



GO GET 'EM TIGER

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR SECURING THE JOB YOU WANT

1 DON'T PANIC: REMEMBER, IT'S NOT AN INTERVIEW, JUST A MEETING...

Dress smartly and try not to frantically read and re-read any notes you've made about the company: it will only get you in a flap. If you've prepared well, read the sports pages before you go into the interview, or a copy of your favourite magazine - anything to make you relax.

It may seem slightly peculiar, but the first step to a successful job interview is to downplay the dreaded 'I' word. 'Interview', after all, can conjure up all sorts of anxious and gnawing thoughts, whether a steely, penetrating glare, stuttering response or long, awkward silence.

Of course, the reality, and what all so-called 'interviewees' need to understand, is that job 'interviews' are nothing more than a meeting, or conversation, between two parties that are interested in what the other has to offer, be it a challenging new job or charismatic new team member. Take the word "interview", in other words, with a sizeable pinch of salt.

It really is important that prospective employees look at the job interview as a meeting of equals, and not an arrangement geared in favour of the employer. You have to make sure that the company you're thinking of joining has enough to offer you too - it's not all one-way traffic!

3 ON THE DAY OF THE JOB INTERVIEW

Take the following items with you:

- a notebook and pen;
- your CV;
- directions and a Map Book
- the company name, address and contact details;
- Your consultant's number and previously prepared questions for reference.

Be on time:

Aim to arrive in the vicinity 30 minutes before your job interview to allow for any potential transport problems. Turn up approximately 10 minutes before the interview is due to start.

When you arrive:

Just relax and give it your best shot. In fact, try to enjoy the experience and remember that you wouldn't be there in the first place if they weren't interested in you.

Greeting:

If you're sitting down when the interviewer arrives, stand up and greet him/her with a smile, some firm eye contact and an equally firm handshake. You'll notice that, like you, he/she is a human, not a machine. If it's a man, never call him 'Sir', just use first names. When you're on the way to the interview room, start up a light conversation about, say, the big match the night before - anything to break the ice.

2 GET ORGANISED: PREPARATION FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW

- Make sure you know your CV like the back of your hand and always take a hard copy along to the interview just in case.
- Ask yourself some general questions as to why you're applying for the job in the first place - what do you hope to get out of the new role and what do you have to offer the employer in terms of skills and experience?
- Learn as much about the company as possible. A good place to start is its website, although any general corporate/marketing brochures will be useful too. The bottom line is that you can make a hugely positive impression in the interview by showing that you've researched a company, and the job you're applying for, in depth.
- Next up, assemble your research and think through the kind of questions you may be asked in the job interview and the type of answers you'll give. Also prepare your own intelligent questions, trying, where possible, to think 'outside the box'.
- Remember the names and titles of the interviewers and, if necessary, visit the premises before the actual day of your job interview to check travel times and directions.
- Make sure your interview outfit is ready the night before - there's nothing worse than having to iron a shirt or top first thing in the morning. First impressions really do count so look smart and make sure you're aware of the appropriate dress code.

4 SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER DURING THE INTERVIEW

Body language is crucial. Sit upright and don't fold your arms - adopt an open posture. Holding a pen and paper will stop you fidgeting if that's a problem. Be as natural as possible.

Let the interviewer determine the course of the interview, although don't be shy to ask a question when one comes into your head. But don't constantly interrupt.

The most important tip is to play each job interview as it is and go with the flow. If the atmosphere is relaxed and informal, you can afford to be a little less formal too, although that's not to say you should light up and ask for a coffee. If the interviewer appears quite stern, adopt a more serious tone and don't let it faze you.

If appropriate, show the interviewer that you've got a sense of humour and are easy to get on with: employers will offer jobs to people they have struck up chemistry with. A bit of appropriate humour will also help you to relax.

Be enthusiastic, don't rush your responses and be as spontaneous as possible. If you're asked an awkward question, take your time to answer it and don't get flustered - it's better to spend a few moments thinking of an appropriate response than to start waffling. This also shows you're confident and thoughtful enough not to be rushed.

Be sure to outline all your achievements and strengths, although don't allow yourself to come across as arrogant - and never be derogatory about your current or previous employer.

Remember to ask intelligent questions and feel free to use and make notes. Overall, enjoy the experience and remember that it's not an interview, just a two-way conversation!



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10 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - AND HOW TO ANSWER THEM

THERE ARE COMMON QUESTION AND YOU SHOULD PREPARE YOUR ANSWERS PRIOR TO INTERVIEW AND MAKE SURE YOU ARE READY FOR THE CHALLENGE.

Keep answers concise and to the point. If faced with a difficult query, rather take your time and think about your response prior to answering.

The responses below are only suggestions. As a candidate you need to personalise to suite them, but obviously you should not sound like a parrot that has rehearsed

Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: Answer: Identify some of your main attributes and memorise them. Describe your qualifications, career history and range of skills, emphasising those skills relevant to the job on offer.

Q: What have your achievements been to date?

A: Select an achievement that is work-related and fairly recent. Identify the skills you used in the achievement and quantify the benefit it had to the company. For example, 'my greatest achievement has been to design and implement a new sales ledger system, bringing it in ahead of time and improving our debtors' position significantly, saving the company R50,000 a month in interest'.

Q: Are you happy with your career-to-date?

A: This question is really about your self-esteem, confidence and career aspirations. The answer must be 'yes', followed by a brief explanation as to what it is about your career so far that's made you happy. If you have hit a career plateau, or you feel you are moving too slowly, then you must qualify your answer.

Q: What is the most difficult situation you have had to face and how did you tackle it?

A: The purpose of this question is to find out what your definition of difficult is and whether you can show a logical approach to problem solving. In order to show yourself in a positive light, select a difficult work situation which was not caused by you and which can be quickly explained in a few sentences. Explain how you defined the problem, what the options were, why you selected the one you did and what the outcome was. Always end on a positive note.

Q: What do you like about your present job?

A: This is a straightforward question. All you have to do is make sure that your 'likes' correspond to the skills required for the job on offer. Be enthusiastic; describe your job as interesting and diverse but do not overdo it - after all, you are looking to leave.

Q: What do you dislike about your present job?

A: Be cautious with this answer. Do not be too specific as you may draw attention to weaknesses that will leave you open to further problems. One approach is to choose a characteristic of your present company, such as its size or slow decision-making processes etc. Give your answer with the air of someone who takes problems and frustrations in your stride as part of the job.

Q: What are your strengths?

A: This is one question that you know you are going to get so there is no excuse for being unprepared. Concentrate on discussing your main strengths. List three or four proficiencies e.g. your ability to learn quickly, determination to succeed, positive attitude, your ability to relate to people and achieve a common goal. You may be asked to give examples of the above so be prepared.

Q: What is your greatest weakness?

A: Do not say you have none - this will lead to further problems. You have two options - use a professed weakness such as a lack of experience (not ability) on your part in an area that is not vital for the job. The second option is to describe a personal or professional weakness that could also be considered to be a strength and the steps you have taken to combat it. An example would be: "I know my team think I'm too demanding at times - I tend to drive them pretty hard but I'm getting much better at using the carrot and not the stick".

Q: Why do you want to leave your current employer?

A: State how you are looking for a new challenge, more responsibility, experience and a change of environment. Do not be negative in your reasons for leaving. It is rarely appropriate to cite salary as your primary motivator.

Q: Why have you applied for this particular job?

A: The employer is looking for evidence that the job suits you, fits in with your general aptitudes, coincides with your long-term goals and involves doing things you enjoy. Make sure you have a good understanding of the role and the organisation, and describe the attributes of the organisation that interest you most.

Other common interview questions to consider:

- How does your job fit in to your department and company?
- What do you enjoy about this industry?
- Give an example of when you have worked under pressure.
- What kinds of people do you like working with?
- Give me an example of when your work was criticised.
- Give me an example of when you have felt anger at work. How did you cope and did you still perform a good job?
- What kind of people do you find it difficult to work with?
- Give me an example of when you have had to face a conflict of interest at work.
- Tell me about the last time you disagreed with your boss.
- Give me an example of when you haven't got on with others.
- Do you prefer to work alone or in a group? Why?
- This organisation is very different to your current employer - how do you think you are going to fit in?
- What are you looking for in a company?
- How do you measure your own performance?
- What kind of pressures have you encountered at work?
- Are you a self-starter? Give me examples to demonstrate this?
- What changes in the workplace have caused you difficulty and why?
- How do you feel about working long hours and/or weekends?
- Give me an example of when you have been out of your depth.
- What have you failed to achieve to date?
- What can you bring to this organisation?