

Getting that Job - How to Shine at an Interview

Often, the toughest part of getting any job is likely to be the interview. Getting through interviews and making them work effectively for you is something that everyone can do - it just takes careful planning.

ESSENTIAL HOMEWORK

Find out as much as you can about the job, analyse the job description, try and work out what sort of person is required and match that to your own strengths and skills.

If you are going through an employment agency such as Kelly Services then your consultant will be able to give you a detailed job description and make sure you know all about the position before you get there.

Research the company, find out all you can about them to show you are really interested in joining. Local reference libraries can often help here or you can contact the company direct and ask for information such as the Report and Accounts and other literature. Again, if you are using an agency then you will be given relevant information.

Plan your route, giving yourself plenty of time to get to the appointment - ideally you should aim to arrive 5-10 minutes early to give yourself a chance to look around and to relax.

Think carefully about what to wear - the importance of first impressions cannot be overstated. Make sure that you look smart and professional.

Think about what it is you want to achieve from the interview. Remember it is as much for you to find out about them as the other way round. Try rehearsing with a friend giving you the opportunity to go over key points.

Make a note of any questions to ask on the day or any points you would like to cover at the interview.

HANDLING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Employers often ask questions designed to discover how you would deal with certain situations and how you would behave. For instance 'describe a situation where you have shown yourself to be flexible' or 'describe how you dealt with an unexpected situation' are both ways of trying to find out more about the way you operate as a person.

Producing answers isn't as difficult as it may first appear, particularly if you have given some thought to these type of questions coming up. You can draw on your past experience and you don't necessarily have to contain yourself to the workplace. Even being able to successfully share a flat demonstrates that you are a team player with the ability to negotiate!

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Some companies use telephone interviews to draw up their shortlist so it is worth giving some thought to how you would cope with this technique. In many ways you need to prepare for a phone interview in the same way as you would for a face-to-face interview. In this instance it is particularly important to think of some questions that you want to ask the interviewer. You should also try and ensure that you have some privacy - so try and find a quiet phone that you can use and then you need to get yourself into interview 'mode'. Try and imagine you are sitting in front of the interviewer and use facial expressions as you would in a one to one interview because your

attitude and frame of mind is always reflected in your voice - so don't forget to smile and be positive.

Don't forget the 5 W's - Who, What, Where, Why and When.

Work out honest and persuasive answers to likely questions such as:

- Why do you want to join us?
- What can you bring to the job/company?
- Why did you leave your last job or why are you leaving your present job?
- Tell me about your last/present job?
- How will you set about tackling this job if you are successful?
- What do you think the main changes will be between your last/present job and this one?

ON THE DAY

Give yourself plenty of time - don't put yourself under extra pressure by having to rush. Always take an up-to-date copy of your CV that is clean and crisp together with a notebook and pen. When you meet the interviewer look directly at the person, smile, and give a firm handshake - this shows confidence.