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## S&L Personnel Advice Centre

### Interview technique: Coping with nerves!

The prospect of an imminent job interview is enough to give anyone sleepless nights and cold sweats...and that's just before the interview. If this anxiety continues to the actual day of the interview, it can completely eliminate any chance of getting the job. Fortunately it is a very simple process to overcome these nerves and thus ensure you make the most out of your job interview.

#### *Change your mindset*

The first step to beating this anxiety is to completely change your mindset concerning the interview. For most people, the interview is considered to be synonymous with an intense period of questioning, which allows the company to make judgements as to your suitability for the job. However, whilst this may be partially true, the interview is also an opportunity for you to make similar judgements of the company. It is your only chance to find out whether working for this company will suit **you**. Once you adopt this mindset, you will regain the feeling of control which is often lost as soon as people enter the interview room.

#### *Preparation*

The single most important thing you can do to beat interview nerves is to be prepared. Worrying that you don't know enough is often the single biggest cause of nerves in interviewees. Research everything, not only about the company you are applying for, but also about the person who will be interviewing you (if this information is known). Having some sort of prior knowledge of your interviewer will not only make them seem more human and less like the terrifying monster you imagine in your head, but it will also inevitably show through in the interview and this will prove to be impressive.

Prepare confident answers to the obvious questions you will be asked and always twist your answers to show how you, above all other applicants, are ideally suited to the specific job in question. It may be helpful to stage a practice interview with someone you know will give you honest and constructive feedback.

It is also important to prepare questions that you want to ask the interviewer, in order for them to sell the potential of their company to you. Not only will this reinforce the positive mindset achieved prior to the interview but it explicitly shows the interviewer that you are keen to get this particular job and are confident enough to ask direct, assertive questions.

#### *The day of the interview*

Make sure that you have fully prepared your schedule for the day of the interview. Plan your route to the location of your interview a few days before and make sure you have a well thought-out back-up route in case of delays on your first route. In the morning, leave more than enough time to arrive at your destination. Having to hurry will only leave you feeling flustered and anxious. Decide what to wear the night before and then get an early night! Your job interview outfit should be something you feel comfortable and confident in but also makes you feel smart and successful enough to get any job. Have a decent breakfast even if you don't feel like eating, it will help to settle your nerves.

During the interview itself, one of the most important yet subtle things you can do to boost self-confidence and banish any nerves which may be creeping up on you, is to have a confident smile. Smiling has scientifically proven benefits: it releases endorphins which instantly make us feel better and can even fake the brain into making you feel happier. It also gives the outward appearance of confidence and professional ease to the interviewer, even if you don't feel that comfortable inside! Ultimately, knowing that you outwardly appear confident will lessen any nerves you may feel on the inside.

### *Some unusual hints*

One hint which may work for you is to imagine the interviewer in a different situation to that of the formal office. It can sometimes take a lot to realise that the interviewer is fundamentally the same as you: human. Therefore, it is perhaps useful to imagine them physically facing the same daily trials as you: sleeping through the alarm, arriving late at work because they couldn't find their keys, dropping some mayonnaise from the sandwich at lunch on their tie, and so on.

Another hint which you may not have thought of is talking to yourself. Do this out loud before the interview when practising your prepared answers but also do it during the interview (in your head of course)! Tell yourself mentally that you are the best applicant for this job and this is your chance to sell yourself. If you think you have answered a question well, mentally congratulate yourself. This may sound a bizarre technique but it can only give you confidence and help to mentally banish personally diminishing thoughts which can result from nerves.

### *After the interview*

Exit the interview as if you personally thought it was a complete success: show a confident and assured smile and give a firm handshake. Some of this confidence is bound to transfer across to the interviewer and thus you will leave a positive last impression of yourself. Whether or not you feel that the interview was a success, try to put it completely out of your mind as soon as you have left the interview room. If you dwell too much on your performance it can negatively impact on subsequent job interviews you may have. Take confidence from the fact that even if you have failed this interview, it has still provided excellent practice for the next one. Prepare in exactly the same way for any upcoming interviews but it is important to give yourself at least one night off to relax, instead of overloading your brain too much and thus multiplying nerves.