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TIPS AND HINTS FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

Those looking for jobs are inclined to feel apprehensive about the interview process and rightly so! It can be an intimidating experience and stress levels create feelings of vulnerability and fear.... often, there is a lot at stake.

Always bear in mind though, that the interview is your opportunity to sell yourself and your skills to a prospective employer.

There are a few factors that contribute to the success of your interview.....

Preparation and Planning

The CV.....

An important part of the preparation process is a professional and succinct CV.

There are excellent templates and examples on the web and if you take the time, it's not too difficult to produce a well-written CV.

The secret in the preparation of a good CV is to provide as much information as possible that is:

- short on words but deep on the provision of rich information, ensuring that the CV matches the job description ask a friend to check the final version;
- provide a photo of yourself and include your contact details on each page;
- you should be thoroughly familiar with the contents of your CV.... in this way, you'll be able to answer any possible questions with confidence;
- references are important..... both written and personal; and
- deliver your CV by hand, if possible.

The research.....

It's important to find out as much as you can about the organisation.... let the interviewer know that you've taken the trouble to familiarise yourself with what they do and any future plans that the company has advertised.

Highlight areas that would be of particular interest to you, if you were successful.... if there's something about the company that excites you, tell them.

The planning.....

- Read the job description thoroughly so that you are perfectly clear on the required skills and qualities.
- Go through a "mock-interview" that will give you some idea of the time that you'll need.... identify the points that are most critical to get across. It's important to use your time in the interview to full advantage.
- Having done the reading and research about the company, you'll undoubtedly find it relatively easy to come up with 2-3 well poised questions.
- Decide before the time, about what you'll wear and make absolutely sure that you are appropriately dressed for the company's style and culture.
- If you have to travel to the interview, allow for sufficient travelling time, planning to arrive about 5-10 minutes before the interview. Make sure that you know who to call in the event that you may be late.

The place.....

Interviews may be conducted in any one of the following ways....

- **One-to-one** - One interviewer and more common in small companies. These interviews can be conducted in person, on the telephone or via a video call.
- **Panel interviews** - Two or more interviewers, possibly with a presentation. Make eye contact with the specific interviewer when asking/answering a question.
- **Group discussions** - Undertaken at an assessment centre, candidates show that they're able to get along well with others. The challenge is to put forward your ideas clearly, whilst maintaining a respectful attitude.

The Interview

To save time, some employers may indicate beforehand, the types of questions they'll ask and in other cases, question examples may be found on their website.

Competency based questions.....

These questions are directed at your skillset so provide good examples.... even those that are personal, if you don't have a description from your professional life.

Strengths-based questions....

These questions reveal what drives you and what you're good at. Eg; your ability to work under pressure, team leading skills, integrating with fellow workers, etc.

Situational judgement questions....

You are presented with a set of circumstances to deal with..... this is to assess your problem-solving skills and make decisions.

Values-based questions....

Mostly used in health care interviews, this method assesses whether you share the organisation's values and understand their culture.

Technical questions....

The employer may test your job-related knowledge and understanding of work processes. This is common for jobs in science, iT, engineering, finance and law.

Motivational questions....

These questions are designed to provide the interviewer with an idea of what drives you and whether you are a good fit for the organisation.

Why you left your last job.....

These questions can be tricky and the only way to deal with them is positively.

- **Left by choice....** explain why you want a new job and describe why this new company would suit you better.
- **Redundancy....** be positive about a sad event for yourself and the organisation.... describe what you've been doing in the interim.
- **Misconduct, poor performance....** explain why your standards were perhaps compromised and describe what you've learnt through the experience and the steps you've taken to improve.

General

There are websites that publish interview feedback which can help enormously with preparation. Have a look at Glassdoor UK and The Student Room.

Use the STAR method to plan your answers and to list your skills and experience on the CV..... **Situation....** what you had to deal with. **Task...** the task you were given. **Action...** the steps you took to accomplish the task. **Result....** what happened as a result of your action and importantly, what you learned.

Describing your strengths and weaknesses may be the hardest part of the interview.

- To list your strengths, be specific.... eg. communication, problem solving, enthusiasm, flexibility.
- Listing weaknesses; not that simple, but be honest.... eg. I struggle with time management on projects but do have timetable steps in place to ensure that I'm able to stick to the time constraints.