

essential interview preparation

Time spent preparing prior to the interview will really pay off on the day. Find out all you can about the organisation. Being fully prepared and informed about the company, plus asking lots of intelligent and relevant questions at an interview always impresses an interviewer.

first impressions

Your CV has paved the way, and will hopefully inspire the interviewer to meet you in person. It would be damaging if the impressive CV were not matched by your own high standard of personal presentation.

- Leave plenty of time to get to your interview
- Some employers do check back with reception staff about your arrival conduct. Make sure you know the exact name and title of whom you are meeting
- Smile! Particularly on meeting the interviewer, this is the best, and most human icebreaker
- Don't smoke before the interview – certain smells linger
- Shake hands firmly but not vigorously
- Avoid smoking, even if you are invited
- Accept tea or coffee if you would like some – this is a good way of relaxing the atmosphere
- If you are asked to complete an application form don't appear irritated. Avoid striking through areas that you feel are covered on your CV – list a brief outline instead
- Don't use one-word answers when asked questions in an interview – always expand

the next stage

- Never let your guard down in a second interview
- If asked to prepare a presentation, or take part in an assessment test always appear enthusiastic
- Put aside time to prepare and thoroughly check any information that will be presented to the client

responding to questions

Why are you seeking new employment?

However frustrated you may feel in your present position, you should avoid projecting a negative attitude and running down your present employer. Think positively; what have been your achievements, and how would you like to develop in the future. This possibly involves moving jobs. Avoid salary discussions at this stage.

What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Strengths and weaknesses need to be tailored to what you have perceived the interviewer is looking for, and backed up with practical examples. Show how your strengths have benefited previous employers. The best weaknesses are normally disguised strengths. For example not feeling stretched or challenged, provided you can demonstrate a pro-active approach to keeping yourself motivated. Nobody's perfect, and "I can't think of anything offhand" is a poor response.

What sort of salary are you looking for?

Your recruitment consultant would probably have discussed your salary requirements before your interview, so don't dramatically change this in the meeting. Negotiations after you have received a job offer will be through your consultant who will always act in your best interest and liaise closely between the employer and yourself to agree a salary that you are both happy with.

success after failure

If your interview has not resulted in a job offer, the most positive thing you can do is attempt to identify why. There may be a simple reason, or you may have to rely on your own perceptions of what went wrong. Either way, your consultant should be able to provide useful feedback for you.