

Nailing the Job Interview

Most of us have had job interviews that have gone extremely well; most of us have also had interviews that did not; some are facing the first interview in their career fields because they are entry-level candidates. Wherever you are on the interview experience spectrum, it will be wise to take a look at those preparations you can make for your next interview. If you are well-prepared, you will be far more at ease and confident when that big day roll around.

Here are some hacks that should help.

Before the Interview

Before you step into that office for your interview, you have a lot to do.

1. **Do Your Research:** You may have already done some research on the company or organization when you prepared your resume or CV. You probably read the job description carefully, found the company website, and navigate around a bit. Now you want to dig a bit deeper.
 - Go back to the website and read every single page. There may be some news, events or little pieces of information you can bring up during the interview. This shows the interviewer that you have taken the time to really learn about their organization.
 - Check out all social media platforms – you will find some interesting stuff and you never know when it might come up.
 - Google the organization and see if there is any current news. Did they just buy another company? Do they have plans to expand in another city, state, or country? When you are “up on” these events, you will be impressive.
2. **Prepare Answers to Common Questions:** One of the worst things that can happen is to be asked a question that you have not thought about and for which you have not prepared and rehearsed an answer. You will get nervous, stammer, and perhaps give an answer that you will regret later. Here are typical questions and some tips for answering them:
 - Tell me about yourself. You need to prepare this answer carefully. Allow yourself about 30-45 seconds – no more than that. Do not bring up your personal life unless something in it relates directly to the position. Do speak to when and how you decided on your career.
 - Why are you interested in working for us? If you haven't prepared an answer in advance, you will end up talking about how this is a great place for the next step in your career – big fail. It's not about what the organization can do for you; it's about the value you can provide to the organization. You don't have to be a braggart, but speak to the expertise and skills you have that are a perfect fit for the job opening. Speak to the fact that you want to feel you are contributing to your profession.
 - Why do you want to make a change from your current job? (If you are currently unemployed, you may be asked why you left your last position). Be frank and honest. Do not be critical of your current organization or boss. And if you were fired, have an explanation prepared that does not relate to unfairness on the part of your previous boss. Having answers to one or the other of these questions will be critical, for they will say a lot about your reasonableness and honesty.
 - Tell me about your strengths. Try to be as specific as possible here. You don't want to just say things like “I'm a good team player.” Talk to specific things your team accomplished and what your role was. Don't just say you have good leadership skills. Give an example of when you exhibited good leadership during a project or a crisis.
 - What are your weaknesses? Think this through in advance. You don't really want to enumerate weaknesses. Instead, think of challenges you have had in the past that you were not fully equipped to handle. Explain how you got the knowledge or the resources to handle them well. When you do this, you are saying that you will do what it takes to overcome any weakness you might have.

3. Prepare a list of questions you want to ask when prompted for them. Here are some good ones.

- Ask for a history of the position.
- Ask how performance will be assessed.
- Ask for a description of the challenges the organization is likely to face over the next few years
- Ask for a description of the “culture”

Do not ask about salary, benefits, vacation, 401K, etc. It may be volunteered, but most of this is covered once you have an offer.

You may be asked about salary requirements. Don't give a figure or a range. Be honest about what you are making now or in your previous position, but you can always say that your salary requirements are flexible, based upon the total compensation package. Leave it at that.

Some Additional Tips

1. Calm yourself once you arrive. Take some deep breaths; think about something really humorous – this will put you in a better frame of mind.
2. Firm handshake, please. And maintain eye contact when either of you is speaking. But don't be creepy about it. Eye contact without seeming to stare is the goal. Practice with a friend if you need to.
3. Never lie.
4. Be ready with a printout of references, but do not present them unless asked.
5. Lean forward just a bit when responding to questions. This shows confidence and interest
6. Ask about the next step in the process as you are winding up. Usually this will be stated, but do not be afraid to ask if it is not.
7. Re-state your interest in the position as you are saying goodbye with another firm handshake, but do not beg, no matter how desperate you may be.

The Impression You Want to Leave

You should leave the interviewer with the following impressions:

1. You are truly interested in the position
2. You have valuable skills and expertise to offer
3. You are honest and authentic