

Knowledge based article

Interviews: personal preparation



Useful candidate advice regarding the personal preparation for interview

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1. Attitude

When going to an interview, remember it is not a one sided meeting. The company may need the person more than the person needs the job. Even if in a position of strength a good attitude is key. People are looking for enthusiasm, a positive 'can do' approach balanced with a sense of reality. If during the meeting you feel confident of your abilities to do the job and make a positive contribution, say so. Interviewers are not mind readers. They are looking for someone who believes they can deliver. If you believe you can contribute make sure they know this and the contribution you could make relevant to the situation.

2. Preparation

Good preparation is essential. Find out about the company, its products, applications, market and even the people you will be meeting. Have your searching questions written down. It will help ensure you do not take a job that is not quite what it seems and shows the interviewer your professionalism. If they make a statement about the job or the company which is either key to you joining or you do not fully accept ask

for proof. Ask why, how, show me type follow up questions. We will be pleased to help you formulate such questions.

Some people like to prepare for an interview by running an **offer analysis** of themselves. Prior to an interview you should know your strengths, what benefits these bring an organisation and which are applicable to the role being discussed. This helps ensure you do not under sell your value by failing to convey the maximum contribution you can make.

Rarely if ever is the selected candidate “ideal” with respect to meeting all the requirements of the candidate profile. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. When constructing the candidate profile few people draw on real life experiences, they simply list every possible contribution the new person could make. Often it is noted that the person who is offered the position is the one who has best managed the areas where their skills and experience do not match parts of the candidate profile. It is worth taking a few moments to be **self critical**, look where potential weaknesses may lie and consider your responses to questioning in these areas.

3. Anticipation

Try to anticipate the questions you will be asked and prepare your responses which should be concise. What supporting evidence can you provide to convince those conducting the interview with respect to performance, measurable results, outcomes and achievements? Prepare for the key questions “Why should you be employed for the role for which you are being interviewed?” It should take no more than one minute to answer this!

If you are being interviewed for a position which involves significant change in role, what evidence can you use to illustrate the efforts you have made to help prepare yourself for such a move? What relevant experience have you gained? What have you learnt?

4. Appearance

Good personal preparation is very important. Again, by taking the time to consider your appearance it indicates both enthusiasm to do your best and an understanding of what is expected. There is an old saying “when recruiting people check their shoes!!” Often good clothes are ruined by a terrible pair of old or dirty shoes. This indicates a lack of attention to detail and pride in what message someone sends about themselves. Other visual stimuli to creating a positive impression include the use of a quality pen, smart writing pad and the taking of notes.

5. During the meeting

There is an old saying “**he who questions leads**”. Questioning not dominating the conversation, allows us to control the meeting, shows interest, courtesy and professionalism. Everything you say has either a positive or negative impact. Only say what contributes to the positive impression you are aiming to give

6. At the end of the meeting

Finally at the end of the meeting either ask for the job or ask if they have any reservations about progressing with you to the next stage. Use the words you are comfortable with. Even a very soft question such as “can you give me any feedback today from our meeting” is better than nothing. The reason this is so important is that it prevents misunderstandings. We have seen cases where a job was not going to be offered because the interviewer either made assumptions or incorrectly interpreted statements made during the interview. By checking at this stage you can clear up any misunderstandings before they become fixed in the mind of the interviewer. If objections are raised which you cannot answer on the spot, seek agreement to take a defined period, a day or two, to think about them and how to respond. Then take the time to think about if they are real, false or irrelevant and take your case back to the company, providing of course the position is still of interest. Your recruiter can assist you at this stage, of course.

7. Follow up

Make sure you take the business card or at least the contact details of the people you meet. Then follow up thanking them for their time, confirming your interest and making the sale by covering your key strengths.

8. Salary negotiations

Many people, even sales people who are trained to negotiate ask advice on how to manage discussion relating to the compensation package. **The golden rule** is “make the sale first and then discuss the price of hiring you”. The best outcome for an employer is to hire the person who brings the greatest value to their business. Price is only one part of this equation. Hence the best time to negotiate the compensation package is when the customer (interviewer) says they want to place an order and make an offer. Conversely the best job should offer the best value and salary is only one part of the compensation package. Other factors such as career advancement, learning opportunities, diversification of CV, culture, environment etc all have to be taken into account. Neither party can be expected to determine value until the end of the interview process. This is the time to negotiate. At this point your recruiter will work with both parties to ensure that a mutually beneficial agreement is reached.

At the end of the day the key factor for success is **ATTITUDE**, always positive, friendly yet in control, keen and confident to do well. **Two heads are better than one**. If you are uncertain with respect to any aspect relating to the interview process, call **george james** to discuss your options and decide on the best way to proceed.

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