



Interview Preparation & Tips

“One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation!”

Arthur Ashe

Very few of us enjoy job interviews but there are a number of simple things to consider which will help you to secure the position you desire.

Preparation

Company Research:

- Visit the company's website and make notes
- Visit the company's social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Look up the people who will be interviewing you on LinkedIn
- Google the company and the market they operate in

Job Research:

- Highlight key points in the job spec and put yourself in the interviewer's shoes and think of questions that you might ask a candidate to test their expertise in each area you have highlighted.
- Complete a SWOT analysis and identify how the company will benefit from employing you.
- Think of questions related to the job spec that you can ask during the interview to show your interest or help your understanding of the role you might ultimately be performing
- If there is an area of the job spec that you are not experienced in, think of examples to give of how you are a quick learner/have picked up on skills quickly in the past.
- Think of examples to demonstrate your achievements in previous roles and try to weave these into the interview discussions.
- Ensure you are familiar with your own CV

Location Research:

- Ensure you know where you need to be, and at what time, who to ask for upon arrival and plan your route. Ensure you have your Recruitment Agents' phone number and also the company phone number easily to hand in case of difficulties.
- Allow yourself sufficient time to arrive in the area early, and go into the office five minutes before the scheduled start time – this way you will be more relaxed and composed than if you have been battling through traffic to arrive on time

- Similarly, wear clothes that you feel relaxed wearing. If you are wearing something new for the interview, be sure to wear it once or twice beforehand so you feel at home.
- Dress smartly – it is better to be overdressed than underdressed. Even if you are interviewing at the ‘coolest’ advertising agency, still dress smartly. Whatever you wear, make sure it is immaculate – no stains, missing buttons etc.
- Research shows that for both men and women, darker clothes present a more professional impression.

First Impressions

Remember that research shows that over 50% of an initial impression is made through what we are wearing, how we carry ourselves and our composure. Furthermore, whilst ‘what’ we say is important, how we say it is equally important.

- First impressions count – enter the room with your head held high, make good eye contact with everyone you meet, and shake their hands firmly
- Sit with your head held high, do not fold your arms, and be conscious of hand gesticulations.
- Do not fiddle with your hair, tie, pen etc.
- Maintain eye contact with interviewers. When addressing them, focus on their eyes for a split second, and then let the focus soften so you do not ‘stare them out’. Practice this with a friend to get it right
- Primarily address your responses to the person who asked the question, yet do also engage any other interviewers with eye contact whilst responding
- Feel free to smile and nod, yet do not do either excessively, or out of turn
- Often more professional interviewers will have the main interviewer in front of you, with another to the side of you whose main job is to observe you. Do not feel intimidated by this, and remember to allocate some of your eye contact to them – and, again, do not feel intimidated or upset if they do not reciprocate with a smile!
- A word of warning for those tempted to ‘fib’ a little in interviews – often interviewers are trained in reading eye contact, and there are instinctive eye movements most humans cannot avoid making when they are lying or making something up. The company have chosen to see you for interview – don’t mess it up by telling a fib!
- Try to avoid looking down during the interview – this can be seen as a sign of insecurity, doubt or representing a lack of confidence. Maybe take note of where your eyes go in day-to-day interactions and you will see how many times they flick downwards – become aware of this and endeavour to avoid it.

The Interview Itself

Remember that the interview is a 2-way thing. It is your opportunity to discover if you would like to work there. It’s not about “selling” yourself – it is about succinctly giving the interviewers the facts about how you can benefit the organisation with your knowledge / experience / skills / attitude – so that they can make an informed choice.

Your very presence at the interview suggests that you want this job. So, show the interviewer this.

No one likes to be with people that are not interested or interesting, so convey interest at every opportunity. Research the organisation so that you can share your interest in them and their industry.

- Make all of your answers as positive as possible. Do not use ‘I don’t like my manager’ or ‘They are making us work longer hours’ as reasons for wanting the job you are interviewing

for. Even if these are true, the interviewers want to hear positive, enthusiastic reasons about their role and their company

- Use knowledge wisely and humbly – nobody knows a business better than those who work in it, so do not try to impress the interviewers with facts and figures about their business. Feel free to drop in nuggets of information such as ‘I seem to remember reading that your European sales had doubled in five years’ which shows that you are on the ball, yet in a humble, qualified way
- Focus on ‘I did’ rather than ‘we did’. Even if you work in a team which shares tasks around, be prepared to specify your exact involvement in any task or project mentioned on your c.v.
- Avoid ‘I was responsible for’ – dig deeper and be able to state what you actually did whilst you were responsible for a particular area – developed, increased, maintained, implemented, achieved are the sort of verbs you should be using
- Use jargon only when there is no other option – ‘There were a few redundancies as a result of the recession so I had to look at ways of getting the job done with less members on the team’ sounds so much better than ‘As a result of the global economic crisis, powers above decided to drop the headcount in my business unit so I had to assess how best to refocus and consolidate using the resources available to me.’

Relax

Above all, remember that you’ve got this far. By being invited to interview, you know that the prospective employer wants to find out more about you. The interviewers are human. They are potentially your future colleagues. Of course you want to impress, and get across just how suitable for the position you are, but you also want them to be able to see your human side. A friendly face and a smile go a long way to help with this, as well as settling your nerves. People employ people they would like to work with!

And Remember: if you don’t get offered the position, try not to take it personally. You do not know who you were up against at interview, or the exact culture fit that the interviewers are looking for. If the door doesn’t open, it’s not your door! But there is another door out there that IS your door! And the preparation and time you have spent getting ready for the interview is NOT a waste of time, it is all practice for the RIGHT JOB that will come along at the RIGHT TIME!

And of course, Black Biro Recruitment wishes you the BEST OF LUCK at your interview!

