

“How to impress at an interview”



**accountancy
solutions**

financial recruitment specialists

**The Ultimate
Interview
Preparation Guide**

www.accountancysolutions.ie

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Steps to a Successful Interview

Have you ever walked away from an interview ready to 'kick yourself'? The role is perfect for you, you have the experience that they are looking for, yet you feel you did not perform well enough to convince them.

Remember in the first instance if you are called for interview you have passed the first hurdle. The employer having read your CV believes that you **could** be the right person for the job, now it's up to you to prove it. Yet some top class candidates never get to the final shortlist. Why?

Many candidates are apprehensive of interviews with a prospective employer - some candidates find it difficult to overcome nervousness. It is a balancing act to listen to the questions being asked, answer the specific questions, maintain eye contact with your interviewers and remain cool, calm and collected throughout. At Accountancy Solutions we have spent several years guiding candidates through the interview process ensuring that when you meet the client you are confident, well prepared and self-assured.

The first thing you should remember when you are called for an interview is that the prospective employer has compared your CV with their requirements and they believe you could be a match. This is really positive ... you are half way there. Employers don't waste their time interviewing people they feel are not capable of doing the job ... the employer's time is valuable and they will only meet people they think they may hire. Now for the hard part ... the interview. With a little bit of preparation you can tremendously improve how you perform at interview. So what do you need to do to "dazzle them," at interview so you get offered that perfect job?

Preparation

"Remember fail to prepare and prepare to fail!"

Case study - Tropical Fruit Distributors is a rapidly expanding fruit importer based in North Dublin. Their newly appointed Financial Controller wants to hire a second in command to himself. He is interviewing four candidates. No 1, 2 and 3 all have good qualities but just don't fit the bill.

- ▲ No 1 has 4 years distribution experience, and has just qualified.
- ▲ No 2 has 1 years experience, is really eager, works in a large retail organisation and has passed stage one of the Accountancy exams.
- ▲ No 3 works in a state owned telecoms provider with great IT / systems experience and really wants to work in a smaller environment where he will have more hands on experience.

All three looked good on paper.

No 1 the newly qualified candidate, having distribution experience said he could do the job with his "eyes closed". The FC took the view that he might get bored quickly and move on.

No 2 came across very well. She showed a real interest in the role, but unfortunately her experience was just a bit too light and she was at too early a stage in the professional exams. However No 2 really wanted the job as she would gain experience she previously didn't have i.e. Managing a team and implementing the new system that the FC had just signed an order for that day.

"Many candidates are apprehensive of interviews"

"She showed a real interest in the role"

How to impress at an Interview

No 3's interview was a complete disaster. He turned up late, in a crumpled suit that looked like it needed a visit to the dry cleaners and while the FC was really giving him a chance to sell himself, he couldn't explain why he would leave the public sector for a growing entrepreneurial firm. Nor did he explain why he arrived late, or apologise.

Just when the FC was despairing of finding a potential employee in this batch of interviewees, the Accountancy Solutions candidate arrives.

She arrives 10 minutes early, dressed in a professional business suit, smiles, shakes hands with the FC and says "Really nice offices, I called for directions and it was very easy to find". She really believes in making a "good first impression".

The candidate discussed her CV well and explained why she wanted to move, how this role would help her, and how she could contribute to the company.

A recent US study concluded that during the first 10 -15 minutes of an interview the interviewer sub consciously formed their views about the candidate. The remaining part of the interview was spent looking for evidence to support those views.

In the case study above, the FC met a confident and professional candidate, whose experience matched the company's requirement. More importantly the candidate was "persuasive" enough to assure the interviewer that they were right for the job and that they wanted to do it.

"He did not explain why he arrived late"

Know your CV "inside out"!

Remember the interviewer will have thoroughly read your CV before the interview. Your CV is a synopsis of your education and job history to date. It is important that you can comfortably discuss any part of your CV when asked to do so. It is also important that you know your exact educational results - back to secondary level, and your reasons for each career move to date. Never ask to see your CV during an interview.

"Your CV is a synopsis of education and career history"

Talk about your Achievements (sell, sell, sell yourself)

Don't be afraid to blow your own trumpet, as nobody else will do it for you. It is important that you list your achievements on your CV. These should preferably be related to your work history. Be able to clearly discuss how these achievements benefited your employers. You should be able to discuss specific examples demonstrating that you are a good team player, or where you improved aspects of your job, handled a specific project, or met deadlines.

"Blow your own trumpet"

Research the Company

With so much web based information now available from a simple Google search, it is inexcusable if a candidate does not do some basic research on a company. When you are asked "What do you know about this company?" the employer is not looking for a thesis on their firm. They really want to see that you are interested enough to have researched them. It is a good idea to find out all you can about the company you are meeting with. Key areas to consider are the company's profile (i.e. current size, employees, services offered, recent growth), market share, financial situation of the firm, industry sector in which the company operates, and key competitors. It is really impressive if you can find their financial results, and a mortal sin if you have not looked at their website. So when asked what do you know about our company - show off ... be a know it all "Well I looked at your web site and I downloaded your published results. I see your biggest competitor is ..."

"What do you know about this company?"

Review the Job Description

We recommend that you review the job description in detail that your consultant has provided you with and spend time tying in your experiences to date with what the company is looking for.

Know exactly where the company is and get there on time

“Don’t be late”

Ensure you know the name of the interviewer and their title within the organisation. It is essential that you arrive on time - if for some reason you are delayed, ensure you call your consultant or the company to advise them of the delay. It is crucial that you know the precise location of where the interview is taking place. Some candidates even go out to the location of the company the night before to ensure they know exactly where they are going.

Anticipate questions that you could be asked and prepare responses

“Ask your recruitment consultant for advice”

A list of frequently asked questions is outlined at the end of this brochure; however you should always ask your recruitment consultant for advice. After all, they probably have worked on recruitment assignments for the company in the past and should know the type of questions asked and the interview style of different managers.

By doing all of the above, you will be able to convince the employer that technically you are capable of doing the role but also that you are sufficiently motivated and a good fit for the team structure and the company. By being well prepared, you will eliminate unnecessary nervousness and perform well at Interview.

First impressions last, dress to impress!

“Have a friendly yet professional demeanour”

You only get one chance to make a first impression. Always wear a business suit when attending interview. You want to give the impression of being confident, well groomed and professional. It is important that you give the interviewer a firm handshake upon first meeting them. It is also important to have a friendly yet professional demeanour and also good posture when seated in the interview. Don't fidget, touch your face or mess with your hair.

Listen to questions asked and answer them!

Listen carefully to what you are asked and answer that question. Never ever drone on about a topic. If you are asked for one example give one example. If you are asked for three strengths, give three strengths. If you are unclear about the question being asked, it is no problem to ask the interviewer to explain or repeat the question.

Maintain eye contact with the interviewer

Maintain good eye contact throughout the meeting. If there is more than one person attending the interview, please include them in the meeting even if they have not asked you the question.

“Remember, the interview is a not an interrogation”

Have you any questions?

Remember the interview is not an interrogation. A properly conducted interview should be a two way process whereby information is exchanged in both directions. When asked if you have any questions, this gives you an ideal opportunity to find out more information about the job, the company and if it will suit your career direction.

Typical questions may include:

- ▲ How is the Finance department structured?
- ▲ Can you tell me what a typical day in the role will involve?
- ▲ What are key challenges the finance department will face in the next 12 months?
- ▲ Where do I fit into the overall organisation structure?
- ▲ What training do you provide?
- ▲ What are the potential careers paths that may be available to me in the future?
- ▲ Does the company plan to expand in the near future?

“Also, it is ok if you do not have any questions”

However do not feel you are obliged to ask questions. If you are satisfied that the interviewer has covered everything it is ok to say “No I do not have any questions, as you seem to have covered everything quite well”

At the end of the interview

As the interview ends it is very polite to thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet you and letting them know how interested you are in the position and the company. And remember the interview does not end until you leave the premises!

“It is really courteous to thank the interviewer”

What should you do after the interview?

After the interview, please contact your consultant in Accountancy Solutions to indicate your level of interest in the position. The consultant will take your feedback on board and relay this to the client.

Frequently asked questions in Interview

As each interview is a unique situation, there is no definitive list of questions that may be asked. The following however are a sample list of questions that are frequently asked:

- ▲ Tell me about yourself?
- ▲ Why did you choose Accountancy/Finance as a career?
- ▲ Talk me through the key responsibilities in your last position?
- ▲ Explain the organisational structure in your last company and where you fitted in?
- ▲ Talk me through a typical day in your current role?
- ▲ Why are you looking to leave your current role?
- ▲ What is your proudest achievement in your career to date?
- ▲ Talk me through a time where you worked to a tight deadline?
- ▲ How do you organise your time and tasks in work?
- ▲ Have you ever experienced conflict in the workplace?
- ▲ What motivates you?
- ▲ Talk me through the last time in work when you were under pressure? What happened, what action did you take? What was the overall result?
- ▲ Tell me about one tough decision you recently made in work?
- ▲ Can you give me an example of where you demonstrated initiative in your job?
- ▲ How would your colleagues describe you?
- ▲ How would your manager describe you?
- ▲ List three strengths and weaknesses?
- ▲ Where do you see your career going in 5 years time?
- ▲ What would your ideal job be?
- ▲ What can you contribute to our company?
- ▲ Why should we hire you?

We spoke with our clients to find out the most common interview mistakes . . .

- ▲ Limp handshake; poor eye contact; untidy personal appearance; bad posture
- ▲ Disrespectful; rude; coarse; lack of tact and courtesy
- ▲ No sense of humour; lack of enthusiasm; indifference; passive attitude
- ▲ “What can you do for me” attitude
- ▲ Interested only in the money and benefits; unrealistic salary demands; expects too much too soon; idealistic job expectations
- ▲ Lack of career planning; job goals and objectives not well defined
- ▲ No record of achievements or experiences; achievement motivation not evident
- ▲ Lack of preparation for the interview; failure to research the company or the role they have applied for
- ▲ Lack of interest in the company or role they have applied for
- ▲ Belittling and disparaging previous employers and supervisors
- ▲ Asks no questions, or poor questions, about the job and company
- ▲ Late arrival to interview without plausible reason

Good Luck!



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