

## 5 Ways to find your spark in interviews.

An interview is a key part of the recruitment process as it allows both you and the potential employer to meet in person, discuss the role and assess your suitability for it.

Chances are there will be at least one other competitor so it's important that you bring the best of yourself on the day to stand out. Even if you are only passively looking it's important that you do a great job as you never know what other opportunities might arise in the future.

BE PREPARED. "Winging it" rarely does you any favours.

The following questions may not seem like rocket science but you'd be surprised how often people aren't prepared, and how often this opens opportunities for those who are...

### 1) Ask your recruiter what to expect beforehand.

Interviews can take a number of formats and as you move through the process you may find yourself meeting different people and responding to different styles of interviews. You will need to be flexible and adaptable as the process is often variable from role to role.

#### Types of interview

**Panel interview**, where you are interviewed by a group of people at the same time. Each representative in the panel may focus on different areas. After the interview the panel will discuss the interview and their thoughts on your suitability for the role.

**Behavioural interview**, this will focus on what you have done in the past and how you react in different situations, asking you to backup statements with examples of how you performed in each circumstance.

**Technical interview**, this will focus on your technical ability, what your skills are and how you would go about doing specific tasks. This may include written or verbal technical test

**'Unstructured' Interviews**, these are interviews where the interviewer covers technical skills, some behavioural questions and seem more informal, almost unstructured. They typically give a strong insight into the interviewer and whilst harder to prepare for, they are often enjoyable and highly interactive.

## 2) Know the company and the role

Make sure you have a solid background of the company you are interviewing for and the role itself, even if you think you know a lot about them. An hour or so invested will show initiative, enthusiasm and a genuine interest in them as a company as well as the role.

### Some thought starters:

*What are the company's core products and services?*

*How is the company perceived in the market place?*

*Who are its competitors and what makes them different?*

*What challenges/opportunities is the industry currently facing?*

*Find out what you can about the company's financial situation.*

*Try to think like a customer of the company and identify potential improvements.*

*Try to find out what their current priorities are: major jobs, share floats etc.*

*Who will be interviewing you and what can you find out about them (eg try LinkedIn)*

### ...Then use it to your advantage.

Once you have the background info the most important thing is to use this effectively. Think about where you have done similar roles or tasks and prepare examples. As you research also think up relevant questions that will help you evaluate the role and company match against your goals.

## 3) Come prepared to discuss your resume constructively

A resume or CV is a brief summary of what you've done. The way you bring your CV to life is even more important as it is a key indicator of your personality, attitudes and communication skills. So plan ahead.

### Some thought starters:

*What are the most positive things you have to say about each of the roles you have had/ companies you have worked in?*

*Where have you had relevant experience and how do you highlight it?*

*What is the culture you have enjoyed working in most and why?*

*Where you have negative experiences, what is the most constructive way of presenting these to a new employer?*

*Why did you change roles when you did and what did you learn from the changes?*

*Why are you interviewing and what are you looking for in your next role?*

*Why are you interested in this company and this role?*

## 4) Make a positive impression

The best way to shine in an interview is to be professional and prepared. Always arrive on time, look professional and pay attention to your body language.

Relax and be confident in your preparation and most of all, be yourself.

### A handy checklist...

**Confirm time and location** and plan how to get there, where to park and allow extra time

**Arrive on time** and act with purpose around the office, you never know who might be looking out for you.

**Turn off your mobile phone** on entering the building.

**Dress professionally**

**Ensure you have fresh breath**, don't smoke before the interview

Know the correct **pronunciation of the interviewer/s names** and their titles

Use a folder to **bring anything you need:**

A copy of your CV as they may refer to it in questions

A copy of the position description

Note paper and pen to take notes

Prepared Questions/ Any research notes

**Pay attention to your body language:** smile, look them in the eye, wait for them to offer you a seat before you sit down, don't fidget.

Check in with your recruiter that you **know exactly what has been presented to the company**, and don't be afraid to ask them background questions about the company as well.

You can expect to be asked some general questions throughout the interview process, these may relate to your professional or personal life. Below are some common interview questions which are important to think about as you prepare.

### Common General Questions

*Why are you interested in this particular role?*

*What do you know about the organisation?*

*What do you really want to do in your next career move?*

*What style of management gets the best from you?*

*What have you done that shows initiative in your career? What were the results?*

*What do you perceive as your weaknesses? What have you done about them?*

*What do you see as your strengths? Why?*

*Where do you see yourself in five years time?*

*Which particular job did you enjoy the most?*

*Why did you choose your particular career?*

*Tell me about a time when you lead a project/team and what were the results*

*Tell me about a difficult task or problem you have faced and how you overcame it?*

*Tell me about a time when you met a difficult deadline and how you managed it?*

## 5) Make the most of the interview

You are interviewed because the company wants to hire somebody, has reviewed your resume and believes your background/ experience may be suitable to the position. Have confidence in yourself and your preparation, be open and honest, and most of all answer the questions constructively with solid examples.

*Here are some tips:*

**Be prepared but flexible:** think about likely questions and your responses to those, especially what good examples you have to talk about. We caution you not to learn an answer by heart as you will need to flex your answer to respond to the specific question being asked.

**Listen carefully to the questions** and make sure you have understood them properly. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat the question.

Don't rush to fill in silence. **Think before you speak.**

**Speak clearly and confidently,** don't rush your answers.

Try and **maintain a comfortable level of eye contact** throughout.

**Use practical examples to illustrate your skills** and show how they suit the role and the company.

**Avoid one word answers, but also be concise.**

Structure your answers using the following framework:

***STAR = Situation, Task, Action, Result***

**Show enthusiasm for the role and make sure you ask your questions.**

**Use your research effectively,** e.g. in small-talk or in your questions at the end.

**Close the interview with a handshake and a genuine thank you;** make a positive last impression.

### **What the interviewers are likely to be assessing...**

*Communication Skills*

*Personal Presentation*

*Technical Ability and experience*

*Initiative*

*Personality and cultural fit*

*Motivation and Drive*

*Strengths and Weaknesses*

*Enthusiasm and interest in the company and the role*

*Other specific values, beliefs and interests e.g. work-life balance, corporate social responsibility etc.*



## Post Interview

Give your recruiter a call to talk through how it went and what your next steps are. Try to be as detailed as you can, honest and open.

**Good luck and please call us if you want any advice on how best to show your spark at interview**