

Interviewing for a new role is always difficult. The more preparation you do, the more comfortable you are, and the less nervous you will be during your interview. Nothing guarantees a successful interview but you can help yourself better prepare for success.

Research - Find out as much information as you can about the company and anyone you will be interviewing with. Check out their website, understand their product, be aware of the company's and their competitor's presence in the market and any changes taking place in the industry. Work on understanding the organisational need and how you can add value. Look at the challenges and opportunities they face and work out how to show that your experience and expertise are relevant. Use your network to find information about the interviewer and his preferences, the company and its culture. Use LinkedIn and other tools to gather all the intelligence you can.

Rehearse - Try to visualize your interview and how you will present yourself and answer questions prior to interviewing. If you get nervous during interviews, you might even consider having someone you know do a practice interview beforehand. The more you practice, the more comfortable you are, and the less nervous you will be when the interview arrives. Whether you call it confidence, self-esteem or self-belief, to shine at interview you need to show that you will make a good employee. Show that you are good at interacting and reading your situation, good at selling yourself and your ideas.

Cover strengths, weaknesses, etc - Think about questions related to where you will be in 2 to 5 years, your most difficult work situation, your most stressful role job, your favorite position to date, what kind of person you'd like to work for, etc... Sit down and establish your answers to all of the stereotypical questions that get asked in interviews. If your interviewer asks where you see yourself in the next 5 number of years, let them know that you are more focused on the current position at this time, but you would obviously want to be considered for appropriate promotions as you master this position and show high performance.

Prepare for Behavioural Questions -Many companies use an interview technique known as behavioral interviewing. This method of interviewing asks candidates to give specific examples of situations they have encountered. For example, "tell me about a time you didn't meet a deadline and how you dealt with the situation." It can be difficult to come up with good examples to behavioral interview questions on the spot, and you will be far better served if you can determine good examples in advance. Think about and be able to offer work related examples of:-

How you handled not meeting a deadline
How you dealt with conflict with a colleague or manager
When you have shown initiative
What you did when a client was upset with you
A time when a colleague blamed you for something that was not your fault
How you dealt with a pressure situation

Think of questions to ask

Why has this opportunity arisen?
What prospects are there for future development?
Are there any training opportunities?
How would you describe the responsibilities of the position?
How would you describe a typical week/day in this position?
What is the company's management style?
Who does this position report to? If I am offered the position, can I meet him/her?
What do you enjoy about working here?
If I am extended a job offer, how soon would you like me to start?
Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

Appearance - Remember to ask ahead of time what the expectation is on your attire. It is always preferable to over-dress for an interview unless you know the company has a strict casual environment. Make sure you are well groomed. Do NOT chew gum during an interview. Think about how you appear when you are confident and on top of the world. Head high, standing straight and tall, a slight smile, relaxed.

Arrival - Arrive for your interview between 5 and 10 minutes early. Some interviewers are very time-sensitive and will notice if you are even just one minute late. If you are running behind or think you might be late, call ahead of your arrival to let them know and apologise when you arrive. It is always best to do a dummy run a day ahead to ascertain parking, traffic etc.

Introduction - When introducing yourself to each interviewer, give your first and last name, make eye contact, and let the interviewer be the person to initiate a handshake. When shaking hands, match the pressure of their handshake. Do not be limp or unusual with the way you shake hands. Wait a moment and smile at the interviewer after meeting them.

Presentation - Your body language tells a lot about you in an interview. Sit up straight. Lean slightly forward in your chair. Keep eye contact with your interviewer as much as possible (especially be aware of this when you are the one speaking as many people make eye contact when listening but not when speaking). Stay alert. Make sure you project energy and do not appear tired. Try to mirror your interviewer's demeanor and style. Be yourself, but let them set the tone of the interview and match their energy level and body language. Never swear or use casual words, even if your interviewer swears and speaks casually.

Take Notes - Bring a notepad or portfolio and a pen to take notes during each interview. This is a very effective way to show your interest in the opportunity and your attention to detail.

Forbidden topics - Never bring up money on your first interview. If they ask what you are earning, be honest but tell them that you feel it is probably premature to talk money at this point and that you are interested in evaluating the entire opportunity rather than the salary alone. Let them know that you are confident that you both can work out a fair offer if you are both interested in moving forward. Don not ask about benefits information or to take a look around the office. This can be done at later stage.

Termination or redundancy - Being terminated for cause is always difficult to answer. Never use the word "fired" when describing your situation and instead use a softer term like "let go". Do not go into great detail about the circumstances and do not express anger. Speak with confidence when discussing the situation and do not appear meek or apologetic. Look the person in the eye the entire time you are discussing what happened. If possible, offer a referee at the company who will give you a solid reference about performance.

Closing the interview - These are the two MOST important questions in each interview you have. You should ask them of each individual interviewer.

- Do you have any concerns about my ability to do this job? - This is your last chance to make sure you didn't leave out anything in your background or incorrectly communicate anything during the interview. Once the interview is over, it is almost impossible to change someone's incorrect impression. Be direct and try to get a sincere response from the individual.
- Express your interest in the opportunity. This might very well be the deciding factor in getting an offer. Even if you have reservations, express to each interviewer that you are definitely interested in the position and want to know what you need to do next to keep the process moving. And make sure that you actually say it in words at the end of the interview. Never assume that they should have noticed your enthusiasm and interest level from the rest of your comments during the interviewing process.

Follow up - Always follow up with a company after you interview within 24 hours. In this electronic age, it is appropriate to send an email to each person who interviewed you if you have their email address. Thank the interviewer for his or her time, re-iterate your interest in the opportunity. Don't make spelling or grammatical mistakes.