



Particularly for permanent or contract work, a well-received application will most commonly lead to a face-to-face interview with your potential employer. The interview is a tried and trusted selection process but it is also very subjective and it favours those who can promote themselves effectively. It is therefore a must to be able to perform well at interviews and, with this in mind, we can offer a few suggestions to help you along your way.

PREPARATION

Good preparation will give you an immediate head start. It will improve your confidence and therefore your interview performance and it will also help you make an informed decision as to whether the position is right for you.

Firstly, preparation involves researching the company and the position on offer. An obvious source of information for this is the job description (and your Recruitment Consultant). However you might also consider other sources such as local libraries, newspapers, the company website or the internet in general. By demonstrating your knowledge of relevant company issues to the interviewer, you are also demonstrating your level of interest in the position.

Secondly, it involves re-examining your own qualities and achievements and what you can actually bring to the position. You should be prepared to talk about yourself confidently and in a way that will hopefully strike a cord with the interviewer. Think of possible questions that might arise during the interview (e.g. "why did you leave your last Company?" or "what are your major strengths and weaknesses?") and consider your possible answers.

Finally, preparation involves thinking about practical matters such as where the interview will take place, when you will arrive and whether your clothes need to be dry-cleaned.

It has been suggested that interviewers take 30 seconds to form an opinion about candidates and then spend the rest of the interview trying to justify it. This may well be an exaggeration but you should always be careful to create the right first impression.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview itself gives you the chance to really sell your skills and personality to your potential employer. Key to your performance is how you interact with the interviewer and how you present yourself to him or her.

Importantly, you should never allow yourself to be intimidated during an interview. Instead, bear in mind that there is another human being (or beings!) across the table and try to build some sort of rapport with them. By adopting a positive approach to the interview, you can greatly help your cause.

It is probably counter productive to be overly obsessed with body language but there are a few simple pointers you might follow. You should greet with a firm handshake, maintain steady but not constant eye contact, sit comfortably without slouching and avoid fiddling nervously during the interview. Good body language will help you present a confident selfimage.

Your voice is, of course, a vital interview tool and you should use it to demonstrate your abilities and your enthusiasm for the position. However, be careful not to monopolise the meeting and always listen to what the interviewer has to say. You do not necessarily have to make your point expansively but you should make it in a way that the interviewer can relate to (e.g. how you are a team player and can benefit the organisation as opposed to how bad your previous boss was).

Give considered answers to any questions. They will not always be straightforward and the ability to think on your feet is a skill that many interviewers look for. Also make a point of asking questions of your own but always ensure that they are relevant and constructive. Particularly at a first interview it is better to ask about your role than to get bogged down in details such as the salary package.

In conclusion, you should behave courteously, be positive and maintain your composure throughout the interview. Even if you feel things have not gone well, the outcome can always surprise you.

FINAL POINTS

As with all other aspects of job seeking, the attitude you adopt towards interviews is essential. Always approach the process professionally and try to get feedback on your performance if possible. If you are unsuccessful, try to identify problem areas and refine your technique for the future. Remember, whatever the result of your interview (and we hope it is the right one) you should be able to take positives from it and you should always benefit from the experience.