

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

A dream come true! Your CV has impressed someone and they have called you for an interview. Before you go out celebrating, consider this fact: the effort you put into preparing for an interview is as important as your answers and conduct during the interview.

Mentally prepare

When you get a call requesting your presence at an interview here is what you should ask: "Can you give me the details on the position? Is there a job description you can email me? How long will the interview be? How many managers will be interviewing me? Is it just an interview or will there also be a test?" The person who called you is normally at liberty to answer most of these questions. The better briefed you are the more mentally prepared and confident you will be, which will show during your interview. I was once called for an interview and did not ask the secretary any of these questions so was shocked to be faced with a panel of 8 interviewers and mortified when asked to sit down at a computer and write an essay in 30 minutes!

Do your homework

Before you go for the interview, you must do your research. This cannot be stressed enough. Without fail the candidates that show knowledge of the company's products, policies, plans and structures, will impress the most. Where to find this information? Ask the person who called you for brochures, go to the organisations website, use newspapers and friends who have contacts or work there. If you fumble the "what do you know about us?" question, you have failed. Apparently IBM always asks candidates what the initials IBM stand for during interviews, and if the candidate does not know they are asked to leave. This week whilst in interviews the candidate who had printed and read the organisations' international ethics policies off their website stuck in the employers mind as someone he would like to meet again next week. I once sat in on sales manager interviews, and one bright candidate could talk not just about the product ranges of the organisation interviewing him but also their competition, pricing, shelf space in different supermarkets, and he concluded that some products were obviously not moving as they were dusty on the shelf so they needed a more aggressive sales team. He then went on to distribute handouts on how he would tackle the challenge if given the job. He was offered the job right there.

Dress for success

I interviewed a candidate recently who wore a brown suit, pink shirt and cartoon tie. I was put off immediately! Presentation is key and dark colours work best. Dark blue or grey suits, combined with white shirts, matching dark socks and black polished shoes tend to impress. Women can show a little more imagination, but should still stick to dark colours. No slippers or stilettos please! Keep makeup and jewelry to a minimum. Men should be clean-shaven. Why the concern about appearance? Nothing should detract from your answers, and employers want to recruit presentable staff, as your image will reflect on theirs.

God is in the details

Never be late. If you are 10 minutes late for a 30-minute interview, you have wasted a third of your chance to impress. Interviewers normally run to a tight schedule and you should not be remembered as the one who got them late. Over estimate the time you need to get there. One minute before you go in quickly check you don't have lunch or lipstick on your teeth and that your papers are in order in a neat black folder. Suck on a mint to freshen your breath and if need be carry a small can of deo. Treat this like a dream date with a movie star. Take a deep breath; remember to smile and.... Good Luck!

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