

JOB INTERVIEWS 101

Global recession, increasing unemployment, bailout packages, sign of the times or an opportunity to establish a new career direction. Tough times often create opportunity to move into new industry sectors and a completely new career direction. Often or not it's the job interview that stands in your way to get that perfect job. Most people who put themselves into the market however do very little preparation when going for job interviews and in South Africa the interview is what actually counts. So how do you turn this hurdle into an opportunity? Simple – preparation and keeping a cool head.

Here are some of my tips for getting through that dreaded job interview.

Review your CV thoroughly. Make sure that you know exactly what company you worked for, when and what you did at that company. Try also predicting what potential questions can be raised from your CV, especially about your move motivators and any potential negative attributes your CV may carry. Always be ready to answer what your accomplishments were with each company and be honest about these achievements. Practise your answers in front of a mirror and try not being too glossy with your answers.

Understanding something about the company that is about to interview and potentially hire you is vital. Try remember that you are being interviewed by a person on behalf of a company and that your interviewer needs to ascertain your fit into the company. However try remembering that getting an understanding of the organisation is as important to you as the hiring company. Making a list of questions before you go into your interview will assist you get the information you require to assist you make the right decision regards moving to that company.

Do your homework regards your interviewer. I know some people that have landed the most impressive jobs through simply stroking their interviewer's egos. The internet can be a great tool when looking for background on people. Having something in common with your interviewer is a major ice breaker. Just be careful not to break the ice too aggressively.

Know your abilities and strengths. So many people confuse the interviewer during an interview regards what they are good at. For me if you cannot identify your own list of strengths, after working for a few years, how can your interviewer identify them for you. Also create a list of accomplishments when constructing your CV and ensure you memorise these for your interview and keep it original, everybody thinks they are dynamic and have high energy!

Ask questions for goodness sake. Would you hire somebody if they expressed no interest in knowing what's on the other side of the fence? Creating an atmosphere of interaction is vital otherwise your interviewer feels they are taking you through a cross examination. Questions that show interest in the company's corporate culture and future are great interview questions and show a genuine sense of interest from your side in the company. If your interviewer does not provide you with an opportunity to ask questions you should question whether they will value your talent in their business.

Clarifying questions that you have been asked during the interview is a must, obviously not for every question or the interviewer may think you are hard of hearing. You can also ask your interviewer if you have answered the question in a clear manner after you have provided an answer that you may feel was unclear. All these indicate to the interviewer that you are an attentive candidate who takes time to think before answering a questions a good skill to have in any business.

Sometimes in an interview especially when in a panel interview questions will come from all sides. It's important to manage these questions in a proper manner. Establish if necessary what the different

questions are if you feel your interviewers have asked you different questions in a panel interview by simply repeating the questions in order of preference and then take your time to answer each question. It's important to make sure that you get your answer across to the correct interviewer that asked the original question when being interviewed by a panel, so as to ensure the interviewer is satisfied.

Get your image and your attitude right. How can your interviewer be enthusiastic about you if you seem not to be enthusiastic about the opportunity? You also need to look and sound the part at your interview do not do casual at the interview and dress smart, not tux, just smart. The best way to prepare for your interview regards image is get a second opinion.

Identifying common mistakes people make at interviews are as important as the proactive preparation that you will need to take before the interview.

Never over criticise your previous employer. Make sure that your reasons for moving are based on objective honest reasons. Remember the potential employer may check so don't twist the truth.

Do not use humour in your interview, yes if the interviewer has a sense of humour - reciprocate in a professional manner. This can, if done, correctly soften the interview and create a more comfortable interview environment.

Last but not least and for me one of the most important aspects of the interview is to speak at the right time and to ensure you keep your interviewers full attention. Good sales people know exactly when to speak and when to listen. So some line managers may want to boast a bit over their successes so let them and then make your point in a less wordy manner. Make sure that the person interviewing you is interested in what you are saying and don't confuse interested and agreeing. If you see the persons attention is fading end your answer and let the next question come your way. Try to create interest in your answers when you think your interviewer is losing focus.

Getting through an interview is not rocket science, at the end of the day the interview is there to ensure both parties meet each other on an equal playing ground. You should go to your interview with an open mind, a goal in mind and a feeling that you are exploring an opportunity.