



# Job Hunting Advice

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# Interview Preparation



## JOB HUNTING ADVICE

# INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Interviews can be nerve-wracking but with the right preparation, you can keep those jitters at bay and make sure you feel as confident as possible.

Our Stopgap consultants have given their advice and support to thousands of candidates over the years, helping them find their perfect new job. Here are their top tips for a successful interview.

## Before You Start

Before you start, make sure you're sure why you want this job. Are you clear about your career objectives and goals?

It's important to be able to reassure and convince the client that you know what you want to consider:

- Fit with your skills
- Exciting/Interesting
- Career opportunities/learning
- Ability to impact results
- Broadening of responsibilities
- Salary
- Life/work balance



Keep those pre-interview jitters at bay!

Once you're convinced that it's the job for you, prepare well, use these tips, and give us a call for any support or advice you need...good luck!

# The Interview Preparation Top 10 Tips



## 1. Prepare Thoroughly:

Prior to the interview, invest time in revisiting your skills and accomplishments so that you can articulate them concisely when needed.

## 2. Dress in Harmony:

Tailor your attire to align with the company's culture and values. Dressing appropriately can make a strong first impression.

## 3. Company Insight:

Prior to the interview, conduct thorough research on the company. Familiarise yourself with their mission, values, and recent developments. This knowledge will empower you to ask insightful questions during the interview.

## 4. Radiant Positivity:

From the moment you step through the door, exhibit politeness and warmth toward everyone you encounter, including the receptionist. Display enthusiasm and optimism, and demonstrate genuine interest and attentiveness. Maintain a positive outlook throughout, steering clear of personal issues when conversing with the interviewer.

## 5. Salary Timing:

Refrain from initiating discussions about salary prematurely. Allow the conversation to naturally progress to this topic after your value to the company has been clearly established. Avoid giving the impression that your primary concern is compensation.



# The Interview Preparation Top 10 Tips



## **6. Maintain Professionalism:**

Always speak respectfully of past employers. Remember, how you talk about them reflects on your character and professionalism, which prospective employers consider.

## **7. Authenticity Matters:**

Be true to yourself during the interview. Confidence stems from a thorough self-review of your past accomplishments and experiences.

## **8: Enhance Efficiency:**

Come prepared with extra copies of your CV and prepare questions in advance. Familiarise yourself with the interview venue to ensure you arrive punctually.

## **9. Effective Communication:**

Listen attentively to your interviewer and provide relevant responses. Ensure that you understand the underlying questions and concerns, even those not explicitly stated. Clarity in your responses is key.

## **10. Showcase Achievements:**

When discussing your skills and accomplishments, bolster your statements with concrete examples. The more specific and illustrative you can be, the easier it is for the interviewer to envision how you would integrate into the company's environment.

# First Impressions Count



## 30 seconds

The amount of time it takes us to judge economic and educational levels, social position, level of sophistication and success.

## 240 seconds

The amount of time it takes us to make decisions about trustworthiness, compassion, reliability, intelligence, capability, humility, friendliness and confidence.

## 40%

Of interviewers made up their minds about a candidate in less than 20 minutes, while nearly 20% had made up their minds in less than 10 minutes.

## 7%

Content – what you say

## 55%

Body language (non-verbal communication)

## 38%

How you sound (how you say it)

## “Tell me about yourself”

Scary, huh? Most interviews start with an opener like this, especially in marketing jobs where the ability to articulate yourself well and convince others are often important qualities.

It can be quite daunting to just start talking about yourself straight off the bat, but the impact you have in the first few minutes of the interview is hard to shift so make sure you make a good one. It is useful to be able to summarise your background, achievements and objectives in between thirty seconds and three minutes, and here are some tips to help you do that:

- Your Background
- Your Achievements
- Your Current Career Goals

## Career Highlights

When it comes to editing your career highlights into a manageable pitch, it helps if you start by filling a whole page with what you would want to say to a potential employer.

Cut that down to half a page. Keep cutting until you get to a quarter of a page. Then pull out your bullet points that give a snapshot of your career.

### Try to cover:

- Your most recent role
- Your key achievements and responsibilities
- Your skills/strengths
- What you want to do next in a role

## Practice, practice and practice some more

Always rehearse out loud, in front of a mirror, to a friend, or into a tape or video recorder. Force yourself to sound enthusiastic.

Too often job candidates recite their pitches in a monotone or rush through them without passion. Remember – your tone of voice and body language have a greater impact than the words you say!

The first few times you try out your pitch may be a bit uncomfortable, but it gets easier. After a while it will become second nature to you and, when it does, you will be glad you practiced.

### Example 30 Second elevator pitch

I have 5 years of experience in retail marketing. My principle skill is managing a team to deliver against business and marketing objectives.

I have worked for companies in the UK and France. At my last company, I was responsible for a profit rise of 30%. I also set up a team of four people who I trained and managed.

I'm looking for a marketing manager position with hands-on e-commerce and website management as part of the role, using my team building and leadership skills as well as my marketing experience.

# What do Interviewers want to know?



Putting yourself in their shoes makes it easier to understand what you should be putting across.

## Critical Considerations for Job Interviews

- Can you do the job now or be trained to do the job?
- Can you be trusted?
- Do you have the skills, experience, training to match the job?
- Are you fit enough?
- Do you have the learning potential?
- Your strengths
- What did you learn from your last job?
- What do you know about our products and services?
- Have you done this type of work before? (if so, how long and at what level)

## Demonstrating Your Approach to the Job

- How motivated are you?
- Will you work non 9–5 hours?
- Would you travel abroad – maybe for prolonged periods? Would you work to different processes than you're used to? Will you stay in the job for a reasonable time?
- Will you find the job a challenge?
- How interested are you in the company?
- What's your work ethic?
- What are your our energy levels like?
- How enthusiastic are you?
- Are you interested in this type of work?
- Do you want a life outside work?
- Are you prepared to relocate?
- Will you get bored in 6 months?
- Will you learn?

## Assessing Company Culture Fit

- Do you fit with the company culture?
- What are your relations with existing team members like?
- Do you have hobbies outside work?
- Does the interviewer like you?
- Chemistry How, and how well do you communicate?
- What's your style like - formal, relaxed, etc?
- What's your dress/appearance like? Will you work as part of a team? How do you get on with people?
- How do you react to change?
- What are your values and needs?

## Answering interview questions

Talking about achievements:

### STARS

**S** First describe the Situation you were in

**T** Describe the Task that was involved

**A** Next describe the Action you took (be certain to say 'I' not 'we' when explaining this – interviewers want to know what YOU did, not the wider team)

**R** Then explain what the Result was

**S** Describe the Skills you used in your achievements

## Practice questions

### CAN questions

- Your skills / strengths
- What you want to do next
- What can you offer us?
- What did you achieve in your last job?
- Can you give me an example of an achievement - when/where/how did you do this?  
What was your role in relation to this?
- What skills did you use?
- What was the result?
- What are your strengths?



# What do Interviewers want to know?



## **WILL** questions

- What do you look for when seeking a new job?
- Why do you want to join this company?
- What hours are you willing to work?
- Can you work under pressure/tight deadlines?

## **CULTURE FIT** questions

- What is important to you in your next job?
- Would you prefer to be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond?
- Why should we employ you?
- How do you feel about looking for another job? What have you been doing since your last job? What are your hobbies & interests?
- How do you get on with other people?

# “Any Questions?”



Even if you feel you already have all the information you need from your interviewer, the ‘any questions?’ question is a great opportunity to add to the positive impression you’ve already given. Before you pick and choose from the following top 10, be sure to consider the culture of the organisation you are hoping to join and the nature of the person doing the selection.

Adopt the right tone and convey a positive attitude – you want to ensure this opportunity works for you, not against you.

## **What are the most enjoyable and the least enjoyable aspects of the role?**

This can show that you like to know what sort of challenges you are going to face and that you like to be properly prepared for it, all in the expectation of being able to rise to it.

## **What types of training opportunities can you offer?**

This is one of the classic questions as it can highlight that you are keen to advance your skills and add further value to a company.

## **Is there a chance for promotion in the future?**

This is another classic question and in a similar vein. It can emphasise a determination to make progress and to do so over the long term.

## **Can you please tell me how the role relates to the overall structure of the organisation?**

With this question, you are drawing attention to a preference for teamwork. It looks as though you want to know where you would fit in and how your contribution would affect the rest of the company.

# "Any Questions?"



## **How would you describe the work culture here?**

Here you are signalling that you want to be able to operate at your optimum and understand that for this you require a positive environment. In turn, this can indicate you are a good self-manager who is aware of how to get the best out of yourself.

## **In what way is performance measured and reviewed?**

This question can flag that you appreciate the importance of delivering real results. You can be seen to be someone who understands the value of commitment, reliability, and returns.

## **What are the most important issues you think your organisation will face? Or, You have recently introduced a new product/service/division/project; how will this benefit the organisation?**

These variations both show that you are interested not just in the job but in the employer behind it. It will be apparent you have done some research, done some thinking, and are now eager to hear their analysis.

## **May I tell you a little more about my particular interest in communicating with clients/developing new ideas/implementing better systems..?**

Okay, so this is a cheeky and obvious way of getting permission to blow your own trumpet but then that's what this interview is all about.

## **Do you have any doubts about whether I am suited to this position?**

This is a rather more brazen way of emphasising some of your strengths. It suggests you are open to constructive criticism and willing to learn from the experience of others.

## **You mentioned there will be a lot of presenting/researching/liasing; what do your most successful people find most satisfying about this part of the role?**

This question can serve two purposes. It can demonstrate your listening skills. Also, it can associate you with being successful in the role and finding it satisfying.

**Best of Luck in your job search!**

**STOPGAP**