



Interview Tips & Techniques

Once an organisation shows an interest in your resume, you will be asked to interview with the potential employer. This is a chance for the company to learn more about you and your experiences, as well as a chance for you to review the company, the position and the offer. Creating a good impression in the interview is vital to the success of your job search. There are three essential Ps to perfect interviews.

1) Interview Preparation

First, do some research on the organisation to ensure that you have sufficient details regarding the organisation, and the position offered. Useful publications or web sites for reference material:

- D&B Australia - Business Who's Who
- Google Search
- Kompass Australia
- Annual Company Reports

Prepare possible answers to questions that you may be asked that demonstrate your competence, experience, knowledge and abilities. Make a list of all of your past significant achievements - expand on the ones you have highlighted in your resume.

During the interview, present your achievements using the Problem, Action, Result (PAR) format. Identify the PAR "story" for each of the skills required for the position. Remember to use this format to give a complete and concise illustration.

- Describe the problem in one to two sentences.
- Explain your actions in response to the problem in one to three sentences.
- Provide a short, punchy sentence that clearly expresses the result or the benefit to the company.

2) Interview Practice

Following are frequently asked questions during interviews. The first 10 are the most common. Read through them and mentally prepare a brief answer for each.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you leave your last position?
- What are your goals?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you know about this company?
- Why do you feel qualified for this job?
- What is your most significant achievement?
- How would your boss describe your job performance?
- Why should we hire you?
- What are your salary expectations?
- Describe your ideal job.
- How long will you stay with us?
- Why haven't you found a new position before now?
- How would you evaluate your present/last company?
- What do you think of your previous/current boss?
- Describe a few situations in which your work was criticised.
- If you had your choice of jobs and companies, where would you go?
- Describe what you feel to be an ideal working environment and an ideal boss?
- What was the toughest decision you had to make last year and what made it so difficult?

Questions to Ask

"Do you have any questions?" is asked at the end of nearly every interview. What should you ask? If you surmise the interview is over and it is just a rhetorical question, ask a quick one. If you have more than you are prepared to ask: express that you have additional questions, but out of respect for the interviewer's schedule, you'll save them until your next meeting. Some suggested questions you might ask during the interview about the position and the organisation:

- A detailed description of the position
- Reason the position is available
- Culture of company
- Anticipated induction and training program
- What style of person has done well
- Professional development opportunities
- Company growth plans
- Best-selling products or services

Behaviourally Based Questions

In addition to the traditional style of questions, behaviourally based questions focus on your past experiences. These questions require you to provide examples of your behaviour that demonstrate that you possess the desired skills or attributes for the particular job. Using specific dates, times, places and numbers will lend credibility to your responses.

The requirements and the attributes sought by the employer usually outlined in the job description and selection criteria. The following are examples of typical selection criteria and the relevant questions that may be asked:

- **Stress** - Describe a recent situation where you were in a stressful situation. What actions did you take and what was the outcome?
- **Conflict Resolution** - Describe a situation where you had a difference of opinion with a work colleague. How did you resolve the problem?
- **Oral Communication** - Describe a situation where you had problems communicating with someone. How did you resolve the situation?
- **Time Management** - Tell me about a situation where you had a number of tasks that needed completion. How did you deal with this situation?
- **Problem Solving** - Can you provide me with a recent example where you had a problem that you could not resolve? What actions did you take?
- **Leadership** - Think about a recent situation where you were the leader of a team. What key attributes do you possess that helped the project become successful and which attributes do you believe need improvement? Can you please provide some examples to demonstrate these attributes?

Behaviourally Based Questions (cont)

In addition to these behaviourally based questions, the employer may also ask you to describe what you would do in a given scenario. These scenarios are usually based on some aspect of the job and test if you can demonstrate the desired behaviour. It is therefore important that you review the job description prior to the interview and have an idea of the tasks involved.

3) Interview Performance

First impressions are powerful. By making a positive first impression, you set a favourable tone for what happens during your interview. Your goal is to create the aura of an individual who is confident, self-assured and gracious. The way you dress frames the picture - the way you behave colours the portrait of who you are.

Performance Tips

- Arrive at least 5-10 minutes before the established time. Allow for unexpected traffic and/or parking difficulties.
- Introduce yourself to the secretary or receptionist.
- Show courtesy and respect to everyone you meet. More than one applicant has lost out because of an inappropriate manner at the front desk.
- Maintain a warm and friendly demeanor. A natural smile will punctuate your conversation and add to your presentation.
- Try to select a seat that places you directly opposite the interviewer. Wait to sit down until the interviewer offers you a chair or is seated.
- Treat the interviewer as a potential colleague and establish a rapport as you would with a peer. Show respect, but do not place the interviewer on a pedestal.
- Maintain an "open" body position. Lean towards the interviewer a bit to show interest.
- Look at the interviewer. Direct eye contact is important.
- Avoid irritating habits such as pen clicking, pencil tapping, hair twisting, foot swinging and knuckle cracking.
- Do not smoke, chew gum or drink coffee during the meeting.
- Limit the amount of personal information you provide if it is not pertinent to the job.
- Remember that you have a valuable contribution to make to an organisation.
- Relax, keep in mind that you are just two human beings meeting with one another in order to get to know each other better.
- Immediately contact your recruitment consultant after your interview to discuss the meeting and to give and receive feedback. He or she can then answer any additional questions the employer might have and may be able to ease the process.

Your Behaviour During the Interview

The following are some key negative behavioural traits to avoid at the interview.

- Overbearing - aggressive - conceited 'superiority complex' - 'know-it-all' attitude.
- Lack of planning for career - no purpose or goals.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive and indifferent.
- Lack of confidence - nervousness. If you are nervous, say so.
- Over-emphasis on money - interested only in remuneration.
- Evasive - makes excuses for unfavourable aspects in past record.
- Lack of tact/maturity/courtesy.
- Condemnation of past employers. Never belittle a past employer.
- Persistent attitude of "What can you do for me?"
- Lack of preparation for interview - failure to get information about the company, resulting in inability to ask intelligent questions.
- Lying. Answer questions truthfully, frankly and as to the point as possible.
- 'Over answering' questions. Try not to say more than is necessary.

Nonverbal Communications

Words express only about 30 - 35% of what people actually communicate. Nonverbal communications such as facial expressions, body movement and actions convey the rest. During an interview, what you convey nonverbally may be as important as what you say. Keep these "body language" clues in mind:

- Facial Expressions: eyes are a key nonverbal indicator. Looking away indicates shyness, dislike or a lack of interest. Eye contact indicates a desire for communication, feedback and friendliness.
- Posture: the way you sit or stand can convey energy or fatigue, interest or boredom. Walk and sit with a confident air. Lean toward an interviewer to indicate interest and enthusiasm.
- Voice and Gestures: a well-modulated voice with a moderate pitch and inflection conveys interest and appropriate excitement. Be aware of gestures, which might convey anxiety and interfere with your message.

Closing the Interview

- Let the interviewer know how interested you are in the position. If they offer you the position and you want it, accept on the spot. If you'd like some time to think it over and talk with a spouse or family member, be courteous and tactful in asking for that time. Set a definite date when you can provide an answer.
- Don't be discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with their office first or interview more applicants before making a decision.
- Thank the interviewer for their time and consideration of you.

After the Interview

Last and most importantly, promptly call your recruitment consultant after the interview and explain what happened. They will want to talk with you before the interviewer calls them back. If you are interested in progressing further it will assist if your feelings towards the position are known, together with your perception of what the client's reaction is likely to be.