



The secret to interview success- Follow these simple steps to ensure you secure the job you want.

Congratulations on securing your interview. The next step is to thoroughly prepare yourself for the forthcoming interview, which is often where most candidates fall down. If your Consultant has not booked you in for a full interview briefing, call them to arrange this. Here are the secrets...

1. Location & appearance

It may seem obvious but check you know where you are going, how long it will take to get there and the route you will take. Take the interview letter with you so you know who you are meeting and their (or the agents) contact number should you get delayed.

Dress conservatively – plain shirt, tie and dark suits for gents and for ladies a smart dress or trouser suit with a plain shirt works well.

2. Research the company & interviewer

Every company has a website and you should read this thoroughly and make notes.

Has the company been in the press recently? Google their name and do not just rely on their website. Their website will give you the good news. The press will give you the whole picture.

If you were asked to summarise the company, could you give a 30 second sound bite?

Check if your interviewer has a LinkedIn profile. You will need this information later at the end of the interview.

Has your interviewer written any articles or been mentioned in the press? If so make a note and try and raise this at some stage in the interview. You can seriously win points if you do!

Why do you want to work for this specific firm, why do they stand out from their competitors?

You will be asked why you are interested in the role. Make sure you have an answer.

3. First impressions

Arrive five minutes early and remember you are on show from the moment you walk through the door. Be polite to the receptionist and start as you mean to go on with creating the right impression to everyone in the company.

You should greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and solid eye contact.

Break the ice by asking small questions but give them a chance to ask questions first and don't take over the conversation.

- Talk about the offices

- Are they busy?

Smile; be enthusiastic and upbeat. Confidence should be your strongest ally!

4. Know your Resume

One of the biggest mistakes candidates make is the assumption that they know their resume. You should know it inside out, from exact dates to every technical bullet point on the resume.

If you are quizzed on a particular bullet point, can you back this up with an example, what you did and the outcome? Make sure you can talk about everything on your resume.

Think about your reasons for leaving each role – everybody moves job but it's important to convey your reasons for moving in a positive way

Always be as positive as you can about your current and former employers and always look for the positives you have gained from a company and do not focus on the negatives. Even your reason for leaving can seem positive e.g. "I have gained some excellent experience with my current employer and they are a great place to work but I just need to gain international experience which they cannot offer me". This is just an example but you can see the way you can turn your reason for leaving into a positive point.

A very good tip is to get a friend or family to quiz you on your CV as often what you think you will say is very different to how you vocalise it. Say your answer out loud to someone and see how it sounds.

Don't be frightened of delivering bad news. Not everything goes right in a career; just make sure you deliver it in a clear and direct manner.

5. Know the vacancy you are interviewing for

You should have a job description (if not ask your consultant for a verbal run down of the job) which needs to be read and digested so if asked, you can give a 30 second sound bite of what the role entails.

Where the job asks for specific responsibilities and attributes, make sure you state you have them to the

interviewer. Sounds obvious but many candidates either wait to be asked or make the assumption the interviewer thinks they possess them.

Be extra positive about the role, tell the interviewer it is just what you are looking for and that you can fulfil the position and grow with it. If you are enthusiastic about the role you will stand out from 'vanilla' candidates that simply don't exude passion. You do!

6. Interview questions & competency

The interviewer will often look for key skills and characteristics via certain questions. To answer these types of questions there is a technique that we recommend, use the acronym 'STAR'.

S – Situation

Always be very specific in describing the situation, use names of people, use client types and describe the situation as if you were telling a story

T – Target

This is where you describe what your target outcome or objective was in any situation.

A – Action

Talk about what you did to solve the problem and reach the objective. Also cover the problems encountered whilst trying to solve the problem, what actions you took to overcome these problems and how they impacted on your objectives. A common mistake is when people describe "what we did" and "how we resolved the issue" when it should be "what I did". The interviewer wants to hear about YOU not your team.

R – Result

What was the outcome, and what did you learn from this going forward.

Motivation, Influence & handling pressure

What motivates you and why?

Can you give an example of when you made a suggestion that was implemented?

Can you give an example of when you had to influence a colleague, a team or your manager?

How do you react to taking on responsibilities?

How do you cope with deadlines?

Give me an example of targets you are set and how you achieve them?

Organisation, work ethic & leadership

How do you organise your day or prioritise work?

How do you deal with conflicting deadlines?

How do you like to be managed?

What management style do you like to employ?

Do you often have to work long hours?

Give an example of where you have been an integral member of a team.

Give an example of how you manage underperforming staff

Give an example of a project you managed and the issues you faced (remember you may be asked for an example of a project that went well or one that went badly).

Awkward questions

Can you describe yourself in 3 words?

How would your boss/colleagues describe you?

What are your key strengths and weaknesses?

Why do you want to work for us?

Why do you want to leave your current employer?

If you fail to reach a target, how do you handle it?

What was said about you in your last appraisal?

What salary are you looking for?

What attracts you to this job/company?

Competency based questions

These are questions that require you to describe an example of a situation and are usually directly in line

with the job specification. Make sure you have read it well.

Competency questions can test a number of different skills, some of which include (but are not limited to); Communication, Job Motivation, Teamwork, Client Service, Commercial Awareness and Operational Excellence.

Ask your recruiter for a list of positive and negative indicators when trying to demonstrate any of the above skills.

Typical competency questions:

Tell me about a person you found it difficult to work with?

What have you done to improve communications/motivation in your team?

Can you tell me about the most demanding client that you have worked with?

Provide an example of when you have had to manage expectations during a project?

Can you give an example of where you had to handle conflict within your team?

Tell me about a time when you have persuaded a colleague to come around to your way of thinking.

What has been the most challenging project you have undertaken in your current role?

Can you tell me a time when you had to persuade a client to take on board certain advice you had given?

Can you give me an example of a project you have had to manage? Have both a successful one and an unsuccessful one.

Can you give an example of where you have had to manage your boss?

7. Your chance to ask questions and get the interviewer onside

This is definitely an area most candidates gloss over and seem to ask the same routine questions of the interviewer. This part of the interview is vital. If you can engage and get the interviewer talking about something s/he is passionate or interested in, you'll score points for fun!

If you are asked to describe a situation/project, pick recent ones. Successes you had 10 years ago are not really relevant.

Don't pick obscure technical points to discuss to show how clever you are, you may well be sat opposite a world authority on the subject. Many candidates who do focus on an obscure technical point, slip up when quizzed on the more fundamental points.

Ask personal questions of the interviewer (remember you should have researched the interviewer on Linked-In and by asking your recruitment consultant) such as:

'Why did you join the firm and what was the attraction?'

'What is your background and how did you find the transition to this firm?'

'Where do you see this team/department going in the next few years?'

'I see you wrote an article on X – did you get much feedback on that?'

Other engaging questions might be:

'Who was the last person recruited into the team at my level and how are they getting on?'

'How does the firm/team compare against its rivals in the market?'

'What is the atmosphere and work environment like?'

8. Closing the meeting

Remember to be positive, upbeat and say how much you enjoyed the meeting and would be keen to progress.

A firm handshake on the way out is also important

9. Feeding Back

Many candidates miss a key opportunity with feedback; it is a chance for you to smooth over any interview hiccoughs.

Whether you stumbled on a particular question, felt you could have been more expansive with a particular answer or you forgot to ask a particular question, your consultant will be able to remedy with this by feeding it back to the client.

Also make sure you feedback to us promptly, delays are often interpreted as a lack of enthusiasm.

10. Miscellaneous

As you can see preparation is paramount and this goes for whether you are a graduate to a Head of Department – Preparation, Preparation, Preparation.

You would also be advised to read a book on body language. A few tips though would be to mirror your interviewers. Most common forms are using the same language they use i.e specific terms. You can also mirror their posture, so lean forward if they lean forward etc. The use of your hands to emphasis specific points is also recommended. In order to gain the interviewers attention and build rapport, say their name a few times in the interview – you'll be surprised how it pricks people's attention and makes them like you subconsciously.

Lastly – be confident, be positive and do not be afraid to show your sense of humour and have the odd joke with the interviewer.

11. Handing in your notice

If you have followed the above advice, you are more than likely to get an offer and now comes the process of handing in your notice.

You must give plenty of thought to this and discuss it with your consultant

Do this in writing and ask your boss for a meeting in order to do this in person

An ex-employer can get emotional about a resignation. Keep calm and factual.

Expect a 'buy-back' from your employer as they try and raise your salary or give you that promotion you have been asking for.

Be aware, your employer may offer you everything now you are leaving. Do not be fooled, the reasons that you wanted to leave will keep resurfacing time and time again. If you were worth the pay rise or promotion, why have they only just given that to you now you are handing in your notice. You should be with an employer who promotes you and gives pay rises when they are earned and due, not when you have had enough and want to leave the business!

Even if your employer does raise your salary, promote you or such like, there are always other underlying reasons why you want to leave, and these do not go away.

Having reached this point, there is also an element of distrust on both sides, which does not bode well for the future relationship.

It is a well-known fact that almost all people that are bought-back by their employer end up leaving their company in the following 10 months. A buy back is a temporary plaster on the wound, not a cure.

12. Call us

The above is a comprehensive protocol to navigate you through the interview process to getting the offer and handing in your notice. As experts in this field, please do not hesitate to pick up the phone to us and we can further talk you through any aspect you are not sure of.

If your agent is not providing you with assistance through the whole process, they should be. So make sure you call for guidance.

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