

Performing better in job interviews

Job interviewing is a topic which can cause very mixed responses, some people enjoy the opportunity which they present, and others are terrified at the prospect of an interview.

No matter how you feel about the idea of a job interview, most people agree that they are important parts of the job seeking process, and for that reason, we want to give you some tips on how to perform better in them.

When you think about a job interview, what images come to mind? Is it the image of a powerful executive in a high back chair who is deliberately trying to ask you difficult questions, or do you think of someone you might meet at a coffee shop for a chat with? Either are possible job interview scenarios, and developing your ability to dynamically adapt yourself towards the way the interviewer is engaging with you is key to your job interview success.

Interviewing doesn't have to be scary

In an interview, it's important to remember that the interviewer is going through the challenges and trials of their day just as much as you are, and because of this, they might show you more or less patience, manners or anything else that might impact your interview experience.

It is important to consider that an interview is a chance to practice something, and sometimes you perform better on that practice effort than other times. It might be tempting to look at an interview like something you can pass or fail at, but that can be risky unless you can also identify the specific factors which led to your interview outcome.

Why even interview?

Sometimes it's not clear what the actual purpose of a job interview is, especially after you have an interview experience where you're asked very much unexpected questions by the interviewer. Generally speaking, the interviewer is seeking to understand you, so in this instance, they are usually going beyond the details you've provided on your resume and cover letter and more likely, they're trying to understand you.

The interviewer might be trying to understand how you cope with difficult questions, people or circumstances.

They might be trying to see how articulate you are, or whether you speak confidently. Some of the reasons they might want to do this is because this is the sort of thing which can help them understand how you're likely to handle yourself when you're in certain situations in the workplace.

If an interviewer wants to understand how you handle difficult situations, they might just ask you about the most difficult situation you've been in. This is where they might be listening carefully about how professionally and maturely you handled a situation. Did you blame a colleague, the customer? Maybe you listened carefully to the customer's concerns, then looked at how you could take responsibility for seeing that the problem was resolved to the customer's satisfaction.

Whatever the goals the interviewer has in an interview, you can be sure that how you answer will be just as important as what you answer with.

If you look at interviews from the interviewer's perspective, their job is to make sure you're going to be a valuable contributor on a work team. If they aren't confident that you'll be that kind of contributor, then it's hard to see why they'd help you progress through to the next step of the application process.

Before, During and After

Before the interview, this is your time to prepare. There is research you can do about the organisation you're interviewing for. You can even reflect on the kind of contributions you want to make in the event you get to join the team, the more clearly you can articulate how you'd contribute on the team, the easier you make it for the interviewer to imagine that.

There is always more you can do for preparation in an interview, and sometimes you need the experience of not-so-good interview performances to have the clarity to understand what you should be preparing for. Over time, and after multiple interviews, you should have a clear understanding of what preparation steps you can take so that your interview performance is as good as it can be.

During the interview, show yourself in a positive, but genuine light so the interviewer can get a reasonably confident understanding of how you might handle yourself in work situations. Again, it can be difficult to know exactly what you should do in an interview until you have done several and have had some go well, and some go not so well. This is not a suggestion that you should try to ruin an interview attempt, but a recognition that some interviews just won't go well, and that's just inevitable.

After an interview, some of the most useful activities you can do is reflect on how you went, consider the dynamic of the conversation, could you manage to get the interviewer to open up, or did they stay quiet and only ask you factual and to the point questions.

Another thing you can do is politely follow up the interviewer, focusing on a simple thanks is often all that's needed (and appropriate) as you need to give the interviewer a chance to consider you amongst others who have applied and respect the fact that they are probably quite busy.



What does an employer want?

The answer to the question of what an employer wants, and thus what they are looking for in an interview is actually a fairly simple one. They probably have products or services they provide to their customers, and they want your direct or indirect help on delivering those offerings to their customer base in a quality, cost effective and value adding manner.

Nobody has a job unless something is being or has been sold, so no matter where the role you're interviewing for is, the more easily you can make it for the interviewer to imagine you being a contributor to the value of their team who is helping deliver better outcomes for customers, patients, students, residents, whoever, the better your chances are in progressing past the interview process towards that job you want.

Good luck with your next interview!