

Preparing for and excelling at interview

Interviews are a difficult subject to write about as there is no such thing as a standard interview, a standard interviewer or a standard interviewee. Some Jobseekers love interviews, some hate them but there is no getting away from how important they are in the job seeking process!

Let's start by stating the blinking obvious:

Punctuality – It speaks volumes about you if you turn up 10 minutes early for an interview, instantly the recruiter sees someone who is organised and well prepared. It also gives you time to compose yourself and get a feel for the 'vibe' of the office environment.

Don't rely on Sat Nav or Google maps to get you there – Tom Tom and Google put our biggest client in the middle of a field about 3 miles away from their contact centre. Make sure you know where you are going and what the parking / transport links are like.

Dress – It will never undermine your cause to be better turned out than the interviewer, however turning up to an interview looking like you have just got out of bed or are going out clubbing will put you at a disadvantage. Our advice is that it is best to look your best – for men that's definitely suit trousers, smart shirt and tie (why not go the whole hog and take a jacket as well) and for the ladies we are talking a smart skirt or trouser suit and shirt / blouse. Clean shoes also make a difference!

Preparation – we all know the old adage – Fail to prepare, Prepare to fail – so it is essential you know about both the role you are being interviewed for and the company you are attending the interview with. If the interview is through **right click** then you're in luck – we'll help you with this critical step. If not then you are going to have to do the research yourself. Either way it is essential you go into that meeting with a thorough understanding of what's what and who is who.

Create a good first impression and make it last – Again, we're stating the obvious here, but there is no substitute for a good firm handshake and a warm, confident hello. Listen for the interviewer's name – and remember it so that you can use it in the interview. Most importantly, look the interviewer in the eye and use positive body language. A good tip is to mirror the body language of the interviewer, although this isn't advisable if your interviewer is lying back in the chair with their feet on the desk. Don't slouch or be too laid back. Crossing your arms is also a very defensive gesture and best to be avoided during interview.

Now for the less obvious:

"I" not "We" – This is the fatal flaw of many an otherwise good interview. Remember that it is you that is being interviewed and not your team. The interviewer wants to know what YOU did specifically so make sure you give answers that start with "I" not "We". If the example you are giving is collective (i.e. starts with a We) then make sure you outline what your unique contribution was.

Take your time – A well thought out answer that requires 20 – 30 seconds thought is light years ahead of a waffled answer about the first thing that comes into your head. When asked a question it is perfectly acceptable to put your brain into gear before you put your mouth in motion – but don't pause for too much thought every time or it could get a bit annoying!

If you don't understand – just ask – Don't be afraid to ask for something to be repeated if you didn't understand it. You won't be penalised for it and it is much better than heading off down the wrong track.

Closed questions – An experienced interviewer shouldn't ask you a closed question (i.e. a question that only requires a "yes" or "no" answer) – but they inevitably will. When asked a closed question it is REALLY important for you to give an expansive answer. If asked "Did you enjoy your role at X" don't say "Yes" say "I really enjoyed it because of A, B, C".

Be yourself – If you feel that you're not the person they are looking for, don't change and become someone you're not. An interview is a two way process and if you're not the right person then the chances are you won't enjoy the job. Be honest and don't try and give the answer you think they want to hear. Contact centres are very much a people business – and it would be a pretty boring place if everyone was the same – so let your personality shine through!

Answer the question – Quite often inexperienced interviewees are asked one question but all they hear is "Tell me everything about you and your career to date". The answer to this question is guaranteed to glaze the eyes of any interviewer and before you know it they will be doodling all over your CV. Listen to the question, work out what it is the interview is seeking to explore – and then provide them with an answer that evidences you, your skills and your experience in the best light possible.

Don't assume – It is a common mistake to assume that the interviewer knows what you are speaking about in detail. They might – but it is essential that you gauge how experienced the interviewer is in your particular field. If you sense they don't have your level of experience, don't use jargon or TLA's (the Three Letter Acronyms that litter most industries) but at the same time don't patronise or talk down to the interviewer. They will still have the ultimate say as to whether you progress through the process.

And finally:

Enjoy it! – Be confident, upbeat and enthusiastic and enjoy the experience. Remember, preparation will only take you so far. The rest is up to you!

Good luck!