



OK. So your CV has done the trick and you've got an interview. **Great!**

But there's still the next hurdle to overcome – ***The Dreaded Interview!***

Your interview with a prospective employer is your **one** chance to really impress – so don't waste this valuable opportunity. We've put together our essential guide to performing well at the interview stage.

Top-Tips for a Tip-Top Interview!

List on paper all the questions you think an interviewer could ask you. Use your experience and that of friends. Then prepare sample answers and write these down as well. Writing down the questions and answers will ensure you remember them. Practice with someone answering these same questions

Think about your weaknesses. What would you be prepared to disclose as an area of your experience/skill that is currently lacking? If not asked, find a way to include this in the interview. Interviewers expect people to emphasise their strengths but do not expect to hear of a "need". They will appreciate your sincerity, it will impress them. However, ensure that whatever you disclose can be easily remedied.

Go over your CV and plan how you will address any "time gaps". For instance, if you had a couple of months between leaving one job and taking up the next, make sure you have a legitimate explanation.

Make sure your past history, academic and work, is achievement driven. So, be prepared to talk about specific achievements rather than your job description. Explain how you feel/felt about a success or failure. Feelings are important.

Questions: Avoid those that push the interviewer for a commitment - unless you are interviewing for a sales job. Good questions to raise are:

- "Can you tell me a little about the people who work in the team?"
- "How have other people progressed in the organisation?"
- "What is the decision process and time frame for selecting someone for this position?"

Use the third person tense, not "I", when talking about the job. Avoid sounding as though you assume the job is yours. Don't ask: "What would my salary be in a year's time?". Instead: "What would the position pay in approximately a year?"

Find something positive about the company from your web browsing that you feel the interviewer will know about and feed them the opportunity to talk (proudly) about it.

If your CV does not contain a photograph ensure you have both a spare photo and CV with you. When the interviewer is going back through their interview notes it helps them to recall you.

If you are not exactly sure where the location of the interview is, make a test run or allow extra time to arrive in plenty of time. You will not want to be rushing as this will just add to the pressure of the situation. Regardless of how genuine the reason, a late arrival is usually viewed as your fault and a negative. If you can, take a mobile phone. Should the train/bus/car be stuck in traffic, you can at least warn the interviewer of your delay.

The First Impression

To begin with, the adage that cleanliness is next to godliness is apropos to the interview because the first impression is the lasting impression. Hair should be well groomed; faces should be clean cut; makeup, cologne, and perfume should be minimal and conservative. Invest some money in professionally dry-cleaning your interview clothes. Accessories including folders and handbags, should likewise be minimal and conservative. Respect business values and conventions. It is usually advisable to be conservative in dress. This means avoiding the latest look. For women this means looking tailored rather than feminine.

Be on time

While employers will not hesitate to keep you waiting, they disapprove of lateness in an applicant. There may be several sound reasons for your tardiness, such as an obscure office location or traffic tie-up, but none of these will help your cause. One suggestion is to arrive 15 minutes prior to the interview and wait out the time near, but not at, the interview location. When you enter the office 5 minutes early, note the tempo of the office and tune yourself accordingly.

Maintain your self-confidence

When you introduce yourself, offer a firm handshake, call the recruiter by name, smile and maintain eye contact without glaring. Those who do not are often regarded, albeit unjustly, as deceptive, evasive and lacking in self-confidence. Be on guard for any nervous mannerisms. For example, if you tap your feet or twirl your hair keep your feet flat and your hands crossed. DO NOT SMOKE even if the interviewer does, as this may be a clue to nervousness. Show politeness to the recruiter and do not ramble in your conversation.

Practice your answers to the most likely questions Perhaps the easiest, and therefore the most neglected aspect, is the question and answer sequence. If you believe that what you say is important, then how you say it is of equal importance. The characteristics you want to convey with your responses are self-confidence, maturity, and fluency of expression. Self-confident individuals impress the interviewer as someone who will be a good spokesperson for their company. Mature applicants are prepared to discuss their weaknesses as well as their strengths. A clear and concise expression will sell better than a rambling explanation.

Be enthusiastic and positive

It will not be unusual for a portion of your interview to focus on your work experience. Your experience will give you something to talk about, it should help you package yourself more attractively. Sell your experience with sizzling enthusiasm. For example rather than just stating that you won an award sell it with zest. "Mr. Johnson, this past year I was honoured with the Gold Seal Gold Award for working 80 hours weekly during the summer - and I am very proud of the accomplishment." Be yourself but be your most charming, polite, concise, enthusiastic and self-confident.

Control the close of the interview

As the interview winds down, it is time to trial close the interviewer to uncover his thoughts about your fitness for the position. "Mr. Johnson, based upon the information you have about me so far, do you believe that I am a good candidate for this position?" Chances are you will hear one of two answers. If yes, then be assumptive. "Fine, what is the next step in the interview process - would I meet with you again, or would I meet with someone else in the company?" If you find you are not a match, ask why. "Mr. Johnson, I appreciate that. Would you mind letting me know which areas that I was weaker in? Uncover the recruiter's objections and answer them immediately. If you are not considered a candidate you will not have another opportunity to sell yourself

Don't let turn-downs get you down

Accept the fact that regardless of your interviewing skills, you still may not get some job offers for a number of reasons that have very little to do with your qualifications or interview skills. Feedback from interviews where you have been turned down will be invaluable. Uncover what they felt you lacked and for what they were looking.

Plan for the follow-up

As the interview closes, thank the recruiter for their time and ask for their business card. This gives you the address for the follow-up letter. Whether or not the position appeals to you on the first impression, trial close the interviewer to maximise your chances for a second interview. "Mr. Johnson, I very much enjoyed meeting you today. This is a great company and I am keen to meet with you again. I can really picture myself being part of this organisation." Whether or not you feel this way is not the issue. The point is that you want at least to have the luxury of turning down his offer!

Talk to GenTec

We hope these notes are of use to you in your search for that perfect job. Please feel free to call GenTec for advice on interview techniques. We may well have presented other candidates to the employer in the past, so we may be able to offer an insight into exactly what they look for and how they go about the interview process.