

Key Appointments

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Preparation + good response = perfect interview

"I think he would be out of his depth in a car park puddle."

The job interview can be a harrowing experience.

Especially if it's the first for a while and you are prone to a few butterflies. But a little preparation can go a long way, especially if you know what employers are looking for.

So what sort of response will keep interviewers nodding with approval rather than staring out the window?

Unfortunately different interviewers will have their own ideas on what constitutes an ideal response but some will always score well and others never.

Be totally honest

While the temptation is to put your best foot forward and not advertise your weaknesses, we all have them. Preferred applicants very rarely get ticks in every box. If they are seeking experience you don't have, don't hide it. Bring it to the interviewer's attention but then explain how you aim to develop in this area or still achieve the job objectives. Even unskilled interviewers can smell a rat and in the absence of information they will assume the worse.

Answer the question

Not the one you like talking about.

Despite initial nerves most applicants will quickly start to enjoy the opportunity to talk about themselves. It is our specialist subject. Keep it relevant. Some questions will be ambiguous. Ask for clarification. "Do you want me to talk about this and that or just that?" This not only demonstrates consideration for what the interviewer is trying to achieve but will ensure you stay on track and get the credit you deserve. If you can sense a lack of interest, ask if your answer is relevant. "Do you want me to elaborate?" If you don't sense it, ask anyway. Rabbiting on providing unnecessary detail is a sure way to a prompt 'Dear John' letter.

Elaborate

Often the really good answers will include consideration of more than one issue.

"How have you responded when a project has started to go off track?" A good answer will focus on logical steps and strategies that got the project back on track. But equally, consideration could be given to communicating with those affected if it fails and an appropriate contingency plan. Demonstrating lateral thinking and seeing the big picture will score heavily. One dimensional answers will not.

Give examples.

Behavioural based interviewing is built around the premise that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. A good recent example of solving a problem or building a strong relationship will be better received than talking about your 'typical' approach.

Be specific.

Talk about what you did, not your team, and what the measurable outcomes were. "... resulting in my monthly sales increasing 47%." Provide evidence and substantiate wherever



possible. If you learnt a valuable lesson in hindsight don't keep it to yourself. "While at the time I thought that approach was the best, I now appreciate the client might have preferred to be consulted directly."

Always be positive.

Slagging off your previous employer or colleagues will not go down well even if you firmly believe it's warranted. We all experience the world differently and have different approaches. Problems and conflict are inevitable. An interviewer is interested in how you have responded to these challenging situations and not who you think was to blame. Your examples could be full of emotion - leave it for friends that aren't judging you on every word. Talk about how you were accepting, positive and proactive. Talk about what you did to rectify the situation and the preventative strategies you explored to prevent the problem from reoccurring.

Ask lots of relevant questions.

Demonstrate that you are well prepared and interested in the position, the company objectives and their clients, products and/or services. Write down your questions and bring them to the interview. This also demonstrates you are organised. Actions speak louder than words.

Finally despite all the research on best practice, unfortunately most interviewers won't consider you seriously if you get on their wrong side. Applicants that smile, are courteous, attentive, good at listening, and appreciative will always increase their chances.

Sometimes however an interviewer wouldn't recognize a top applicant if they hit them in the face. If you are talented and they can't see it, missing out could be a blessing in disguise. While different types have different stripes, a lack of perception is unlikely to be a characteristic of a good boss.

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