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The Right Process for the Right IT Staff

## Interview Masterclass

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If you have successfully made it to the interview stage of the recruitment process, you may be wondering what you can do to increase your chances of landing that dream job. Now, while there is no way of predicting what questions you will be asked during the interview, there are a number of ways in which you can prepare for it and ensure you make a great first impression. With this in mind, here are our top tips for interview success.

## Stage 1

### Interview Preparation

A successful interview wholly relies on being well prepared. As an interviewee, it is impossible to know what is going to be thrown at you so it makes sense to be prepared for any scenario. The following is a list of areas to thoroughly research and plan for before the day of the interview:

#### The Job Description



- Before you arrive at the interview, it is essential to read the job description carefully. Pick out what your responsibilities will be on a typical day. Knowing this will help you to predict the questions you will be asked so you can prepare how to answer them.
- Memorise the key tasks and be ready to talk about the experience you have in these areas. It is wise to have specific examples to hand, and tangible results that you achieved. Data is powerful in a job interview, but can be hard to recall on the spot, which is why preparing in advance is crucial.

## The Company

You may be so focused on answering questions about yourself and your work experience that you may forget to read up on the company itself. Familiarise yourself with the company's values as well as recent product launches, awards and achievements and find out what sets them apart from their competitors.



- The chances are high that you will be asked what you know about the company and being able to reply confidently shows that you are interested about the job you are applying for. Even a few general facts about the company will stand you in good stead.
- If you know nothing about the company you are interviewing with, this will be an immediate red flag to an interviewer. Scan the company's website and social media channels to get a summary of the latest company news or look up current employees on Twitter or LinkedIn. Finding common ground with current employees of the company is the first step to building rapport in the interview.
- Take the time to identify two or three of the company's main competitors, as you may be asked about this in the interview. This is a common interview question, as the answer will often reveal how much research a candidate has undertaken beforehand.

## The Industry

Knowing a few facts about the company is a great start to acing that interview but it also beneficial to know what is going on in the industry as a whole.

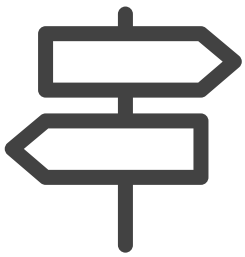


- Identify the key players in the industry and be aware of any recent changes.
- Ensure you are aware of any wider industry challenges or advancements. This knowledge will set you apart from other candidates and seriously impress your interviewers.

## The Dress Code



- If you want to make a great first impression, looking the part is the first step. Even if you know the office dress code is casual, you should still dress appropriately for the interview.
- Opt for a smart suit or a formal dress and whatever you choose, make sure it is in pristine condition. Dirty shoes or a stained jacket will do you no favours. The week before your interview, assess your outfit and wash or dry clean and iron it if necessary. There's nothing worse than waking up to realise your only smart shirt is still at the dry cleaners. Small inconveniences like this can throw you off your game before you even arrive at your interview.
- Strive for a balance between looking smart and feeling comfortable. A professional appearance shows that you are taking the opportunity seriously, but you must be comfortable for your confidence to shine through.



## Directions

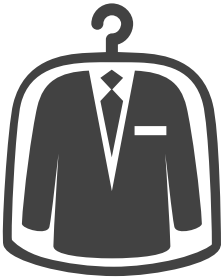
- Being late to an interview will always be frowned upon so it makes sense to research your journey in advance. Plan every detail and add on a bit of extra time, especially if you intend to drive to the interview during rush hour.
- Pinpoint the exact location of the interview and don't forget the small details such as having sufficient change for the parking meter.
- Always arrive at least five minutes early and remember to switch off your mobile phone.

## The Interview



- Research the most common interview questions. Interview formats differ from company to company but you can prepare yourself for it by identifying the most commonly asked questions and preparing answers to these in advance. This will reduce the chance of being caught off guard with a tricky question and will help you to keep your cool.
- Practice makes perfect. Once you have picked out a few interview questions, get a friend or a family member to test you on them. Practicing your answers is a simple way to prepare for your interview and it will make you feel more comfortable saying your answers aloud in front of others.
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer. An interview shouldn't be a one-way street. It's also a chance to determine whether or not the company is a good fit for you. It's your chance to get a feel for the company and therefore you should prepare a few questions of your own.

## The Night Before



- Charge your tech. If your interview requires you to prepare a presentation or present an online portfolio, make sure the battery on your laptop or tablet is fully charged.
- Lay out your outfit, paying particular attention to your accessories. Check that your shoes are clean, that you have a matching belt and/or decide what earrings will you wear. It's the little details that will help your morning go smoothly and ensure you don't turn up frazzled.

You've done all you can to prepare for your interview behind closed doors; it's now time to impress your interviewers by selling your skills face-to-face. Read on to discover our top interview tips.



- Communicating with your interviewers isn't simply about answering their questions correctly. Everything you do from the way that you stand to the facial expressions you use can speak volumes. From the moment you step into the room, use your body language to portray confidence by standing up straight, make eye-contact with everyone in the room and remember to smile. Get off to a great start with a firm handshake.
- One of the worst things you can do during an interview is to fold your hands across your chest. It may be that you simply aren't sure what else to do with them but this will have a negative impact on how you are perceived. Try to use open body language and rest your hands in your lap or on the table to appear open and approachable.
- Hand gestures when used at the right time can help you to emphasise certain points during your interview and express emotion. However, aggressive hand gestures should be avoided at all costs.
- Leaning back in your chair can give the impression that you aren't interested while leaning in too close can seem over solicitous. Opt for a neutral posture and remember to sit up straight rather than slouching in your seat.

- Use the star technique to structure your answers (situation, task, action, result) and present your ideas in a clear and concise manner. Mention specific examples of similar projects you have successfully managed in the past, describe the planning process itself and what you learned from the experience.
- It is natural to be nervous during an interview but try to avoid rushing your answers. Don't be afraid to pause before answering a question. Thinking through your response will help you to gather your thoughts.
- The interview is the perfect opportunity to find out additional information about the company and job role so don't be afraid to ask questions. This is the right time to ask the interviewer what their prediction is for progression and what your role will look like six-months down the line.
- End the interview on a positive note by thanking each person present for his or her time. You should always be polite regardless of how you think the interview went. Remember to leave on a positive note.

The questions may be over but the interview process doesn't come to an end once you leave the room. An interview will have various outcomes so read on to discover how to prepare for every situation, whether you are successful or not.

### You get a second interview

Congratulations for making it through the first interview stage! If you are invited back for a second interview it is essential to start preparing for it as soon as possible, taking into account the feedback you received from the recruiter regarding your first interview and your previous performance. Remember that the second interview is often more complex than the first and may require you to prepare a presentation, so be prepared to up your game.

### You don't want the job

If after the interview process, you decide that the job isn't a great fit for you after all, let your recruitment consultant know as soon as possible. In this situation it is good to let the company know your reasons for not wishing to continue in the recruitment process so they can improve the process for future candidates.

Identify the reasons why you chose to pass on the opportunity and use this information to progress in your job search by eliminating any other unsuitable roles.

Finding you don't fit with a particular company can be frustrating especially after you have devoted so much time to preparing for the interview. But any interview experience is beneficial and it will help you sculpt and adapt your approach in the long-run.



## You didn't get the job

If your interview wasn't successful, not all is lost. Attending an interview is a valuable experience that you can learn a lot from. If you didn't get called back to attend a second interview or you weren't offered the job, always ask for feedback from the employer or recruitment agent as this can help you to avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

This feedback is crucial if you want to make progress and work in your desired industry. Take into account all of the comments whether they are good or bad and adapt your interview technique accordingly.

So what now? It's time to get back to hunting for your next job. Are you being as productive as possible in your job search? Simple things such as updating your LinkedIn profile, taking a course to gain additional qualifications or setting up job alerts via email will help you get one step closer to landing that dream job.

**Follow this guide to interview success and approach your next job opportunity with confidence.**