

JESSICALICE

Navigating an Interview

Attending an interview is integral part of the job search and selection process. An interview is a forum that facilitates the exchange of information in an interactive and conversational manner. An interview can take on many forms from a telephone conversation, a face-to-face meeting through to meeting a group of people (panel interview). Interviews can be quite daunting and can make even the most highly qualified professionals nervous. To successfully navigate your way through any interview you need to be prepared and in turn you will be more confident.

Preparation

Research the Company

Get on to the internet and research the prospective employer's website. Browse the entire website but focus on the about us, news, our people and careers sections. Do further research on the internet with a company search through Google, Bing etc. Look at articles through the media, do they have a face book page, twitter etc. It is a thorough background check.

Revise You

No one knows, you as well as you know yourself however during an interview you can lose track of which job you held when and what your achievements were. Revising your work history, achievements, training and education will keep it clear in your mind. Also ensure you understand your remuneration package.

Review the Job

A good understanding of the position comes from the job description. Ensure you have read the position description to know what the exact responsibilities and measurables are of the role.

Prepare Answers

Interviewers often seek practical examples of past behaviour, which helps demonstrate your competencies. The job description is your key to determining what will be discussed and assessed throughout the interview. Review the key performance measures and use these to prepare examples for the interview. Ensure you describe the situation, the action you took and the outcome of your actions. In the absence of a job description use the advertisement you applied to. An advertisement will generally outline the responsibilities and criteria to be successful.

Prepare Questions

Through all of your research and revision prepare a number of questions to ask the interviewer/s. These questions can be about the company or the position, however, ensure it is not something that could have been answered through your research.

Organise

The night before the interview check you have the completed the following:

- Arranged clothes for the interview in advance. Dress appropriately - best to be conservative, suitable to the culture of the company and reflective of the image you wish to project.
- Write down the names and titles of the people you are meeting.
- Write down the address of where the interview is being conducted.
- Research how you get to the location – trams, train stations, parking.
- Write down a contact number for the company should an unforeseen circumstance arise.

Arrival

- Ensure you are on time - this means don't be late but also don't be too early.
- Do not take unnecessary items – if you happen to go shopping beforehand do not bring your bags to the interview.
- Smile.
- Make eye contact.
- Have a firm handshake.
- Engage in "small talk" but be guided by the engagement of the interview. Too much could set the wrong tone.

You only get one chance to make a GOOD first impression. Make it count.

Interview

No two interviews will be the same. Interviewers have their own individual styles and therefore you need to look for queues from the interviewers as to the type of style it will be – formal, structured, behavioural, a chat etc.

An interview will generally move through the following stages:

1. *Introduction* – the interviewer will establish rapport and create a relaxed, though business like atmosphere. This is when first impressions are made.
2. *Review of Experience, Education and Interests* – these questions focus on what you are like, what you have accomplished, your academic and work background and your goals.
3. *Matching* – behavioural-based questions asked to assess your competencies based on past behaviour and your future potential in the open position.
4. *Conclusion* – the final stage of the process, the next steps should be clarified, and you will have opportunity to ask any questions.

Answering Questions

When partaking in an interview the interviewer places value on qualities such as:

- energy and enthusiasm
- honesty
- not embellishing the facts
- rapport and personable
- engaging in conversation
- clear and articulate communication
- warmth

When answering questions you need to display the above qualities and remember to be positive. Making negative judgments and criticisms of past managers and employers doesn't reflect well on you.

Closing the Interview – The Conclusion

When the interview is coming to an end you have the opportunity to ask questions – those that you prepared before the interview.

The types of questions you might ask are:

- What are the reporting relationships?
- What resources are accessible by this position?
- What long term career opportunities are available?
- Do you see any gaps between the role and my skills and experience?

Do not initiate a discussion about salary and remuneration in the first interview. If the interviewer does ask about it be open and honest.

In addition to asking questions you also have the opportunity to make positive comments about some of the highlights of the conversation and the position. These comments not only reiterate your interest but also give you an opportunity to reaffirm your strengths.

If you are genuinely interested don't be afraid to say so.

When leaving the interview again make a good impression. Smile, firm handshake and don't relax until you have left the company.

During an interview remember the following tips:

- be honest
- don't say anything negative about a past employer
- don't interrupt anyone who is speaking
- maintain good eye contact with all interviewers
- speak clearly and concisely
- don't be too friendly
- listen carefully to questions
- don't make general statements without substance
- don't be over enthusiastic
- when giving behavioural based answers remember to refer to what you did not what 'we' or the team did

Common Questions

- Tell me about yourself?
- What kind of position are you looking for?
- Why did you leave your last position? / Why are you looking to leave your current position?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What were your responsibilities?
- What were your achievements?
- How was your performance measured?
- How did you get along with your manager?
- What do you consider to be your strengths?
- What areas do you need development/What are your weaknesses?
- What is your operating/ management style?
- Provide an example of managing multiple task and conflicting deadlines?
- Provide some examples of the most difficult problems you have encountered in your previous positions and how did you resolve these?