



Prepare for interview success

Part Three: On the big day ...

Don't rush

Give yourself lots of time. Choose your interview clothes with care and get them prepared to make sure there are no last minute panics. Make sure you have a pen to fill out application forms, aptitude tests or personality profiles.

Plan how you'll get to the interview and allow extra time for peak hour traffic, aiming to arrive ten minutes early.

Have an early night before your interview and set your alarm if necessary.

While you are waiting in reception

Be organised. Have your folder containing your application and relevant documents handy. Read your application again.

Stay focused while waiting to be called in. If you have been given the list of questions to review, use the time by jotting down your workplace examples

next to each question. Otherwise, use these few minutes to rethink about possible questions you might be asked and your answers.

Look for ways to break the ice. See if there are any brochures, staff notices or other information of interest near where you are sitting. You can build rapport by mentioning something you've learned and showing your interest in the organisation during the 'icebreaker' part of the interview.

Think of the interview as just another meeting where you can both assess if you are interested in working together. Relax!

Introductions and getting started

Smile when introduced. Give a firm handshake while maintaining eye contact and repeat the person's name in your greeting to help you remember it.

Be conscious of your posture and movements. When invited to do so, take the seat allocated to you. Sit up straight (but relaxed) and cross your ankles if this is comfortable (don't slouch). Avoid negative behaviour like crossing your arms or fiddling with your hair.

'Sell' yourself by showing confidence and building rapport. Smile frequently during the small talk that usually precedes the business part of the interview, as this will help you to relax. Fake it till you make it! Pretend you are feeling confident and enjoying the interview ... and before you know it, you really will.

Demonstrate that you're an active listener. Lean forward slightly in the chair to show you are really listening. Use eye contact and minimal encouragers (little nods of the head) to show you're following what the speaker is saying. If it's natural for you, you can make sounds like 'uh huh' or 'I see' to show you are in agreement with what the speaker is saying. Don't interrupt — wait until the interviewer has finished speaking if you want to ask a question.

Answer each question thoroughly and convincingly. Maintain eye contact with the person who asked the question, but include other panel members in your gaze. Use the 'SAO' method when responding to questions to ensure you stick to the point (refer to the 'SAO' method in Part 2). Speak in a clear, well-modulated voice that shows your enthusiasm for the role.

Use your sales pitch when asked to "tell us about yourself". This is your BIG moment. You've practised your "pitch" so now it's natural and spontaneous. If you're comfortable doing so, use hand gestures to emphasise points (watch out for glasses of water within your wingspan). Point your feet toward the person you are speaking to so that your body is slightly angled towards them.

Finishing the interview

Watch for non-verbal signs that the interview is finishing. Usually, just prior to the end of the interview, the interviewer may ask something like: 'Do you have any further questions?' If you say 'no', then you can assume the interview is nearly over. Other non-verbal signs such as panel members stacking papers, placing their pens on the desk or pushing their chairs back are your cues to get ready to leave. Thank all of the interviewers for their time as you leave the room.

Make a positive impression as you leave. This is just as important as making a positive entry when you arrive. Be ready for a handshake if it is offered (put your folder in your left hand).

Body language accounts for 55% of the message. The last image they will have in their minds is of you walking out of the room ... so make it count. Walk with confidence.

Conclusion

Confident applicants perform much better at interviews. The key to confidence is rigorous preparation. Make the interview process as organised as you can to maximise your success.

By Mark Ryan, Principal, Successful Resumes Northern Victoria & Albury

Avoid these pitfalls:

- Don't arrive late — if it is unavoidable, apologise sincerely
- Don't wear jeans or other unsuitable clothing
- Don't wear body jewellery such as nose rings or tongue studs
- Don't have your mobile phone turned on
- Don't chew gum
- Don't mention other job applications during the interview