

THE INTERVIEW

The interview is still the most commonly used selection tool. Sometimes it is the only selection tool. This timeslot is your window of opportunity - a chance to make a good impression, outshine your competition, and to gain all the information you need about the company to assist you in deciding whether the company and its job is right for you.

1) DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEW FORMATS

There are several forms of interview with varying degrees of formality, but in essence they consist of a conversation, allowing the employer to get to know you and for you to see what they are like. Whilst interviews can be nerve wracking experiences, it should be remembered that the interviewer is only human and it is possible that they are nervous also. Enter with a confident air, be friendly and open, most importantly don't forget to breathe.

One-on-one interview

To get to this stage you would have succeeded in qualifying the preliminary screening processes. The selection process will have been narrowed down and the company has recognised you as an attractive prospect. Usually this interview will be carried out by department supervisor, but sometimes with human resources personnel. Be prepared to talk about yourself in detail, why you want the job, and what you can contribute to the company.

In advance of the interview carry out research into what the company do, and think of some questions you want to ask. Do not volunteer information that the interviewer doesn't ask for.

Tips: You want them to want you on their team, therefore you have to impress them with your personality, your qualifications and your career ambition. Dress conservatively to impress and arrive punctually, be chatty with plenty of eye contact. Establish a rapport with the interviewer.

Lunch interview

A interview over lunch will be more casual than in an office, however do not let down your guard. Make your life easier by not ordering messy food and order something that is a similar price range to the others in attendance. The decision whether to smoke or drink alcohol should be based upon the location and what the interviewer is doing.

Tips: Follow the lead of the interviewer in behaviour, tone and ordering.

Screening interview

A brief meeting with the company used by them to weed out unqualified and uninterested candidates. Screening interviews occur if there is a huge number of job applicants, however on the whole candidates are rarely asked to attend them. Interviewers are usually human resource professionals and the format is usually that of straight questions and answers.

Tips: Confirm to the interviewer what they have already read in your CV, do not deviate from the truth. Providing facts is more important than building a rapport.

Telephone interview

Sometimes if a candidate lives a great distance from the offices of the company then it may not be practical to attend preliminary interviews in person. In this case an interview can be conducted on the telephone. Alternatively some companies use telephone interviews as a screening process to eliminate the weaker candidates early on. A telephone interview is not to be treated as an easier option, it should be conducted in an equally professional manner as a standard interview and the same rules apply. The only difference is that your body language no longer applies.

Do not let the interviewer totally lead the conversation, if it is appropriate push for a face to face meeting saying something like "I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you in person so we can both better evaluate each other. I am free either Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning. Which would be better for you?"

How to behave: Speak in a clear voice, answer the interviewers questions precisely and try to elaborate without talking too much, exude controlled professionalism.

Group interview

Often group interviews are used to introduce the company and describe the job to an assembled audience of candidates. As this form of interview is not one-on-one there is not so much pressure on an individual candidate, however the aim is to stand out from the crowd and be noticed.

Tips: Ask questions speak to company personnel afterwards to establish a brief rapport.

Committee/Panel interview

Companies use this method when hiring for advanced positions or if they are just feeling nasty. During committee interviews candidates are questioned by several company personnel at once, this can be daunting but try to keep cool. Be sure to impress all of the interviewers, do not cater to just what one or two want to hear.

Tips: When an interviewer addresses you with a question, respond to the person that asked that question, while being conscious of how the others will interpret what you are saying.

Deliberate attempts to unnerve you

Interviewers may try to test your nerve to see how you handle yourself under pressure. The interview may start out in a relaxed fashion with standard questions being posed, then the interviewer may change tack to launch into a hostile assault, for example "So you failed your A-levels, what makes you think you can handle the pace at our company?" You should be prepared for this and when it comes don't take it personally. Calmly answer each question as it comes.

Second Interview / Third Round Interviews

A second interview occurs when the first round of interviews has whittled the prospective candidates down to a few that are suitable for the position. Sometimes a second interview may be required for technical, specialist or senior positions so that an interview(s) with the appropriate skills or seniority can finalise the decision on the candidate. As with the first interview (unless the first interview was conducted over the telephone) any of the above types may be used. This interview is

significant, as you are almost there. You need to really impress at this point as you may be competing against similarly high-calibre applicants. The second interview is not always as officially undertaken as the first. Some companies use the second interview to get a final view of the candidate and then offer the position. This can then lead on to discussing **salary**, **benefits package** and the role and **department**.

Selection Tests

At any stage in the interview process and employer could ask you to conduct a Selection Test. These tests are designed to identify particular skills competencies or personality traits, etc.

More information upon Selection Tests can be found in the Download Section under "Selection Tests".

2) Some Golden Rules to follow

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT AND WHY YOU WANT IT

Before you make that first approach to anyone, directly to companies or through recruiters, you should be clear in your own mind what you want and why you want it. Having a clear view of your objective will allow you to focus with more energy and improve your chances of making your application and presentation convincingly. It sets up a positive mindset which will drive your mental attitude, self confidence, and physical bearing all improving your chances of securing that job.

This is a time for you to showcase yourself - don't be tempted to skimp on the time needed to prepare. You only have one chance to make a first impression - make sure it has the desired result. Make the most of your self and your CV. Invest time and effort in yourself. Unless you do you will have an uphill struggle to convince anyone that you are willing to spend time and effort on the work you will do for them.

STEREOTYPES - Go with the flow....

Like it or not we are all guilty of making assumptions about people, making judgements, applying labels within moments of a first meeting. Maybe up to 90 per cent of that first impression is concluded within the first four minutes, mostly gathered from behaviour and appearance rather than anything that might have been said, however eloquent. In an interview situation this effect can be compounded by the fact that it takes place in a small time window without subsequent opportunity to redeem any false impressions that may have been gathered.

So, when deciding how to present yourself for that all important first meeting with a potential employer, take into account the expectations that your chosen career option has of the people that work in it, and where possible, specific to that company. "Go with the flow" - there will be plenty of time to be an individual after you get the job and people have had time to get to know you!

Dress Sense

- Always dress for the job you want rather than the one you have already got. Ensure your chosen attire is appropriate for the role.
- Clothing should be clean and well pressed.
- Choose styles and colours that flatter you. Colour co-ordinate accessories. White socks are best avoided-unless you are applying for a job as a tennis coach!
- Ladies beware the short skirt-always try the sit-down test before deciding on your outfit.
- Shoes should be cleaned, polished so they shine, and well heeled
- It goes without saying that you should be fresh...wear some subtle perfume or aftershave but nothing overpowering that will leave your interviewer gasping for breath! It will affect how you are perceived.
- Make up, nails polish and jewellery should be appropriate-not too over the top.

So, you look good, and you know it. You are waiting to be called in, You look around.... and already you look like you belong. So far so good.

Behaviour

That takes care of the appearance factor-now to the behaviours...

- Stand tall, smile and greet the interviewer in a friendly manner with a firm (hopefully not too clammy) handshake (avoid wet lettuce limp or bone-crunching firm).
- Give the interviewer space-don't get too close. Our personal bubble needs to be around 4 feet in Western Europe to remain comfortable
- Take a seat where indicated and when invited to do so
- Sit comfortably, hands relaxed in your lap when you are not using them to talk! Arms and legs should remain uncrossed. Crossed arms convey a defensive, negative attitude and may reveal uncertainty and insecurity. It sends out messages of "I need protection", and "I don't believe you"
- Don't stare but make sure you hold eye contact.
- Mirror the interviewers' movements and gestures. Mirroring comes natural to people who know one another well. When used correctly it is one of the most rapid and reliable ways of developing rapport. So if the interviewer leans back in their chair, you do, raises a hand to their face, you do. Make sure your movements are natural or it will appear like mimicking.
- Watch for and read the other persons body language.
- Speak clearly. Pause before responding to a question to gather your thoughts.

Above all **be confident**.

Tips: To help increase your confidence, do your research and practice your responses to those interview questions. Read and act upon the follow section!

3) Interview Count Down Advice and Guidance on Preparation:

Interview Preparation

Preparation for the **interview** is as important as the interview itself. By preparing fully you can ensure that you will be calm and collected on your way to your destination and during the interview, you are ready for any questions asked.

If you are using an employment or **recruitment agency**, get the full details of the role, the company, location of interview, who will be conducting the interview or your contact when you arrive and also information about the type of interview that will take place.

If you have gone direct to a company, most of the information you need will have been sent to you via a letter. It is suggested that you phone to confirm that you have received it and that you will be attending the interview. During the phone call you can always ask about the type of interview if this has not been mentioned within the letter.

A few days before the interview

Don't Be Late!

Make sure you know where you are going. Maps available at www.multimap.com and www.streetmap.co.uk If possible practice the route, find the company, and check for potential parking problems. If you are using public transport check the timetable and leave yourself plenty of time allowing for traffic or other reasonable disruptions. You don't want to rush and arrive flustered. Have the name of the person you are seeing memorised or if you think your memory might let you down, on a piece of paper easily accessible without having to empty the contents of briefcase or handbag all over the reception desk.

Do Your Homework!

Most employers will want to see that you know something of the company. The internet will provide most of the information you need - typically that will primarily include:

- What the company do - product or service
- Who owns them
- How many people are employed on that site and companywide.
- Details of major news stories - mergers, acquisitions, change programmes
- Turnover and profit, shareholder information, board members (Chairman, MD, CEO) for senior positions

If you have enough time before the interview you may be able to obtain a company prospectus directly from the company (the cheapest way), and will ensure that the information you are arming yourself with is bang up to date.

Details of a company's accounts and key personnel can be obtained through [Companies House](#) for UK companies, although there is usually a fee involved. Other company information can be obtained through on line business directories such as [Kompass](#). Information for overseas companies can also be obtained on that site.

Your Ascensys consultant will brief you thoroughly on the job role, duties, expectations and where the role fits in to the overall structure of the company, and any other information you need. If you are applying directly to a company they will usually send out a job specification and person profile.

- Make a list of questions that you would like to ask; this may include ones about the company, the role, location of where you would work, plans that the company may have in the future (they may be preparing for a **stock market** floatation for example) and any others that are relevant. This will show an interest on your part and that you have prepared well

TRICKY QUESTIONS!

- Once you are in the hot seat its too late to wish that you had spent time looking at those "How to answer tough interview questions" books that were sitting on the coffee table at home for you to look at when you had a moment. It goes without saying you should have all your key skills, attributes and major contributions you have made to previous employers on the tip of your tongue relative to each of the jobs on your CV. Include in your preparation answers as to why you left each job.
- Spending a little time thinking through answers to questions that always come up mean your answers are well considered and should therefore present you in the best possible way.
- There are many inexpensive books aimed at interview preparation on the shelves of most bookshops, or go to www.amazon.co.uk. Have a look at "Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions" by Martin John Yate (Kogan Page)

The day before the interview:

- Ensure you go to sleep early so that you are fresh and alert during the **interview**.
- Pick out all of the clothes you will be wearing and check that they are clean and ironed.

If you are required to take anything to the interview, have the items ready to take tomorrow.

Read any company literature and the questions you have prepared.

Read through your **CV** to ensure that if any questions are asked about the information in it you can answer confidently.

Have a printout of your CV, as it can be useful to have to hand during the interview.

The day of the interview:

- Go through your normal routine in the morning, ensuring you are well dressed, have everything you need and know where you are going before you leave
- Leave for the interview at a time to ensure you arrive 30 minutes before the interview. This will allow for delays and enable you to be calm and prepared before you meet your interviewer(s).
- Before entering the **company offices**, check that your appearance is fine (straightening your tie etc.)
- Tell the security guard or person at reception that you are here for an interview with (the name of the interviewer) and the time the interview is scheduled for. Ensure you are courteous to everyone you meet at the company as it creates a good impression with potential colleagues.

Do's and Don'ts

- Do phone ahead, if you are running late for an **interview**, as soon as you can and apologise to your contact/ **interviewer** when you arrive.
- Do shake hands firmly with everyone you meet at the **company**.
- Do be polite and if asked a question which you do not understand, ask for it to be restated (this can also provide a short amount of time to formulate a good answer).
- Do smile and remember to be yourself.
- Do present a professional image, ensuring you do not slouch, interrupt the interviewer(s) and keep questions and answers short and to the point.
- Do not fidget or keep looking at your watch during the interview.
- Do not mention pay unless asked and be careful of the figures that you state.
- Do not use bad language and especially swear words or slang.
- Remember that the interview can also be a vital element to deciding upon your grade or level within the company and also your **salary** and **benefits package**.

Remember**An Interview is a two way process...**

Interviews are not just for employers to see if they like the look of you - it's also for you to assess whether this is the type of employer that you feel will offer you the support, environment, challenges and direction that you are looking for. Take time before the interview to identify what you want from your next job - you probably will be asked anyway - and list the questions you would need to ask to uncover that information.

Now Relax!

A good relaxation technique prior to the interview is:

- To sit upright in a chair with a straight back and close your eyes
- Exhale
- Draw in a deep whilst counting slowly to 5
- Exhale slowly whilst counting to 5
- Repeat three times
- Open your eyes

Remember to help remain calm during the interview continue to take slow deep breathes - **Good Luck!**