

Peach Legal Guide to Successful Interviews

Congratulations! You have made it past the initial selection process and have been chosen for interview. Your CV has shown that you potentially have the right skills for the job but are you the right person for the company?

People in general will make their mind up about someone in the first few minutes of meeting them so it is vital to create an excellent first impression!

There will be many candidates being interviewed for the job - all of whom will have the skills for the role, so how are you going to stand out?

Preparation Preparation Preparation!

The only way to distinguish yourself from the rest of the interviewees is to present yourself in a more effective way than others do. Focus on being confident, motivated, energetic and proactive. You will need to be prepared to talk about yourself in order to show a prospective employer that you are the right person for the job.

Checklist the following items:

Ensure that you have confirmed back to the employer or agency that you can make the interview time and date.

- Familiarise yourself with the journey to the location so that you arrive in plenty of time. If the interview location is different to that of the job then also familiarise yourself with the journey to your potential job so that you are sure that it is commutable.
- Dress for success! Prepare your interview outfit in advance – a suit is usually the best option. Even if you know the firm dresses casually, you still need to present yourself smartly. Ask your consultant if you are not sure.
- Practice a good handshake; not too firm and not too weak.
- Research your prospective employer – familiarise yourself with mission statements, past performance, future goals, analyse ratings. Most companies have comprehensive websites with this information.
- Alternatively read business pages of relevant professional journals to gain a better insight into the company. You could also contact the company and request general information.

- If you are going for the interview through an agency, ask your consultant for some background information on the company. Whatever you do – don't go unprepared!
- Make a short list of questions to ask at the end of the interview.
- Other key factors you may wish to consider are: salary, benefits, probationary period, structure of department and progression.
- Know your CV – education, job history and hobbies. Be prepared to answer questions on salaries, why you left a position and any gaps between employment.
- Review everything you have done in the past as evidence of your strong traits and be prepared to answer questions on weak spots in your CV.
- Anticipate likely questions and prepare suitable answers. Why not practice with a friend so that you sound natural, not rehearsed from a script!

The Interview

- Be ready in plenty of time.
- Take your CV, any relevant information such as presentation material, ID, certificates or references, your list of questions and a notepad and pen. Put these items in a folder.
- If you are running unavoidably late ensure that you contact the interviewer or your agency immediately.
- Arrive with some time to spare but not too early!
- Treat all the support staff you meet with courtesy – they may influence the decision making process.
- Positive body language is essential - create a good first impression: smile, shake hands and greet your interviewer.
- Sit comfortably, do not slouch and try not to fidget!
- Do not gesticulate too much as it will show your nerves to the employer.
- Throughout the interview maintain as much eye contact as possible.

Overcoming Obstacles

- Be a good listener –try not to over-talk as this can be off-putting.
- Listen very carefully to what is being asked, if you are not sure what the interviewer is asking you then try and summarise the question and feed it back first, before answering, or even ask them to repeat the question. Always answer the question being asked with enthusiasm and interest.
- Keep your answers concise and give examples wherever possible to demonstrate your skills and abilities.
- Don't answer questions with just 'yes' or 'no', try to expand a little on what you are saying.
- Do not criticise previous employers.
- Do not tell lies - you will soon be found out!
- Make sure the employer knows the benefits of employing you.
- Do not be the first one to bring up the subject of salary and benefits.

Handling Difficult Questions

There may be parts of your employment history that may be considered as 'weak spots' – these will need to be handled in a positive way:

- If you were dismissed or made redundant – be completely neutral when providing answers. What positives have you learned from the situation? Show the employer you are a survivor who can make the best of a bad situation.
- If you're over-qualified for the role – emphasise your relevant skills and qualifications for the job. 'Sell yourself' so that the employer keeps an open mind about you.
- If you don't have enough experience for the job – tell the employer what transferable skills you have and what you can contribute to the job. 'Sell yourself' so that the employer is convinced of your abilities. Show willingness to do any training required.

Exiting the Interview

- Before you leave the interview - have you asked all the questions you need to make up your mind about the job?
- Have you got all the information from the interviewer that is relevant to the job?

- Establish what the next step is – when are you likely to hear from them?
- Thank your interviewer for their time and shake their hands before leaving.
- If you have used an agency, call your consultant and give them some feedback. Share any concerns and expectations you have with them.

Good luck from Peach Legal!