

## SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

With careful planning and research, the interview situation can prove to be less of an ordeal than anticipated. Creating the right impression is paramount. Major problems can arise when candidates are unprepared.

Companies expect to see that some research has been carried out before interviewees come to see them. So make sure you research the company and its products - any information you can obtain could give you the edge in an interview. Ring the company and ask for literature, a report or set of accounts.

Information on the Lloyd's market can be found at [www.lloyds.com](http://www.lloyds.com) and you can sign up for free access to an excellent database of archived insurance news at [www.postmag.co.uk](http://www.postmag.co.uk) which will give you plenty of information on your target organisation.

In addition your consultant will make sure that you have all the necessary background information regarding size of company, function and location, and any other details which will help you succeed, such as whether the interview will be conducted by the personnel department and/or a line manager and what style of interview it will be.

### Interview techniques

The interview is still the most common method by which decisions on job offers are taken, although this is sometimes backed up by other recruitment methods, for example, psychometric or aptitude tests.

It is a mistake to sit back and expect experience and qualifications alone to get you the position. Personality is at least as important. A confident approach will single you out as a candidate who must be taken seriously. Your job is to sell yourself to the interviewer.

Most interviews tend to follow a basic pattern:

- Asking you questions to establish ability and suitability for the job.
- Telling you about the post and the company.
- Giving you the opportunity to ask questions.
- Telling you what will happen next.

### First Impressions

The importance of making the right first impression cannot be overstated. An interviewer's opinion of you begins to be formed from the minute you arrive. Punctuality is therefore paramount - ten minutes early is good practice.

Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and a smile - it goes a long way to help break the ice and dispel nerves. Having said that, allowances are made for nerves and they can be an indication that you are taking the interview seriously rather than treating it as 'just another interview'.

Good presentation is vital. An untidy appearance will mark you down in the eyes of the interviewer. Ensure that your appearance is clean and tidy. A dark suit (preferably navy blue or grey) is always a 'safe bet' for both men and women.

Don't slouch. Take an upright but fairly relaxed position and try to look your interviewer in the eyes. Look rather than stare at the interviewer and avoid gazing round the room (irrespective of how impressive your surroundings are).

Attitude is always so important. Even if you are uncertain about attending the interview, go into it with a positive attitude. Remember - it is easy enough to reject a position you may feel is unsuitable once it is offered to you, but not as easy to retrieve an interview after suddenly discovering that it's exactly the job you were looking for.

Speak clearly and concisely. Do not mumble or try to disguise any dialects or regional accents - it only causes more problems for you as the interview wears on. Technical questions can sometimes cause problems - think carefully and pause if necessary before answering to make sure your answers show initiative, common sense and imagination. If you don't know the answer it is better to say so.

Use of voice, eyes and your overall posture go a long way in creating the right impression. In the event of panel interviews (God forbid), try not to direct all answers and questions at one person. Look at and speak to the whole panel.

Whether or not to smoke prior to an interview is a controversial subject. Although it may calm your nerves remember that you will smell particularly unpleasant to a non smoker and this could very well hinder your chances. Having alcohol on your breath is definitely not a good idea.

### **Asking Questions**

Now is your chance to impress the interviewer with a good choice of question. Remember, the interviewer is looking for someone who genuinely wants the job. Questions should be asked at a reasonably general level but should be relevant to the company/industry/market. Prior research should bring to mind the right questions. Try and save a good question for the end of the interview. Generally speaking, do not discuss salary and benefits until the second interview stage, unless the interviewer raises the subject. The same principle applies to working hours, pension schemes and health benefits - these matters can be dealt with in detail later or via personnel. Treat this part of the interview as an opportunity to clear up any areas of doubt or queries you may have concerning the position. Think carefully when asking questions and make sure they relate to the role you are interested in.

### **At the end of the interview**

Last impressions are as important as first impressions and the way you leave may be the way that you are remembered. Thank the interviewer for his/her time and give a firm handshake before leaving. When asked about your interest in the opportunity, always answer in the affirmative - even if you have doubts. If you give a negative response, it will be difficult to convince a potential employer of your change of mind once the interview has ended.

### **Feedback**

Immediately after the interview remember to contact your consultant to give them your feedback. They can then relay this back to the client and, if positive, will hopefully reconfirm their positive feelings about you and perhaps even dispel any doubts they have. Giving feedback can really help the consultant limit any damage should you not have performed to the best of your ability.

An Artemis consultant will always endeavour to get as much detailed feedback from the client as possible. This will help you understand how you performed, whether you are to be offered the position you want, or need to amend your interview technique in some way.

If you have any further queries please contact your consultant directly and remember to also download and read our guide to common interview questions. Good luck!