

Interview Preparation

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Whether you're being interviewed for a senior management position or your first job, it is equally important to ensure that you make the best impression possible. All interviews are nerve-wracking, no matter how much experience you have. In order to eliminate unnecessary nervousness and to put yourself in a strong position you need to be prepared.

The days of interviewers holding the monopoly in terms of asking all the questions are gone. It is imperative that as an interviewee you ask the questions you need to in order to (a) show your interest and illustrate your skills in relation to the company's particular needs and (b) to ensure that you have enough information to determine whether or not accepting this position would meet all your career development requirements.

The most crucial aspect of successful interviewing is preparation. You should always undertake extensive research before the interview so that you have a clear idea of the company and how you could add value to their existing team. The Internet makes pre-interview research simple – simply type in the company's name in any search engine and you're likely to get a wealth of information including the company's website, latest press releases etc.

You should, depending on the position you're applying for, look for the following information:

- Product range - what is the company selling?
- Competitors – where are they placed? How fierce is the industry?
- Target market – who are they selling to? Adverts are a good indication
- Company size – how much opportunity would there be for career growth?

Using this information you should be sure to align your skill set and experience. You should highlight and illustrate how your particular skills and strengths can be transferred. Remember, sometimes you have to spell it out – don't take the chance that the interviewer is not able to see for themselves how your experience relates to their particular company. It is always best to quantify your successes, for example, how much money you've saved, systems you've improved that have meant time or money savings, revenue you've increased through sales etc.

Equally important as the preparation is ensuring that you have a clear idea of the questions you're going to ask the interviewer. These questions should be designed to illustrate your interest and commitment to the position as well as to help you decide if the company is going to provide you with the kind of working environment and career development prospects you seek.

Questions that you should ask during an interview would include, among others:

- Why is the position available?
- What are the primary challenges/objectives of this position?
- What are the short- and long-term goals of this position?
- How does the company contribute to employee development?
- What makes the company different from its competitors?
- What is the corporate/work culture like? What is the management structure/style like?
- Does the company promote from within? What is the typical career path for this position?

Questions that should NEVER be asked during an interview include:

- What is the salary? What are the company benefits?
- How much leave is due in this position?
- Any question relating to information that is published in the company literature or in its advertising – this shows that you have not done any preparation and is a definite bad reflection on you!

By using these tips you should be able to go into your next job interview feeling confident. This confidence and preparation will certainly give the interviewer a good impression and assist you in getting that job!