Being A Contender - doing well at interview

Being interviewed for a job can be a really odd experience, after all it’s not every day that you are the sole focus of other adults’ attention in such an intense way. Part of being a contender, once selected for interview, is to use all the time you have in advance of the interview, to take the guesswork out the situation you are approaching.

So, three things you need to do before an interview:
1. PREPARE
2. PREPARE
3. PREPARE SOME MORE

Know yourself:
• Re-read your CV and/or application documents.
• What are the selection criteria?
• Think about what your strengths and weaknesses are in relation to the role.
• Why do you want the job?
• What are you offering?

Know the job itself:
• What skills are required for this job and what do you need?
• Dig around as far as you can to understand the role.
• How can you demonstrate these skills with examples from your academic or work achievements or outside interests?

Know the organisation & sector:
• Reflect the image of someone working within the company.
• Use the internet and other sources of information to find out as much as possible.
• Speak to people that work in the company to find out more about the culture and working environment.
• Why do you want to work for that organisation?
• What’s happening in the sector right now?
• What are the issues affecting it?

Rehearse:
• Identify possible question areas.
• Rehearse your answers out loud before the interview to test how well prepared you are. If you think you may get asked what your salary expectations are make sure you practice your answer to this. It is typically one of the most awkward parts of an interview and you must sound confident and that you know your worth.
• Identify any gaps in your delivery and answering techniques.
• Rehearse with a real person. Your rehearsal partner can provide you with feedback and constructive criticism which is vital to improving your chances for success.
Rehearsing will help you build your confidence and delivery technique. Think about your questions for the interviewer, this demonstrates interest and enthusiasm.

**Getting there:**
- How will you get there?
- How long will it take you?
- Are there any access issues?

What are the three key things employers are looking for?

**Getting Spotted:**
- Can you do the job? Do you have the knowledge and skills?
- Do you want to do the job? Do you have the motivation?
- Will you fit in? Do you have relevant values, behaviours and personal qualities?

Create a good impression at your interview:

**Dress:**
- Whatever job you are going for there is one general rule when it comes to what to wear: dress up!
- The general consensus amongst recruiters is that dressing to impress for a job interview tells the interviewer you are serious about the job and you’re serious about yourself.
- Even in cases where the company culture allows casual dress every day it’s still a good idea to wear more formal business dress for the initial job interview.
- All that said, wear clothes that you are comfortable in so that you can concentrate on what is being asked of you.

**What to take:**
Certificates if needed, copies of your CV/application.

The Interview itself

**Arrive on time:**
- Confirm times and arrive at least ten-fifteen minutes early to create a good first impression.
- Check out and plan the route.
- Leave extra journey time for potential delays.

**Meeting the interviewers:**
- Memorise the name(s) of the interviewer/s and use it at the appropriate points.
- Get comfortable, but remember you are being observed.
- Smile as if you mean it! Make eye contact and give a firm handshake.
Body language in an interview:
Body language is a form of non-verbal communication, consisting of body pose, gestures and eye movements. We send and interpret such signals subconsciously, so don’t focus on this too much on your big day as you don’t want to become stiff and too formal as you concentrate on “putting on a show.” Rather, work on your sense of entitlement to be there. Your interviewers have asked to see you, they want to like you, so be yourself and be open to the experience. If they seem professional and considerate just mirror their body language to fit in.
Body language may provide cues as to your attitude or state of mind. For example, it may indicate aggression, enthusiasm, irritation, pleasure, engagement along with many other cues. Don’t read too much into their body language, just keep true to yourself.

Common Types of Questions

Motivational Questions
These types of questions are designed to test your motivation for the job and the organisation:
• Why do you want to work here?
• What can you tell us about our organisation?
• Where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?

Technical Questions
These types of questions test your ability to use relevant or appropriate technology or whether you have the technical ability to do a particular job:
• What systems and software packages are you competent in?
• What are your IT strengths and weaknesses?
• How would you rate your key technical competencies for this job?
• What do you know about (a particular technical skill or piece of equipment etc.)?

Competency Questions
Competency based questions are based on the general competencies an employer will expect of you (team behaviour, leadership, communication etc.):
• Can you tell us when you have reflected on your own performance, identifying and acting on learning and development needs?
• Can you tell us about a time when you have delegated to others, providing clear guidance and monitoring progress?

The interviewer may also want to know…
Why have you applied for this job or why do you want to work for us?
• Try to demonstrate you know what they do and how they operate (this is where your research on the company will come into use).
• Think about how that links to what you are interested in or already have experience of (this could be from your hobbies, your academic or work experience).
• Try to make it fit to them rather than be generic. Try to apply it to you, setting yourself apart from other candidates.
Closing an interview:
- The purpose of the interview is to help you (as well as the company) determine if the position will be right for you.
- Prepare questions and ask the interviewer these when asked to do so. This is your chance to really impress the interviewer with your research skills and knowledge about the company and role.
- Ask (if you haven't been told) what the process will be after the interview has been completed, or when they would be prepared to make a decision.
- Leave the interviewer with a good impression. Thank them, smile and give a firm handshake. Shake hands warmly with a firm grip. Handshakes have a far deeper significance than most people give them credit for.

Dealing with nerves:
We can all get nervous!
- Being nervous is quite normal (that job matters to us!) and most experienced interviewers understand this.
- Remember, it rarely harms your chances if you acknowledge that you are a bit nervous.
- However, excessive nervousness can work against you, especially if you continually apologise for it.
- It is likely to make other applicants, who are more relaxed and confident, seem more attractive.
- Also, many people tend to be overly talkative and gabble when nervous.
- If you fall into this category, try not to go off on tangents.
- Stick to the question being asked and answer it concisely and succinctly.
- You will control your nervousness more effectively if you have taken the time to practice answering questions before the interview.