines, visit competitor websites, etc.
-  Study the job specification; match it to your CV so you can provide evidence that you meet the criteria.

First Impressions Last:

-  Wear a smart but comfortable suit or outfit.
-  Remember that you are making an impression as soon as you walk through the front door.
-  Be courteous to everyone, from the Receptionist to the Managing Director - you never know who might influence the final selection of candidates, or even the job winner.
-  Look at all interviewers (if a panel) when greeting them, smile and carefully remember their names so you can address them throughout the interview.
-  If the area in which you are being interviewed is not adequately stocked or prepared, e.g. you do not have a glass of water in front of you, ask for one. It is better to speak up and be as comfortable as possible.

Questions:

-  Relax - imagine you're having a conversation with someone you know.
-  Listen carefully - people get so caught up with nerves they forget to listen to the questions; slowing the pace will help you hear the questions and answer them correctly.
-  Before you respond to more difficult questions, think about your answers and how you want to express them - this will help you speak more confidently.
-  Body language demonstrates how comfortable you are with your subject matter - if you are enthusiastic about what you are saying, smile and let your hands do the talking.
-  If you said something you did not mean and are worried it could damage your chances, simply rectify this by restating what you meant - don't hold back, it could be your only chance to get that point across.
-  Be factual and honest about your strengths and weaknesses - show that you recognise your weaknesses and that you are striving to improve them.
-  If you get stuck on a question, do not dwell on it for too long but politely ask if you can come back to it later.

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Sample Questions to ask the client:

- MAKE YOUR MOVE Can I ask about other staff in the department? How would their roles impact on mine?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE What would my core responsibilities be?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE What training or induction is given?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE What sort of one-off projects might I be given?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE How much interaction would I have with other departments, or with clients and suppliers?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE What scope is there for taking on extra work, or being involved in any other aspects of the company?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE What plans do you have for expansion? How would these plans impact on my role?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Where are the opportunities to progress within the company?
- MAKE YOUR MOVE What key characteristics do your high performers possess?

You might want to write some of these questions down and refer to them during the interview as you may forget them in the heat of the moment. Make your questions specific to the industry you are interviewing for, e.g. if being interviewed for a marketing role use buzz words related to the market.

Conclusion:

- MAKE YOUR MOVE There may be an explanation of how the process will continue - if not, ask.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Try to find out when you should hear back - but do not be pushy as some recruiters will not want to commit themselves to timescales until they have had time to consider all candidates.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Make sure the appropriate people know where you can be reached.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Finally, thank your interviewer for his or her time and shake hands.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Remember to say a personal goodbye to each person you talked to.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Do not forget to acknowledge the receptionist as you leave, particularly if you have been looked after while waiting.

Post-interview action:

- MAKE YOUR MOVE Call your recruitment consultant and let him or her know how it went.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Your consultant is employed by the company to liaise with you, and can also handle any queries or objections raised, or persuade the employer to wait while you supply more information.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Some interviewers may give you their direct line in case you have any further queries - take advantage of this if necessary but do not overdo it.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Allow a reasonable amount of time - a week is ideal.
- MAKE YOUR MOVE Write a letter or email confirming your interest and thanking the company for its consideration. A timely but subtle reminder like this could pay dividends.

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Great Questions you can ask at Interview

Do you know that most good employers are expecting you to ask questions at interview – and that if you fail to ask questions, you may appear as if you are not truly interested in the job, and the employer may think less of you as a result?

It's not just about asking any old question, you must avoid foolish questions, and by foolish, we don't mean questions like "Why is the Sky Blue?", we mean questions where you could easily have found the answer by researching on their website. Asking these kinds of foolish questions will make it look like you could not be bothered to research the business in advance and will not reflect well on your candidacy. So, to do a complete interview, it's vital that you research the website in detail beforehand, and then, based on the remaining gaps in your knowledge of their business, prepare a set of pertinent questions and then ask them at interview. To help you with this process, we have presented some pertinent interview questions that you might like to ask at interview.

These questions are intended to be asked of the actual hiring manager.

1. What exactly would my day to day responsibilities be?

You may have received a job description, but job descriptions can be out of date and they are static documents that may not reflect the dynamic nature of the role, or the balance of emphasis of each duty. The role is the fundamental reason that you are joining the business, so it is fine to seek clarification to ensure it meets your expectations.

2. Can you describe a typical week or month in the job?

While the job description can tell you what your duties may be, it does not really give you a live impression of the role. Asking this question will give you a more realistic impression of the role, so you can really understand how you feel about the position.

3. What are the key challenges/objectives for the job holder over the next three months?

This is in part a trick question. You are trying to get the interviewer to reveal if there are any genuine crises lurking within the role. At the same time, by using positive terminology like challenges (as opposed to issues), you are showing the interviewer that you are motivated, you are someone who likes to achieve and that you want to support the manager/business in achieving their objectives. It's a star question.

4. Is this a new role?

If yes, ask them to explain why it was created? If no, ask them how the role became available? You are trying to understand if there is anything problematic with the role which caused the employee to resign or to be fired. If the employee was promoted or simply moved on to better things, then all is good.

5. What training and development opportunities exist?

The employer's website may make some reference to this, but many do not. Training and Development is crucial to you doing your job well and to helping you meet your career objectives, so it's good to know your employer's position on this. Also, this will show that you are ambitious and thinking ahead.

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6. Are there any shortcomings in my application that may prevent you from offering me the job/ Would you like me to clarify anything else?

In sales terms, you are effectively trying to close the deal. You are now showing the interviewer that you are positive about the role and that you are open to feedback about any deficiencies you may have. If you do get a useful answer from the interviewer, it gives you the chance to address these issues immediately, and if you are able to address those concerns, you move one step closer to getting the job.

7. What is the next step in the process?

This is a simple but important question as by inquiring and showing curiosity about the future process, you let the employer know that you are genuinely interested in the role.

8. May I have your business card?

Ask each interviewer for a business card and then you will be able to send them a thank you note.

Best of luck!