

HOW TO



AT INTERVIEWS

A Short Guide to Securing that Dream Job

How To Wow at Interview



An interview is your opportunity to sell yourself, to find out more about the position you're applying for and the company as a whole. Priority's Business Manager, Tracy Welch, shares her experience on what makes a great interview.

When you attend an interview with a prospective employee, they want to find out about you: what motivates you, whether you will fit in with their team and, of course, whether you have the skills they are looking for.

An interview is a two-way process and is as much about you finding out whether the job and company are the right fit for you as it is about selling yourself to the employer.

So whilst it's important to always be yourself at interview, there are some simple rules that you can follow that will help you to wow the interview panel and stand out from the competition.

Ten Tips to Help You Succeed

1 Find Out About the Company

It is well worth spending some time finding out as much as possible about the business before you go for the interview. Have a look online to find out about their products and services, what markets they operate in, their structure and so on.

It's a good idea to look at the news feed on their website and make a note of any stories that could be relevant to the area where you'd be working as it shows your interest and that you have done your research. It also means you are prepared in case this comes up at interview.

Have a look at the team page: if you can, look at which area your interviewer works in. You could also look up your interviewer on LinkedIn to find out where they've worked in the past or whether you know anyone in common. Bear in mind that they will be able to see that you've viewed their profile (so don't do it five minutes before the interview!) Don't connect with them at this stage – hopefully you can do that later if they become a colleague.

If you know anyone who works for that company, or for another firm in their field, ask them what they know too so that you get a well-rounded view.

2 Know your Own CV

This sounds very obvious, but we have heard of interviewees who have forgotten things on their own CVs!

Make sure you can answer, or refer to, any points covered in it and clearly explain why you are leaving your current job and any gaps in employment. If any of your roles were temporary or contract jobs, make sure that's clearly shown on your CV so that the interviewer understands that there is a good reason why you were only there for a short time. Take a copy of your CV with you in case you do need to refer to it.

If the interview has been set up through a recruitment consultancy, make sure you have an up to date job description and ensure that you get a copy to take with you for the interview. At Priority Appointments, we always make sure you have information about the job you are being interviewed for in plenty of time.

3

Make Sure You're Prepared for Every Question

Depending on the type of role you're applying for, your interview is likely to include at least some routine questions such as:

- Why do you want to work for us / Why do you want this job?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why are you looking for a new position?
- What has been the biggest challenge in your career to date?
- What has been your biggest achievement to date?
- Why should we employ you for this role?
- How would your friends/colleagues describe you?
- What are your plans for the next 2, 5 or 10 years?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What do you like /dislike about your current job?

Don't talk about a personal weakness – it is fine to talk about gaps in your skills at a particular point in time, but make sure you explain how you overcame this with training or by working with another colleague.

Make sure you talk about competencies you have that are relevant to the job. Competency-based questions usually take the form of "Can you give me an example of when you have demonstrated" or "Tell me about a time when....."

When answering questions of this type, it is worth practising the STAR method so that you include:

S – Situation: give the background and set the scene

T – Task or Target: give specifics of what's been required in your current role – when, where, by who

A – Action: what did you do, what skills, behaviours or characteristics did you use in that situation?

R – Result: what happened? What was the benefit

Make sure you sound confident in your answers and keep to the point – don't be tempted to waffle or digress and always talk about yourself in the first person (I, me).

If appropriate, you can share with the interviewer any records of achievement such as letters or testimonials from customers about you and your service or copies of qualification certificates.

4

Think About What the Interviewer is Trying to Achieve

Think about who is interviewing you and what they are trying to achieve. For instance, the prime concern of an HR person is likely to be to assess your character and ensure you will fit the company culture. On the other hand, a manager who is interviewing you to work in his/her department will want to test your skills to make sure you can do the job with minimum support and that you will fit in with the team.

Try and assess yourself against the job description. If you were the interviewer looking to fill a particular role, what would you ask? Try and anticipate this and explain your relevant areas of strength and give examples of situations where you've demonstrated your skills. If your skills are not quite what is asked for don't be tempted to fudge or exaggerate – just explain what you can do.

Take some time to research the company's values and use a few words or phrases from their website to show that you understand and like these. However, don't just quote chunks of the website – let your own personality shine.

5

Double Check the Location

A little knowledge can be dangerous! Just because you know a particular town or business park, don't assume you'll be able to find the premises. Always double check the interview location as it may be different from the location of the job. If possible, go to the location beforehand to ensure you know where you are going.

6 Arrive Early

Always aim to be ten minutes early, fully prepared for the interview – not bursting for the loo as you walk in the door! However, don't get there TOO early as it may be inconvenient and could even put a prospective employer off.

Engage with any staff that you come into contact with and chat to the receptionist – they could be your future colleague.

Check that you know where to park if relevant and how long the journey will take, allowing for heavy traffic or buses being late.

If the worst happens and you do get held up, do call your recruitment agency or the company before the time you are due to apologise and let them know what time you expect to arrive.

7 Dress Appropriately

First impressions count so it is important to dress appropriately. If you have secured the interview through a recruitment agency, they will be able to tell you what sort of clothing is best.

If you don't have this support, for office jobs, it's safest to wear your best suit, and a smart shirt or dress works well for women. Do make sure your shoes are clean.

If the work is in a warehouse or on site, check what the dress code is - a clean polo shirt or blouse may be fine, but it is worth being sure. Check whether the interview will include a site visit, and bring any relevant PPE safety equipment if it does.

8 Engage with the Interviewers

On meeting the interviewer/s, be enthusiastic and polite from the outset. Try to maintain eye contact at all times: if there are several interviewers, make eye contact with each of them at different points during the interview. Try not to be unsettled if one person appears to be there solely to observe you - this is quite common. Reflect the style of interviewer – if they are formal, be formal: if they are informal, then you can be a little more relaxed, but don't overdo it. Never use bad language, even if your interviewer does.

Think about your body language – keep arms unfolded and sit upright to ensure you look alert and engaged at all times.

9 Take your Time Answering Questions

Before you answer a question, give yourself a few moments to think about your reply. It's better to take your time and give a good, considered and concise reply rather than rushing in with the wrong answer, then trying to backtrack.

10 Ask Questions

Ask your recruitment consultant for a few questions that you can have in mind to ask the interviewer. This will make you come across as someone who is really interested in the company and the role, as well as allowing you to find out more about the business.

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Or pop in and see one of our friendly, professional consultants at:

Priority Appointments, Winchester House, 19-23 Winchester Street,
Basingstoke RG21 7EE t: 01256 334 575