

HOW TO SUCCEED AT INTERVIEWS

Interviews are an opportunity to meet with potential employers so they can find out more about your skills, abilities, attitude, experience, qualifications and interests to determine if you are a fit for the role and employer. You are usually invited for a formal job interview after submitting your interest by sending a resume and cover letter that reflects why you are suitable for the role. When you get to the interview stage go in with the frame of mind that the employer is already interested in you!

Interviews are a 2-way process so they are a great opportunity for you to find out more about the job and employer. *Remember they are not an exact science and no two interviews are usually alike!*

When you meet somebody face-to-face they get to know your **personality**, which according to a recent [BMO study](#) tops the list for what employers look for in new graduates, with 30 per cent ranking this as the most important quality that employers use to recruit students. Meeting somebody face-to-face allows your drive, passion, strengths and uniqueness to shine through. You are no longer just a name on a resume!

Like everything, practice makes perfect and it's very likely that you will attend a number of interviews before you are offered a job. You can maximize your chances of doing well in interviews using the tips that follow.

Before the interview

- Research the role, company and industry - find out about the latest projects the employer is involved in, who the employer's main competition is and trends in the industry. This way when asked "*what do you know about the role and/or company?*" you **do not** regurgitate the home page of the employer's website, which if anything, shows a lack of research!
- Use LinkedIn to find out more about those conducting the interview(s), if possible, as this allows you to find out if you have any shared interests with the interviewers.
- Based on your research, prepare 3 informed questions to ask that demonstrate your eagerness to learn more about the role and company.
- Plan your route and arrive at least 15 minutes early, however don't report in more than 10 mins early as most interviewers schedule the appointments so that applicants for the same job don't meet each other.
- Practice interview questions using the PAWS, STARR and SHARE formulas – see *the section on Interview Strategies*.
- Gather a portfolio of work samples to show your breadth of experience, abilities, talents and what you have achieved in your past roles, paid or unpaid.
- Dress appropriately for your industry, after all first impressions do count! If unsure of what to wear add this to the list of things you need to research.

During the Interview

- Bring a professional looking case or portfolio to the interview and have pen, paper and additional copies of your resume with you.
- Have positive body language, for example, a firm handshake (not too firm though!), smile and maintain eye contact with all the interviewers.
- Observe the interviewers body language – stop talking when they stop taking notes or stop smiling.
- Try to get business cards from the interviewers to make following up easier.
- Focus on the questions asked to ensure you understand what is being asked of you. Don't be afraid to ask "*can you clarify the question*" or "*can you repeat the question please*".
- Ask at least one good question near the end of the interview.
- Thank all interviewers when the interview is close to completion.
- Confidence is everything. Show the interviewer your personality and be confident in your ability to do the job.
- Ask about the next steps, if you haven't already been told as part of the process.
- Don't forget to show samples of your work to back-up your suitability.

After the Interview

- Follow-up if nobody has gotten back to in the time-frame you discussed. Always be polite and professional and never pushy. Recruitment usually involves many unpredictable factors so can often take longer than anticipated.
- Write down all the questions you were asked, and specifically those you struggled to answer so you can practice them.
- Write down your answers to the questions you were asked so you can refine your answers next time you are asked the same questions.
- Send a thank you e-mail or handwritten card to the interviewers.
- If references have been requested send them in, however make sure your referees are aware of the request and they understand what information they need to provide.
- If you don't get the job let the employer know you would still be interested in future applications. Ask if they will be posting any future jobs?
- If unsuccessful, ask for feedback at the appropriate stage.