

PASS THE
JOB 
INTERVIEW

***The Only Interview
Guide You Will
Ever Need***

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PASS THE JOB INTERVIEW
THE ONLY INTERVIEW GUIDE YOU WILL EVER NEED
Your Comprehensive Guide to Interview Preparation

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Introduction

Let's be honest. The whole job search process would be so much easier with one simple element removed wouldn't it?

We're talking about the interview process of course.

You know how it is; you laboriously research every career advice website and pore through copious amounts of books, seeking advice from recruitment professionals and well meaning friends to ensure your resume is honed to perfection. Once complete, it's duly dispatched to every company on your target list, each version tailored to suit the needs of the employer and enhance your prospects of securing the role.

Now comes the hard part. To make that jump from applicant to employee you have to submit yourself to one of the most arduous elements of the whole recruitment process.

The interview.

Even the most confident of applicants admit to feeling a degree of nervousness when approaching an interview and we all have our share of disaster stories (either our own, our friends or both!) In fact, most of us have probably emerged from an interview at some point in our lives feeling like we've blown it.

How do you prepare, what do you say, how do you dress – how do you handle the really awkward questions?

That's where this book comes in.

It takes you through every single step of the interview process, including preparation, what to wear, the importance of attitude and body language through to salary negotiation.

We also cover the top 100 interview questions based on non-competency and competency based questions. If you're baffled at the prospect of what that might mean, we'll explain that too.

As a bonus, we have also included 25 pages packed with information and advice on both group exercises and psychometric testing.

We'll even cover situations such as whether or not to accept a counter offer from your current employer and the seven warning signs of a toxic organization – but let's not jump ahead of ourselves.

Before you attend one more interview you need to read this book.

**SECTION ONE – THE FIVE KEYS TO INTERVIEW
PREPARATION**

The Advantages of Preparation

If you've applied for a position and been invited for an interview that means there is something in your resume that has attracted the employer's attention. In today's climate, most recruiters and employers are inundated with countless applicants for each interview which are painstakingly whittled down to a handful of first interviews.

An invitation for interview is an achievement in itself and should be seen as such.

As with all things in life, however, preparation is the key. The people who sail through interviews seemingly without a care in the world may tell you they didn't put much time or effort into the preparation process but unless they are supremely confident, their claims are highly unlikely to be true.

The principal advantages of preparation are:-

- You'll feel more confident and at ease knowing that you've done everything you could possibly do to enhance the chances of success.
- The employer will be impressed if you have researched the position thoroughly and your chances of making it through to the next round of interviews will increase.
- If you've prepared thoroughly you'll be ready for even the most daunting – or trickiest - of questions

Our tips below will take you through the whole preparation process.

Tip Number One – Know Your Resume

It may be stating the obvious but before going into your interview you need to have reviewed your resume thoroughly and know it inside out. Think of it as preparing for an exam. Revise and memorize! Interview nerves can often cause us to draw a blank at the moment we need our memory to be at its clearest.

Recalling in detail all of your key achievements under the spotlight of intense interview scrutiny will leave even the most confident applicant wilting. Before your interview read through all of your resume and in particular note the following:-

Key Achievements

You may have a list of achievements as long as your arm but focus on the key achievements relevant for the position you are being considered for. For example, in a sales role you will need to illustrate where you've exceeded previous sales targets. In a management role it may be the implementation of new procedures that have improved your department's effectiveness. Perhaps you've introduced innovative PR ideas in a previous marketing role.

Whichever it is, review the job description, understand what the company is looking for and plan accordingly.

FAB

Remember how FAB you are!

FAB is an acronym for Features, Achievements and Benefits which is useful in remembering why your specific skillsets and background are relevant to this particular position. Let's return to the sales example to give you a demonstration of what we mean.

Feature – a feature of your career history is your track record in selling financial products.

Achievement – you've excelled in every area and taken your company's product into a new market, exceeding your targets by 20% last year.

Benefits – the benefits to your potential new employer are your sales skills and your ability to think 'out of the box' and take their brand to a new market. Your skills are transferable and adaptable for the benefit of future employers.

Know Your USP

Your USP is your 'unique selling point'. Those of you with marketing experience will be aware that most successful companies have a unique selling point. It's that element in their service that separates them from the competition.

What single point on your resume would you consider to be your unique selling point?

What makes you successful? What separates you from the competition? Is it one key skill? Is it your ability to deliver results on time? Is it your attitude reflected in a demonstrable track record? Be clear on your USP before your interview and ensure your resume provides indisputable evidence to back it up.

Career Gaps

Be prepared to respond to any questions about any unexplained gaps in your career history. In these cases honesty is always the best policy and we will cover that in more detail later in the book.

Tip Number Two – Research the Company Thoroughly

Employers are impressed by candidates who thoroughly research their company. It demonstrates an interest and a desire to work with them.

At the very least you should familiarize yourself with the following information:-

- Location of company, number of offices and the number of employees. Do they have an international presence?

- The name of the company founder or owner and their key Board members, Zoominfo and LinkedIn are both useful sources of information for searches on key individuals.
- When was the company established? Has it been the subject of a takeover at any point?
- What separates them from the competition – what do you perceive to be their USP?
- Have they won any awards or accolades in their sector or introduced new products recently?
- Are they financially stable? Where possible, obtain information on their financial performance, did they make a profit or a loss in the last financial year?
- Can you obtain statistics on staff turnover? You may find this difficult to ascertain during your research but it will be a useful question to ask at interview.
- Take a look at their Facebook page or Twitter feed if relevant. LinkedIn is again another useful resource.
- Discover as much as you can about the person who is interviewing you, particularly their background and how long they have worked at the company. Again, online networking sites are useful resources.

Additional Sources of Information

The company's website is always a good place to start. You may also wish to research press releases which may well be available on the company website. For an objective viewpoint research the business press to see what the media is saying about them.

If the employer is a retailer try visiting an outlet and make notes on what you see, from customer services to shop or restaurant layout. Contact head office or visit the website and request brochures if possible. The more information you can gain the more prepared you will be when it comes to the interview stage and the more impressed the employer will be.

NB : If you have applied for this position via a recruitment agency your consultant should brief you thoroughly on all of the above questions. A good recruitment consultant will also advise you to research thoroughly prior to your interview, whatever information they provide.

Tip Number Three – Advice for Overseas Positions

With today's global mobility in the workplace, opportunities to work abroad are increasing, particularly in industry sectors affected by a global skills shortage. Countries such as Canada actively seek skilled international applicants to cover a variety of positions.

While the thrill of traveling and working abroad exudes a degree of glamor, the reality of living and working overseas on a daily basis should be acknowledged. It isn't the same as an extended vacation. Additional issues to consider researching for an international position include the following:-

- Is this a short term or long term position? If it is the latter, will you have the opportunity to return home for short breaks? Who will pay the airfare?
- How long has the company been established there? What is the culture and politics of the country? Do they have different attitudes towards women for example? Business etiquette also varies from country to country, are there any particular issues you need to be aware of?
- What are the passport and visa requirements? Will you need a medical check? What medical and healthcare facilities are available in the country in question? Is a work permit or formal authorization needed before you begin work?
- If you are working on an expatriate basis where will your accommodation be based? Will you be required to find your own lodgings or will the employer provide assistance?
- What is it like actually living and working in the country where the position is based? Can you talk to any other employees working overseas for the company?
- Will you need to learn a new language? While many countries habitually speak English as a second language, if you are going to be living and working in that country it would be advantageous to have at least a basic smattering of the native language before accepting a position there. It will be invaluable in settling into a new culture.
- What are the tax implications of living and working overseas? American citizens are required by law to report any foreign bank accounts they hold to the IRS. What are the requirements of your particular government?
- Are you considering working overseas as a long-term career option or as a short term assignment?
- Are you up to the task? Working overseas isn't appropriate for everyone. Be honest with yourself. According to the Global Mindset Institute a successful career overseas requires an ability to adapt to new and often radically different cultures and customs, absorb an onslaught of new information quickly and effectively and demonstrate excellent communication skills.

Tip Number Four – Know Where You’re Going

Before the big day arrives confirm where the actual interview is taking place. Some companies have more than one office so it’s vital to confirm the location of your interview. Don’t turn up thoroughly prepared only to discover you’re in the wrong place. Plan your route well in advance.

If it’s a route you’re unfamiliar with and you have the time, carry out a dummy run so you’re not panicking on the day. Aim to arrive early, and take some refreshments in a nearby coffee shop while you read through your interview notes again.

Whatever you do, don’t leave your departure time until the last minute. Build in ample time to allow for delays on public transport or on the freeway – or for taking the wrong turn. A late arrival means you arrive flustered and anxious, all of your detailed preparation vanishes from your mind and you begin the interview on the back foot.

It also creates the worst first impression, that of disinterest and lack of planning.

Tip Number Five – Review the Questions In This Book

Sections Four and Five cover 100 examples of competency and non-competency based interview questions incorporating every single aspect of the interview process. You’ll also find useful sections on handling telephone interviews, a section on body language, advice on the most common interview mistakes, notes on dealing with the counter offer and advice on how to handle salary negotiation.

To maximize your chances of interview success we recommend that you reread and revise all of the questions contained in this book and make notes as you go along.

SECTION TWO – SURVIVING THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Why Do Employers Use the Telephone Interview?

As a pre-screening tool, companies often require potential candidates to be put through an initial telephone interview before inviting them for a face-to-face interview.

The advantages of the telephone interviews for the employer are obvious. Rather than interview countless candidates in the office they eliminate a large chunk of applicants through a less time consuming and more cost effective process. Telephone interviews tend to comprise a series of pre-set interview questions. Normally each candidate is put through an identical screening process.

A note of caution : A telephone interview is not an indication that a face-to-face interview is guaranteed. It is more than likely that the company is trying to reduce the high volume of applicants down to a mere handful to invite to an interview. The person carrying out the telephone interview is often a junior member of HR, not the actual Hiring Manager for this particular vacancy.

Remember too that only one candidate can be successful in applying for this position out of possibly hundreds of applicants. It is simply a preliminary stage in the recruitment process. To put things in perspective, some companies may screen as many as one hundred applicants by telephone depending on the type of position. The odds are against you from the start so preparation is absolutely vital.

Tips for Succeeding at the Telephone Interview

Choose a Time to Suit You

First of all, a telephone interview should take place at a pre-arranged time to suit both you and the company. If you answer an impromptu call and it is a caller from the company requesting an initial conversation, don't panic. Advise them politely that you are unable to talk confidentially at the present moment and schedule a time when it is mutually convenient.

Prepare Thoroughly

Successfully navigating your way through the minefield of a telephone screening significantly increases your chances of being invited to interview. Whether it's a telephone or face-to-face interview the preparation principles are identical. Follow the advice on research in the previous section. If anything, it is perhaps more important to prepare thoroughly for this conversation as the primary concern of the caller is to reduce their candidate list down to a manageable number of applicants – in other words, eliminate you from the process.

Ensure You Won't Be Disturbed

Find a location where you won't be disturbed or your cellphone connection won't drop out. If it's possible, use a landline to avoid being cut off at a crucial point. You don't need to give your caller an excuse to draw a red line through your name before you've even begun.

We would recommend sitting quietly in your study with a note pad and paper but if the call takes place during working hours and there truly is no other alternative, go

and sit in the remote corner of a parking lot. You require focus and concentration throughout the call. Avoid intrusive background noise – switch off the radio and television and close your internet browser – it's too easy to absent mindedly begin searching online for some random update on your favorite celebrity.

Stay focused.

The Lack of Body Language

Most human communication takes place through the medium of body language. We subconsciously express ourselves through gestures, facial expressions and eye contact and often mirror the behavior of our interviewer (we discuss Body Language in the following section). In a telephone interview we lack those visual indications, relying solely on a professional telephone manner backed up with the content of our words.

Prepare and Rehearse Your Answers

In terms of your responses to questions, identical principles apply to a telephone interview as they do to a face-to-face situation, although it's likely that the questions may be more general in nature. Please refer to Sections Four of this book for advice on how to handle general interview questions. You may also wish to reread the first summary section of this book too. The clear advantage of a telephone interview is that you can prepare a rough script providing notes of answers to the most likely questions and refer to it throughout the conversation.

When you have satisfactorily drafted your answers, try reading them aloud to get a sense of whether or not they sound natural. Request the assistance of a trusted friend for role play if you find that useful.

Answer The Question

The ideal telephone interview will require you to listen as much you speak. If your natural tendency is to anticipate questions and interrupt the caller half way through their sentence our advice is – don't! Firstly, your assumption about the remainder of the question may be completely erroneous. Secondly, while it may purely be symptomatic of nervousness or enthusiasm you are likely to give the caller a reason not to recommend you for a face-to-face interview.

The aim is to progress to the second round of 'proper' interviews which means LISTENING!

In other words, maintain a respectful silence, pause thoughtfully after the question has been asked and think about your answer before you respond.

'Don't Take That Tone of Voice With Me!'

We've all had it said to us (and probably said it to a few people ourselves in our time) but your tone of voice may make that vital difference in success or failure at interview. Speak clearly, convey energy and express enthusiasm in your tone. A metaphorical shrugging of the shoulders will not reflect positively in the overall interview feedback.

One technique suggested for telephone interviews is to reflect the pace of voice of the interviewer. The idea is that if they adopt a reserved and softly spoken approach, you should try and mirror that tone while reinforcing your interest in the position.

While it may be a useful technique it is also essential to reflect a professional approach and tone that is natural to you.

Don't Be Afraid of Silence

Don't be rushed into an answer. The caller will respect the fact that you are considering the question seriously.

Choose Your Words Carefully

Most of us adopt a 'telephone voice' in our professional life where we'll minimize our natural tendency to use slang or dialect. This is absolutely essential for your telephone interview. Don't refer to your interviewer as 'mate', 'dude' or 'love'.

The Effect of Body Language

Your body language will reflect in your tone of voice and attitude during the telephone interview. Imagine slouching over a desk with one hand on your forehead and one on the telephone. The chances are you'll mumble or convey a negative attitude. Sit up straight in your chair with your notes in front of you, prepared to answer every single question that the caller throws your way. And smile. You may be on the telephone but a smile is easily conveyed.

Be Confident

Don't leave room for doubt in either your tone of voice or the words you use. Adopt affirmative phrases such as 'I know' and 'I can', rather than 'I think so' or 'possibly'. Choose strong words and sentences that support your cause and demonstrate a clear thought process.

Don't Mention Money

We'll cover this later but do not mention money during your telephone screening. If questioned about salary expectations respond with something along these lines 'The overall opportunity and career prospects offered by your company are more important than salary considerations at this stage but I would be happy to discuss it further at a face-to-face interview'.

You're not even through to the bona fide interview process yet; don't blow it by ruling yourself out of their salary bracket at this stage.

A Few Final Tips

- Don't, under any circumstances, criticize either your current or former company or colleagues. It reflects negatively on you. Focus on the attractions of this vacancy not the reasons you want to leave your current job.

- If you don't know the answer to a particular question, be honest. If you are confident that you can ascertain the answer after the call then request a telephone number to call back on after the interview has finished.
- Equally, if you don't understand a question that's put to you, ask for clarification to be sure you're giving them the right answer.
- Don't discuss issues such as marital status, health, vacation or your personal situation on a screening call.
- If you have any concerns or if any aspect of the telephone call is raising faint alarm bells, simply make a note of them to discuss at the actual interview.

The Absolute Don'ts Of Telephone Interviews

HR jobs website Changeboard carried out a survey of recruiters into the worst examples of telephone interview habits while a candidate was being screened. We're pretty confident that you won't have considered any of these but they may make you smile:-

- eating
- driving
- taking a call in the bath
- breastfeeding
- walking the dog
- going to the bathroom (yes going to the bathroom)

For the record, we advise against every single one of them!

Closing the Call

Always close the call by reiterating your interest in the position, thanking the caller for their time and asking if they require further information.

Don't be afraid to ask if they have any concerns about your suitability in progressing to the next stage or to enquire as to when first interviews will be carried out. You might not elicit much of a response to either question but it reinforces your commitment and enthusiasm.

NB : It's worth asking if the call is being recorded. If it is, that is another reason why commitment, preparation and enthusiasm are essential!

SECTION THREE

ATTENDING THE INTERVIEW – SOME BASIC GUIDELINES

Back to Basics

Before we move on to the detail of responding to specific interview questions, there are a few more basics to consider.

How to Dress For Your Interview

Not only are you managing the stress of what to say and what not to say in an interview but you also have to consider what you are going to wear.

You know the old adage - first impressions count - and in an interview your clothes play a strategic supporting role that will influence the employer's assessment of whether or not you are suitable for the position.

What to wear for your interview is one of the more challenging decisions and while there is some conflicting advice we've come up with a few basic guidelines to minimize the already overwhelming stress levels resulting from your interview preparation:-.

Wear Formal Business Attire

As a general rule of thumb it's expected that interviewees dress formally. It may be 'dress down day' in the offices you are visiting and they may have a general policy of 'smart casual' office wear, but this is an interview. You are out to make an impression. Last weekend's casual wear that was suitable for lunch with Great Uncle Henry won't cut the mustard in a serious interview. How much do you want this job?

Adopt a conservative approach and opt for the two piece business suit in neutral colors that fits you well.

Dressing for a position two or three ranks above the job you are being interviewed for also suggests aspirations and ambition, so don't be afraid to go for it.

No Club/Date/Evening Wear

As a guideline, if you'd wear it to a club, it's not suitable for the formal environment of an interview! This is a business meeting. You want to be remembered for your professional attributes and suitability for the role you've applied for – not what you wore.

Keep It Pristine (And Don't Dye Your Hair)

Clean hair, clean clothes, clean face, scrubbed nails, shoes, minimal jewelry and cosmetics for the ladies, a clean shaven appearance for the guys where appropriate. It's common sense but always worth repeating. If you spilt your favorite pasta sauce on your best suit last time it saw daylight, take it to the dry cleaner's before it sees the light of day again. A pristine appearance will make all the difference.

Avoid experimental new fashion looks the week – and especially not the night – before your interview. Recruiters regale each other with stories of not so subtle hair dyes applied at home when an interview is imminent (including the color purple). They are often disasters in waiting.

A Note on Tattoos and Piercings

Err on the side of caution – cover up tattoos and remove excessive piercings. You may feel it's your right to dress how you wish and that is fine if and when you become an employee but to be on the safe side, observe the more conservative interview guidelines.

Avoid Heavy Perfume or Aftershave

You're the one who needs to be making the entrance, not your aftershave or perfume paving the way for you. Besides, if the hiring manager has an allergy to your particular brand of expensive fragrance your interview is as good as over before you begin.

Ways To Control And Use Body Language To Your Advantage

The effect of body language cannot be underestimated during the interview process.

It is estimated that non-verbal signals such as hand movements, facial expressions and eye contact apparently account for in excess of 90% of the message you send to the employer during an interview. Conversely what you say accounts for less than 10% of the overall message you convey.

Awareness of your body language isn't limited to the actual interview itself either. How you conduct yourself prior to the interview can also effect the overall impression.

It Starts Outside the Building

Be sure you know exactly where everything is before you get out of our car or leave the bus or railway station, such as your portfolio or copies of your resume. There's nothing worse than rummaging frantically through a briefcase or bag in search of relevant documents and emptying the contents of it onto the table in front of your prospective employer.

You need to retain a calm and composed exterior throughout the process. However you feel on the inside, keep it below the surface. Think of yourself as a duck gliding through the water (this will make sense, I promise). Underneath its webbed feet are frantically paddling but on the surface it glides serenely along. You are that duck!

As you approach the building or take the elevator, stand tall, you don't know who is in the elevator with you. It could be the interviewer. Engage eye contact and smile at everyone you encounter. Poise and confidence suggest someone who is comfortable in their own skin.

Waiting In Reception

No matter how nervous you feel while you are waiting in reception to be taken to your interview, don't let your head drop and try not to hunch your shoulders. We all do it subconsciously when we are nervous but check the position of your body. Breathe deeply, count to ten, relax your shoulders and sit up straight and expectantly. Don't read through too much while you are waiting otherwise you'll have that awkward moment when you're called for interview and have to shuffle a pile of papers out of the way.

The Handshake!

The handshake is that vital opener to the interview. Shake firmly with your right hand – not with a bone crushing grip and equally not with a limp wrist. Body language experts will also advise you not to cover the other person's hand with your free hand during the shake as it may be perceived as an attempt to dominate.

First Steps

Depending on the office layout you may walk through or pass by several offices – which may be open plan – on your way to the interview. Stand tall and relax with

your shoulders back and smile briefly if you make eye contact with anyone. Don't avoid eye contact; it's natural when you feel nervous but it can make you appear either arrogant or shifty. Whichever one it is that won't fit in with company culture.

In The Actual Interview

- **Bags and Briefcases** – Place them on the floor out of the way. Don't hold them on your knees, it will imply nervousness and also create a barrier between you and the interviewer.
- **Sit Up Straight** - OK, we know that sounds like your parents ticking you off at the breakfast table all of those years ago but it's vital to remain upright, rather than slouch. Not only will you appear self-assured but it also gives the impression of height which in turn suggests confidence and credibility. Slouching or sitting with a hunched posture will suggest anxiety. You might be anxious but remember the duck! Sit back in your chair (but not too far back – see our comment below).
- **Leaning During the Conversation** – This requires a delicate balance in your body language. Leaning backwards suggests that you don't like someone. Leaning towards the interviewer, while suggesting the opposite, can also be intimidating if you lean forward too far as you are invading the interviewer's personal space. Leaning to the side can suggest that you don't like the person interviewing you. Yes, it's confusing but if you think about it, it makes sense.
- **The Position Of Your Head** – For a self-assured impression keep your head straight and facing forward. For a thoughtful and more open countenance tilt your head to the side. The progress of the interview may well influence how you naturally respond.
- **Mirror Your Interviewer** – To establish a rapport with the person carrying out your interview you may wish to subtly mirror their posture. This may involve sitting up straight for a more formal interview tone or relaxing as the interview progresses. One note of caution – even if the interviewer lies back and puts his hand behind his/her head in the ultimate expression of relaxation our advice is don't copy them! That's their prerogative; retain a display of professionalism and composure.
- **Eye Contact** – Good eye contact suggests confidence, approachability and openness. If you are being interviewed by a panel, respond predominantly to the person asking the question while acknowledging the presence of the other interviewees. Don't spend time looking at the floor or staring at the ceiling, it suggests that you may be evading the question. Keep nodding to demonstrate that you are listening to your interviewer, as an unblinking direct stare can be quite intimidating! And on a final note, don't roll your eyes, it is disrespectful and may suggest that you would rather be somewhere else (even if that is the truth).

- **Watch Your Hands** – Avoid playing with your hair, fingernails or jewelry. Minimize hand gestures; excessive waving of your hands in the style of an exaggerated karate chop may imply a sense of panic or hysteria. If you're really not sure what to do, simply place them on your lap or on the table. According to body language experts, candidates continuously touching their nose and lips are not being completely honest so keep your hands away from your face.
- **Minimize Your Leg Movement** – Too much crossing and uncrossing of legs will be distracting and disconcerting. For the most professional stance either place both feet flat on the floor or cross them at the ankles.
- **Smile** – Smiling naturally will give the impression that you are relaxed but avoid an inane grin or inappropriate guffaws of laughter (especially if you are laughing alone!). As a general rule avoid extreme displays of emotion.
- **A strong clear voice will add to the impression of confidence** - Avoid a monotone expression by varying both your tone and pitch of voice. Don't run out of breath half way through a sentence in the midst of barely concealed nervousness. Pause, breathe and speak in a calm and measured way to reiterate your confident posture. It will also allow time for you to ensure that the interviewer has finished the question. Don't speak quietly, it implies a lack of confidence and don't adopt an apologetic tone. You are here as an equal, as a potential employee who has something to offer the company.

Warning Signs from Your Interviewer

If you're curious about how your interview is progressing, here are some warning signs that will indicate it may be time to change tactics if displayed by your interviewer:-

- **Crossed Arms Or Leaning Away** – Check you aren't leaning too far forward and intimidating them by invading their space. Both gestures suggest a degree of discomfort.
- **Tapping Fingers on the Table or Rubbing Their Face** – Double check how you are responding to the question you have just been asked. Are they frustrated with your answer? Have you been direct and to the point or are you rambling?
- **Loss of Eye Contact** – Coupled with resting their head on their hands or studying the state of their fingernails may also suggest that you've lost your interviewer's attention

As You Leave

No matter what emotions you are experiencing after your interview (and it may range from exhaustion to relief to elation) remain calm and composed as you stand up to leave.

Be prepared to shake hands with everyone in the interview, or at the very least the actual hiring manager.. Don't try and guess how your interview went from either the posture or body language of the interviewer. They may have half a dozen more interviews to carry out and will be well-versed in the art of not giving anything away to desperate applicants.

Be Natural!

You're probably wondering how on earth you are going to be natural while you're trying to assimilate all of this information.

While this may all be quite overwhelming it is intended to give you an overall idea of how subtle gestures and facial expressions may impact the effect you have on your interviewer. They are intended as guidelines, not to increase your anxiety. Much of what we have discussed is basic body language.

The most important aspect of this whole process is to be your unique and professional self.

Positive Attitude

It's an oft-used cliché but the thing that most affects our ability to succeed is our attitude. According to statistics, 90% of success in business and achieving goals that we set for ourselves is down to just that.

Adopting a positive attitude is possibly the most important thing you can do during the interview process – and here's why.

Over a two year period, US based consultancy Leadership IQ carried out research into 20,000 employees starting a new job. Nearly half of the employees failed in their new role within a period of eighteen months. Those figures may be quite scary but what's more scary is that 90% of the time the reason cited for the failure was their lack of a positive attitude, rather than their ability to do the job.

A positive attitude is what's called a 'soft skill' – those subtle elements to your character that ultimately influence your ability to fit within the culture of a company. The need for these 'soft skills' - a stable temperament, an ability to accept challenges and learn from mistakes, self-motivation, a positive attitude and so on – means that the whole way in which interviews are structured is changing.

In addition to the more predictable questions such as 'Tell me about yourself', companies also focus on the verb tense and the choice of grammar adopted by candidates to enable them to assess their future potential.

A positive attitude is the most vital asset that you can give to your potential employer.

Furthermore, according to Leadership IQ's 'Hiring for Attitude' the most effective way to source high performing candidates is through networking and referrals.

It's never been more important to review your activity on professional social media sites such as LinkedIn, in addition to objectively assessing your Twitter feed and Facebook timeline.

We'll cover that more in our section on questions but we're sure you'll agree it's food for thought during the interview process.

When it comes to your interview, what does a positive attitude look like?

It basically comes back to the positive attitude and body language that we discussed in detail in the previous section. Simply remember to:-

- Exude warmth and friendliness to employers without being too obsequious. You're an equal, don't forget that.
- Maintain eye contact, nodding and smiling.
- Remember the positive language 'I can'.
- Remember your manners! 'Please' and 'thank you' go a long way.

7 Perfect Questions To Ask The Interviewer

Responding to interviews with perfect answers is a challenge in itself.

On top of that, we have to demonstrate that we have researched the position, the company and the culture, that we are intelligent, rational human beings and absolutely perfect for the job and prepare our own list of perfect questions too.

No pressure then!

Normally the candidate is given the opportunity to put questions to the employer at the end of the interview, probably when you least feel like it. At this point you'll have been through the mill, in some cases subjected to a grilling from a total stranger whose aim seems to have been to make you feel completely uncomfortable.

In the process, every step in your career has been dissected and questioned – and now you're expected to come up with questions for them?

Preparing a list of well thought out questions for the interview is another absolute must. Well prepared and well thought out questions form that vital element that will give you a distinct competitive advantage against other candidates being interviewed for this role.

Turn your thinking around. Although it may not feel like it, this is you giving your prospective employer the opportunity to convince you that this is a company worth working for.

In Section One we looked at how to prepare for the interview; a key part of that was researching the company. The answers to that research will help you to formulate your questions for the interviewer.

Here's our list of some great questions to ask the employer

Question : What do you expect of the successful candidate in the first two to three months of this role?

Why? : This demonstrates that you want to hit the ground running and you're eager to make your presence known. You want to know what the company expects of you to equip you to do just that.

Question : What are the common traits of your top performing employees?

Why? : This demonstrates a competitive edge, a need to know what it will take for you to join that echelon of high caliber employees within their company. Each company is different; what works well within one company, won't necessarily fit the culture of another. Is it flair and initiative or attention to detail? Is it working longer hours than everyone else or is it primarily money focused, continually exceeding sales targets? Is it outstanding mentoring skills? Whatever it is, this shows that you want to know if their culture will suit your background and also that you intend to be one of those top performers.

Question : What top three things can I do in this position that will make a difference for the company?

Why? Make no mistake - employers are looking for a return on their 'investment' in an employee. What one thing can you do or change that will make an impact? Questions like this show initiative and an inquisitive mind coupled with an ability to think outside of the box. Candidates who really want the job want to know what will make them stand out from the crowd (and in doing so, benefit the employer – it's win-win all round).

Question : How do you deal with challenging situations such as an economic downturn? How did they respond to the economic recession of the last few years? Were redundancies made? What changes did they make in their business methodology? How have they separated themselves from the competition or adapted to rapid changes in technology?

Why? : It's important to know that the company you are potentially going to be working for has strategies in place to respond to a constantly evolving economic and technological climate. If this is a tough call for you as a candidate – that is, you're OK where you are but you would move for better prospects or career advancement, or possibly you've already been through a redundancy situation, you need to assure yourself that any company you move to is financially secure.

Question : Where does this position fit in terms of the long-term goals of the company?

Why? : It shows the interviewer that you are thinking ahead. You're not simply viewing this as a 'job' but as a long-term career option. Employers like that.

Question : Why is this job vacant? How long has the position been open? Have any other candidates turned it down?

Why? : The job could be vacant for a number of reasons. The company may be expanding, in which case this will be a new role (allowing you to be a trailblazer and set the standard). Perhaps the previous person is leaving for better opportunities. That's great, but what part of their career ambitions could the employer not fulfill? Does the company have unrealistic expectations in terms of performance and targets? Was the culture simply not right? If you discover they have already had two candidates turn the position down for similar reasons this is a red flag. Find out as much as you; perhaps the salary advertised is not the one ultimately on offer.

Question : What do you like about working for this company?

Why? : Asking the hiring manager what keeps them at the company is the question that they least expect and is always a great way of closing an interview. In turning the tables it shows original thought and it's always great to see their reaction!

Type the questions out on a sheet to refer to during your interview. Noting the hiring manager's responses is again evidence of preparation and a candidate who is taking this company seriously.

Closing the Interview

Your interview may have been the most excruciating experience of your life or you may have thoroughly enjoyed it. Even if you can't wait to leave the building, jump into your car and never look back, remember the section on Body Language. Maintain a calm and composed demeanor. Be polite, shake hands and thank everyone present for their time.

Always ask the interviewer if there is anything that they would like you to do in terms of follow-up. Hiring managers are trained not to divulge much either by way of body language or the next step in the process. Don't be surprised if your response is a cursory 'we'll be in touch'.

On rare occasions, you may be given the indication that they would like to see you again. If this is the case, do not assume that a second interview is guaranteed. The situation may change in the meantime; internal candidates may appear from nowhere and often jobs get pulled due to company restructuring or – as is often the case at present – in order to reduce employment costs.

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