

Interviews are generally regarded as the primary decision-making event in any recruitment process. Regardless of your academic credentials or career thus far, it is crucial that you perform well in the interview process in order to secure that next position. The following interview tips and techniques should help you prepare and perform at your best during an interview:

Preparation

It is often said that "Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance". Here are 5 pointers to help you effectively prepare for interviews:

1. Timing – Interviewers will generally have some flexibility in their diary. Try and choose a time of the day where you will be able to present yourself at your best. For example, if you regard yourself as a morning person, try and schedule your interview in the morning and not at the end of a gruelling day.

2. Research – It is essential that you research the company extensively prior to attending any interviews. There are three main reasons:

- It demonstrates that you have a genuine interest in their organization;
- Shows a degree of initiative; and
- Will provide you with a confidence boost during the interview when you are able to demonstrate this research.

Information on prospective employers is readily available and can be obtained from a number of sources, such as: the company website, search tools (such as Google) and information from the recruitment agency you are working with.

3. Interview Type & Format – Your Recruitment Consultant should be able to provide you with the following details regarding the interview: Name of Interviewer, expected duration, format and style of the person(s) conducting the interview. This information is critical, as interview types and styles vary widely and you should modify your interview technique accordingly.

4. Job Description – Familiarise yourself with the job description, regardless of the quality of the particular document. Further, it is a good idea to reread the document on the day of your interview.

5. Questions for Interviewer – It is highly recommended that you come prepared to an interview with a number of specific questions. These may relate to: the position, organisation or your ability to perform in the role. For example, "If I'm successful in obtaining this position, what do you think will be my biggest challenge?" As the interview progresses, additional questions may come to mind and you may also receive answers to some of your prepared questions. Play it by ear, but always try and end the interview with at least three relevant questions.

The Interview

Remember: An interview is a two way street, as it provides the opportunity for:

- Employers to compare an interviewee with other available candidates in the marketplace; and
- Potential employees to compare this opportunity with others in the marketplace.

However, your principal objective should be always to perform at your best and secure an offer from every potential employer (where possible), regardless of the opportunity. As a result, you will have the opportunity later on to select the best 'offer on the table' and make an informed decision regarding the next stage in your career.

The following suggestions should assist you in this endeavour:

1. Be on time – Plan to arrive 10 minutes before the interview commences. Allow plenty of time for traffic and unfamiliar territory.

Do NOT arrive early, as it is arrogant to assume that your interview has nothing better to do than interview you. It also puts undue pressure on your interviewer to see you immediately. If you do arrive with extra time to spare, grab a coffee or go for a walk.

Do NOT be late. However, if you are running late due to unforeseen circumstances, phone ahead to inform either your recruitment consultant or your contact at the company itself that you are running late.

2. Presentation – First impressions are critical, so dress at your best. Always wear a suit, regardless of the working environment of your potential employer, as they will want to see you at your best. If you are currently employed and do not wish to raise suspicion by wearing a suit, provide the Interviewer with plenty of notice that you will be in casual dress. It is likely that they will be fine with it. A little courtesy can go a long way...

3. Follow their lead – Do not run the interview. Give your interviewer the opportunity to set the tone and pace and follow their example. If the tone of the interview is relaxed and informal, act accordingly.

4. Answer the Question – Answer the questions as clearly and concisely as possible. Most questions should be answered in two or three sentences, with a relevant example where appropriate. Do NOT volunteer extra information that is irrelevant to the question being asked. If you are unsure of what the interviewer is really asking, seek clarification before answering.

Avoid yes/no type questions (where possible), as they will not give you the opportunity to expand or provide examples.

After the interview

Contact your Recruitment Consultant as soon as possible after the interview to discuss how you went. Be as honest and forthcoming as possible, as they will be able to use this information to your advantage in any future negotiations conducted on your behalf.

