The Recruiting Office
Providing staff that last

The Ultimate Guide To **A Successful Interview**

Today, the world is facing a **growing shortage of people with crucial skills.**

This means that the most appealing talent have more choice than ever about where they want to pursue their career.

However, that doesn't mean that job seekers can just stroll into an interview and get an offer. Hiring managers still want the best of the best for their team. This means that if you're going to be successful in the quest for your next job, then you need to know how to interview.

It takes more than just spending ten minutes on Google looking for common interview questions or brushing up on details about the business to stand out. You need to combine everything from an excellent appearance to an in-depth understanding of your target company to get results.

Your next job interview might be the start of your dream career. Here's how you can make a memorable first impression.

Know Your Outcomes

There's a common saying that applies to the interview process: "Fail to plan, and you plan to fail."

There's no need to ever go into an interview blind. The online world and the support of your Recruiting Office recruitment consultant give you everything you need to research the business and prepare for success.

Before you begin hunting down key information online, think about what your goals are for this upcoming discussion. You want to get through to the next stage of the interview process, but what else are you hoping to achieve?

Ask yourself:

- What kind of first impression do I want to give my employer? If the job description asks for someone that's able to solve problems with an ability to lead a project then make sure that you're ready to show those characteristics during the meeting.

- What are the essential messages you want to communicate? If your interviewer can only remember one thing about you after the meeting, what do you want it to be? Is it that you have deep expertise or experience about the sector or a true passion for the role? How are you going to make those messages stick?

Know Your Audience

One of the best things that you can do when you're preparing for an interview is research. Spending a few hours learning everything you can about a company is an excellent way to show how committed you are to the role. This is your chance to show your hiring manager that you've done your homework.

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Some of the ways you can gather the right information include:

- Reviewing social media sites to get a sense of the organisation's employer brand: Can you embody a similar personality through the interview?

- Examining their website and highlighting any words, phrases, and terms that indicate what the company's values are. You may be able to find a mission statement on the "About Us" page that you can use to guide you when answering questions.

- Finding out who you'll be speaking to in the interview. Look the person up online and on LinkedIn to get a sense of their experience.

- Check press releases on industry websites and Google articles to avail yourself on the latest “big wins” that the business has achieved. This shows that you’re invested in the success of your potential employer.

Remember that different companies use unique kinds of interviews too. Reading up on Glassdoor testimonials, or speaking to your recruitment consultant can help you to prepare for the type of experience you’re going to have. If you need to give a presentation, you can plan. If you are taking any tests or assessments, you can make sure that your knowledge is up-to-date.

Making Strong First Impressions

You only have one chance to make a good first impression; according to Oscar Wilde. Not exactly 100% true; however, a strong first impression is essential.

Interviewers judge candidates **within the first few seconds of meeting them**, so make sure it’s as positive as it can be. Dress codes vary so much, and we now live in a world where a casual dress style is an accepted norm.

However.....

Check in with your recruitment consultant and if in doubt always dress up. Though the company might have a smart casual policy overall your hiring manager might have a different view; therefore lean towards the smarter end of casual.

When you get to the meeting, make sure that you’re standing up straight, smile, and shake the hiring interviewer’s hand. Remember, your appearance is responsible for 95% of the first impression you make, and a confident body stance does exactly this. Have a look at this famous **TED talk by Amy Cuddy the famous social psychologist.**

Preparing for Interview Questions

It's difficult to know for certain exactly which questions your interviewer will ask. However, you can get a general idea of what the hiring manager is looking for by analysing the job description.

Go through the information line by line and highlight anything that seems particularly relevant. For instance, are terms like "teamwork" and "collaboration" mentioned frequently? If so, there's a good chance that your employer is looking for a team player.

While you're reading, come up with examples of how you represent the key characteristics outlined in the job description. Think back to times when you've demonstrated your best qualities, like leadership, innovation and so on.

To ensure you're ready for anything:

- Make a list of common questions that hiring managers in your sector might ask: What will they need to know about you to determine if you're the right candidate? Maybe they'll want to hear about your management abilities or your creativity? Questions like "Tell Me About Yourself" are common, so ensure you have an answer prepared that reflects the organisation's values.

- Don't be thrown off by complicated questions: The question "What's your biggest weakness?" can be one of the most overwhelming for candidates. A good way to answer this is to think about something in the industry that you're struggling with but show how you're working to improve. For instance, maybe you're nervous with public presentations, but you've been taking speaking classes to overcome your anxiety.

- Jot down key numbers and statistics. Numbers, percentages and other quantitative data make a real impact in interviews. When you're discussing how you helped a company grow, quoting a percentage like 36% adds greater credibility to your accomplishments.

Remember, you'll often be asked why you applied for this specific company and role. Your research into the business will assist you in answering this question. Identify some key facts about the company and how you relate to them. Once you know your practice questions, test your responses in mock interviews with a friend. This will boost your confidence and clarify your thoughts.

Answering Interview Questions

Your interview preparation and research will ensure that you feel as confident as possible going into a meeting with a hiring manager. However, it's still useful to work on your presentation when it comes to answering competency-based questions.

Competency-based interview questions often start with the phrase: "Tell us about a time when". They're designed to give the company insight into how you react to specific circumstances.

You can find out more about the behavioural interviewing technique in a competency-based guide.

To prepare for these kinds of behavioural questions, make sure that you know your way around the "STAR" technique.

The STAR method asks you to take an example of impressive behaviour from your past and arrange it into a particular structure. The acronym encourages interviewees to:

When you're discussing how you helped a company grow, quoting a percentage like 36% adds greater credibility to your accomplishments.

- **S**ituation: Describe the circumstances relevant to the question.

- **T**ask: Outline the details of your responsibility in that situation.

- **A**ction: Explain the action steps that you took to address these challenges.

- **R**esults: Talk about what your actions achieved.

Using these four steps to shape your anecdote will make it easier to deliver a highly focused and relevant answer. It also makes it easier for interviewers to determine if you're the right person for the role.

Confidence and Managing Nerves

Even if you're usually an outgoing person, interviews can make almost anyone nervous.

If you can present a confident, self-assured version of yourself to the hiring manager, then you're much more likely to make the right first impression. However, this means that you need to get your mindset right.

Think about what you can do to feel as prepared as possible. Can you create a cheat-sheet of go-to numbers and statistics you can refer to when you want to draw attention to previous wins? If you're preparing for a technical interview, can you start preparing as early as possible by researching practice questions online?

A few ways to increase your confidence before the big day include:

- Come up with a go-to response when you need a moment to think. If you're scared that you'll be left without anything to say when a question stumps you, look for a go-to phrase. Something like "That's an excellent question. Let me think about that..."

- Practising positive thinking: We can all get a little bit negative at times. If you've been trying to get your dream job for a while now, you may be tempted to tell yourself that you're going to "mess up" your next interview or miss out on an offer. Instead, focus on all the things you've achieved in the past, and the factors that make you a good addition to this new team. If you believe that you deserve the job, the interviewer will begin to believe it too.

- Using visualisation to mentally rehearse: Find some quiet time and visualise what the interview experience might be like. Remember, the questions shouldn't be rushed, and you need to be wearing professional clothing. If there are any parts of the visualised interview that you're particularly nervous about, practice them with a friend.

- Exploring relaxation techniques: All prospective employees can feel overwhelmed at times. Find a way to calm yourself by **focusing on deep breathing**. This will centre you when you're in the interview and feeling nervous. Remember, before the day, make sure that you get plenty of sleep too. This will allow you to wake up feeling confident, prepared and ready to pursue your goals.

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Mastering Body Language

It's not always what you say in an interview that has the biggest impact. Sometimes, the non-verbal signals that you can send can be the things that the hiring manager remembers. For instance, do you show good posture when sitting and standing? Or do you slump in your seat, or wrap your arms around yourself? When you're speaking to the interviewer, do you make eye contact, or watch your fidgeting fingers?

Body language will dictate whether you come across as a confident, experienced individual. Fail to make the right impact with everything from your handshake to your sitting style, and you might lose out on a great opportunity.

Remember:

- Smile! I know you might be full of nerves but smiling is a great icebreaker for all concerned so use it to your advantage.

- Concentrate on posture: Keep your chin up and your spine straight whether you're sitting or standing. Lean forward slightly in your chair to indicate interest and avoid crossing your arms or fiddling with things on the desk in front of you.

- Practice a firm handshake: During the handshake, make sure that you're looking at the person, and giving them a genuine smile. Show them that you're happy to be there.

- Suppress any restless habits: Avoid crossing and uncrossing your legs, cracking your knuckles, tapping your foot, or biting your nails. All of these small quirks indicate nerves and may be deemed as impolite.

- Make eye contact: Make eye contact during your interview, rather than continually staring at the clock or down at your CV. However, be careful not to stare continuously at the hiring manager, as this can make them uncomfortable. Balance it out by making eye contact as you listen to and respond to questions, but let your eyes wander occasionally.

- Use your hands: If you're not sure what to do with your hands, then use them to gesture while you're speaking. Hand movements can show passion during a conversation. Just make sure that they're not so aggressive that they distract from what you're saying.

Be Able to Talk About Your Future

Remember, the interview isn't exclusively for the hiring manager. It's also a chance for you to discuss your future with a new employer and determine whether this role is the right move for you. You're not just trying to get a job; you're interviewing the business to see whether you'll fit well within their team.

Discussing your future with the hiring manager shows that you're committed to making your new career work as much as possible. It also shows you what kind of opportunities the future might hold. Explain what you hope to get out of the role and ask the hiring manager about the development options available for employees. For instance:

- Is there a mentorship programme where you can learn from others and develop your skills?

- Does the company offer plenty of training solutions and chances to learn new things?

Make eye contact during your interview, rather than continually staring at the clock or down at your CV.

- How does the business approach things like development plans? Will you get regular one-on-one interviews to see how you're progressing towards your goals?

- Are their opportunities for professional advancement when you get into this role? What might the next step look like for you?

- What happened to the last person that held this job? Did they move into a bigger role or switch companies?

- What are your thoughts about lateral movement? Do employees have an opportunity to explore other projects in different roles?

Discussing your ambitions will also help your hiring manager to see how well you'll fit into the role in question. If you don't seem to be right for the position in question, based on your passions and goals, they may suggest that you apply for a different role.

Questions to Ask the Employer

Interviews are a two-way street.

Just as your hiring manager wants to learn about you and your skills, you want to learn about what you can get from your new role.

Preparing intelligent, well-thought-out questions shows the interviewer that you're thoroughly prepared, and that you understand the role you're getting into. Your questions show that you're interested in the position and that you have ambitions to excel in your new job.

Some of the best potential questions include:

- Can you tell me more about the responsibilities of this job: If the day-to-day responsibilities have already been discussed on the job description, you can skip this question. However, if they're vague, this is your opportunity to determine exactly what you'll need to do in your new role.

- How can someone excel in this role? This question often leads to valuable information about how the business measures things like success and performance in the workplace. You can even ask how you'll be assessed going forward, and how regularly you can expect to get feedback.

- Where do you see the company heading in the next five years? This question shows that you're committed to staying with the company for the foreseeable future, and you're interested in its progress.

- What do you expect me to achieve in this role during the first 30 days, 60 days, or 90 days? This gives you an overview of the goals you'll be pursuing when you begin your new job.

- Can you describe the culture of your company? It's important to know if you'll fit well with your team members. A brief description of company culture will show you whether your personality is a match for the business dynamic.

- What do you like best about working for this company? Asking for your interviewer's personal experience of working within the company is an excellent insight into what you can expect from your new employment.

- What are the biggest challenges facing the company or my department today? This question shows that you're eager to seize opportunity and assist the business in overcoming any difficulties. You might even discover areas where your specific skills will save the day.

Can you describe the culture of your company? It's important to know if you'll fit well with your team members.

- What is the typical career path for someone who takes this role? This question will give you an overview of how career advancement works in your chosen organisation. It may also show you whether you can expect some regular support and training when achieving your career goals.

- What are the next steps in the interview process? This question indicates that you're eager to move to the next stage with the business. It will also give you an insight into the timeline you can expect to follow for hiring. You'll know when you can follow up appropriately, without pestering the company.

- Is there anything about my CV or background that makes you question my fit for this role? Here, you're showing your interviewer that you're committed to making the right impression as a candidate. This question also means that you have an opportunity to respond to possible concerns.

Remember, there are some questions to avoid asking in a job interview too. For instance, you won't need to ask what the business does if you've done your research. Additionally, it's a good idea not to ask about benefits and changing things straight away.

Interviews can be stressful and nerve-wracking experiences. However, with the right preparation strategy in place, you'll feel more confident walking into the initial meeting with the company that's right for you. Using the tips above, and some support from your recruiting consultant, you can ensure that you're ready to make the right impression in an interview.

What is the typical career path for someone who takes this role?

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About us

At The Recruiting Office we recognise how hard it can be for non HR staff to fit recruitment around their regular day to day duties and to ensure that job specifications, advertisements, selection and interview processes are without bias and are effective in identifying the best possible candidates.

We know how vital pro-active candidate sourcing can be in an increasingly candidate short market and we understand that many non recruitment professionals struggle to pro-actively identify and engage with suitable passive candidates.

And we know that modern businesses sometimes need to engage skilled personnel on a non permanent basis to support specific projects or changing business needs.

If you are experiencing issues or concerns with any aspect of the recruitment process - from writing job and person specifications to effective on boarding, from engaging with passive candidates to required document checks and when to undertake them - we can help!

At The Recruiting Office we have over 40 years experience of supporting Norfolk employers through every aspect of the recruitment process and our comprehensive, knowledgeable, compliant and ethical recruitment services really work!

For a no obligation discussion of the recruitment issues you are experiencing and the solutions we can offer - call us now on **01603 964816** or email **neil@therecruitingoffice.co.uk**

Your next actions

Connect with us in multiple ways

You can connect with either of us on multiple social media channels including LinkedIn and Facebook

https://www.linkedin.com/in/neil-scarborough-recruiter-for-all-your-norwich-and-norfolk-recruitment-needs/

https://www.linkedin.com/in/adela-matin-cert-rp-2a98a333/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/5517696/admin/

Or call 01603 964816 or email Neil neil@therecruitingoffice.co.uk or Adela Adela@therecruitingoffice.co.uk to book a private recruitment strategy call.

Best wishes
Neil and Adela

P.S. Our recruitment services are without charge until/unless our successful candidate accepts your job offer and in the unlikely event they don't work out we offer a 100 day 100% refund guarantee!

Client Testimonials

"What makes The Recruiting Office our agency of choice is the ability Adela and Neil have to fully engage and understand our requirements. They understand that we are looking for people who want to be part of our brand. This is reflected in the quality of candidate they place in both temporary and permanent positions. This is a true partnership and one I believe will be long lasting and important in the success and growth of our depot."
Simon

"The Recruiting Office has found our company a succession of quality staff that are continuing to provide first class service to our customers in East Anglia. The professional and thoroughly well organised manner that The Recruiting Office operate make them a pleasure to do business with."
Graham

Candidate Testimonials

Just a quick email to say thank you for your help in getting me to interview. What makes The Recruiting Office different stand head and shoulders ahead of other agencies is the care and attention the staff put into understanding not only what the potential employer does and requires but also understanding not only the skill set of the potential employee but also their personality thus making the position/employee a match better. This coupled with your attention to detail and contact, updates, feed back and genuine interest in all aspects of the process makes for an outstanding business model.
Mark

"I would recommend to anyone looking for short or long term employment to use the services of the Recruiting Office.
The help and support I received was invaluable-from CV analysis to a better understanding of the current work market (after coming out of a long-term job) I was in a placement within a couple of days.
All consultants I dealt with were friendly, polite and professional.
My placement lead to permanent employment, however, I would not hesitate to use the services of The Recruiting Office again if my situation changed."
Charlotte