

## Interview Advice

### How To Sell Yourself At Interview

Many of our candidates ask us for advice on how to best present themselves at interview. If one is entering the job market for the first time, or after a long time in one company, this can often be a daunting task. Remember that regardless of your 'on paper' experience, the impression that you convey at interview is usually **the** make or break.

### Preparation

Good preparation is paramount to perform well at interview. It will also give you confidence, and help allay any nerves. Preparation can be both practical and knowledge based. The following are key points that you **must** follow:

- Ensure you have all relevant details such as time, date and interview location, as well as the interviewer name(s) where appropriate. It is important that you take personal responsibility for these details and chase your consultant if they have not been provided – remember that your interview is one of many they are involved in every day.
- Plan your journey and factor in the chance of delays. **DON'T** be late. You may work long hours and be under time pressure, but if you are interviewing at another firm the chances are your interviewer is in a similar situation. Thus a negative impression is immediately created if you affect the smooth running of their day.
- Research the firm you are interviewing with, the role you are interviewing for, and your interviewer's background if relevant. Information sources include the internet, libraries, friends and your recruitment consultant. Think about the organisation's background, current projects, culture, mission statements etc.
- Make sure you know your CV – check dates of employment as these may have to be confirmed and prepare answers to some common questions such as 'tell me about your most recent position' or 'what has been your most recent achievement'. Ensure that you are able to relate your discussion back to points you have raised on your CV.
- Wear a dark suit, white shirt / top and plain tie (men). Clean your shoes, shave (if appropriate!) and ensure your hair is tidy. Makeup, if worn, should be conservative.

## The Interview

Interviews can vary hugely, from very formal, to completely relaxed. Examples of standard interview questions include:

- what can you offer our organisation?
- what are your best attributes?
- why are you better than other candidates ?
- why are you interested in us?

Spend some time in thought about a list of 5 of your chief personal and technical attributes – these could be things like:

- goal oriented
- attentive to detail
- team player
- competitive

Practice your answers to questions of this type both **mentally** and **actually**. Generally:

- Ensure your answers are succinct but not abrupt. Avoid waffling or going off at tangents. Although you may feel you have not had the chance to discuss all your skills, the interviewer will have ensured they have gleaned all relevant information for that stage.
- Think before you speak! If you are faced with a technical question, problem solving exercise or unexpected topic take a deep breath and give yourself time to collect your thoughts. This will demonstrate that you are not repeating information parrot fashion, but have the reasoning skills essential to succeed in this market.
- If you don't know - admit it. Ideally this should only happen once or twice though. Be honest and open – never lie.
- Even if, half way through, you feel the role is not for you, continue as you would for a position you love. You may wish to interview with the same company in the future for another role, or may deal with them in another capacity. The legal market is a small place and if you appear indifferent, arrogant or rude it will be noted and remembered. Your interviewer has given their time, and wants to feel it has been well spent, even if it is only to establish you are not right for the job.
- Make sure you are prepared with a couple of questions to ask at the end of the interview. These questions should encompass a demonstration of your knowledge and enthusiasm for the company, and show you have a real interest in its running e.g. what goals does the team want to accomplish in the next year? Don't use this time to discuss salary or benefits – it implies money is your only motivator!

## **Body Language**

This is an extremely important, and often ignored part of an interview. It is said that a person will form an opinion of you in the first five minutes of a meeting. This is often based on sub-conscious reading of your body language. Remember the following:

- A good handshake gets you off to a great start. It should be firm without crushing their hand!
- Don't fidget. Practice a comfortable way of sitting before you go to the interview. Don't play with your hair, clothes, pen or business card; it will seem as though you are bored, and not paying attention. It will also imply nerves.
- Maintain natural eye contact, and in the case of multiple interviewers look at who is talking to you. When giving your answer shift your gaze between the two to involve both in the discussion.
- Use affirmative actions such as nodding and saying 'yes' and 'mmm' as they speak. This will show that you can listen and understand.

## **Conclusion**

You are half way there. The company you are interviewing with liked what they saw in your CV. An interview is your opportunity to reinforce your 'on paper' experience with 'in-person' excellence. Remember - be yourself, and use the pointers above to enhance your overall performance. **Always call your consultant** as soon as you leave an interview – if it went badly, rather you acknowledge this, and the company may feel that your honesty and ability to admit your mistakes warrants another interview – if it went well you want to let the company know that you are keen as soon as possible. Good luck!