

Q&A

How you handle your interview could determine whether you get the job. Make the right impression. By Helen Ueckermann

So you sent in your application, you waited for days by the phone and then you got the call inviting you for an interview. Cause for celebration certainly, but the process isn't over yet. While you may be a finalist in the competition for the job, it's how you 'perform live' that will convince the employer you're who they are looking for.

NAIL IT
Certain things can make or break an interview. Give yourself the added edge by following these tips.

- **Personality.** The right attitude is everything, says Karen Oosthuysse, a senior consultant at Frontline Targeted Recruitment

Solutions. 'When you get to the interview, be alert, friendly and professional. Remember to smile. If you get nervous, just tell the interviewer - they're sure to understand and this will immediately make you feel more relaxed.'

- **Presentation.** First impressions count. When it comes to picking your outfit, err on the conservative side, even if the culture of the company is informal. This is the time to blend in, says www.workbloom.com, so no loud shirts, bare midriffs or statement hair. Guys, you can't really go wrong with chinos and a smart shirt. Girls, avoid anything low-cut, skip the jangling bracelets and go easy with your make-up.



ILLUSTRATION: GALLONIMAGES/THINKSTOCK

- **Preparation.** This is one situation where it's not a good idea to wing it. While the interviewer may ask something completely unexpected, there are certain questions that are sure to come up. Practise answering the following - before you're sitting in the hot seat.

The hypothetical question

Eg 'You fail to meet a deadline. What do you do?'

Your answer Think beforehand about what you would do in difficult situations and answer accordingly.

The yes-or-no question

Eg 'Have you prepared financial statements/written a feature article/dealt with an angry customer before?'

Your answer Don't simply answer 'yes' or 'no'. Give the interviewer more info.

The non-question question

Eg 'I've enjoyed reading your CV, but I'm not sure you have the experience we are looking for.'

Your answer Turn this into a question. 'Could you give me an example so I can quantify my experience?'

The A-or-B question

Eg 'Which is more important to you - salary package or what you will learn?'

Your answer Say you're sure they would pay a market-related package and therefore you're more focused on the learning opportunities.

The point-blank question

Eg 'Why should we hire you?'

Your answer List the qualities you can bring to the workplace (it's about what you can do for the company, not the other way around). Give examples to back it up.

The open-ended question

Eg 'So, tell me a little bit

about yourself/your interests/your previous job.'

Your answer Prepare for these questions in advance. Create a summary of your work experience and a list of your traits and achievements that you think are relevant to the job you're being interviewed for.

YOUR TURN

In most cases the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. 'Remember you're there to interview them as much as they are there to interview you,' says Karen. Also, if by the end of the interview you feel you would really like the job, let them know, she advises. 'It shows your enthusiasm.'

Here's a list of questions you may like to ask your interviewer:

- If I get the job, what would be my key areas of responsibility?
- To whom would I report?
- What scope would I have for growth within the company?
- Does the company grant study leave?
- In what way are achievements recognised? ■

DO...

- Ask the interviewer to repeat a question if you don't understand it.
- Switch your cellphone off.
- Be on time for your interview.

DON'T...

- Give one-word answers. For example, if you are asked whether you can handle pressure, a simple 'yes' isn't enough. Give examples of stressful situations you've handled well in the past.
- Bad-mouth your current employer if you have one.
- Ask what your salary will be.