

PIE'S GUIDE TO INTERVIEW PREP

PIE

GET THAT RESEARCH DONE

The interviewer will look at the way you've done your research and make direct comparisons with how you'd do your job. If you go in unprepared and have researched in a slipshod, haphazard & half-hearted way it's going to show.

Get familiar with the company's history, their purpose(s) and goals.

Good sources of info are websites (both the company and industry/industry news), company brochures, HR departments, Sales/Marketing departments or ask friends if they know anyone who works there. Look at LinkedIn and see how many employees they have and what kind of content is being posted. Check out Glassdoor reviews! Instagram & Twitter profiles can be handy (lots of businesses use Instagram to showcase their employee brand proposition - think pics of team building days and birthday cakes ;-))

If it's an FMCG business take a look in some local supermarkets at their product range and placement.

PIE will be happy to help with sources of information for you as well and fill in as much detail as we can ahead of time.

All businesses want to be loved and you need to show them that you've done some groundwork. You also have the added bonus of uncovering potential problems or issues early in the process which you can raise in the meeting.

This also adds a tremendous amount of credibility to you as a potential employee. Make sure the employer is aware of the hard work you've done by taking the information into the interview with you. In addition you'll also benefit from a much stronger dialogue in the interview as you'll be so well versed in their industry, competitors, facts & figures etc!

GETTING DRESSED FOR SUCCESS



The old adage that you never get a second chance to make a good first impression still holds firm!

Open the meeting with a firm handshake, good eye contact and a confident approach. Take in a presenter/smart folder and pen and write down points that you would like to raise later, demonstrating your interest. As a salesperson you would never go to a prospect appointment without some prepared qualifying questions and a pad/pen. So why take chances on your interview?

It's always worth checking what the dress code is for the company you're interviewing for - although it's very unlikely to be formal business dress nowadays. Ask your recruiter, this is stuff they should know. Look professional - we're not talking suits and ties but being smartly dressed with polished shoes absolutely cannot hurt your chances ;-)

Since the pandemic there's been a seismic shift towards video interviewing & many businesses are still using video in the initial stages of the interview process. So you need to make sure you're presenting as professional an approach on video as you would in person. Make sure you find a quiet space with no interruptions for the duration - ideally somewhere without a mountain of clutter visible behind you, You don't want the interviewer to be distracted by wondering where you got that weird ornament or pondering on how long it's going to take you to get through that mound of washing. Plug in your laptop - you definitely don't want a flat battery halfway through your meeting. Maintain eye contact (but without being weird).

SPEAKING/LISTENING MIX

Golden Rule: NEVER interrupt the person speaking.

Try to mix speaking and listening fifty-fifty in the interview.
People who ignore the rule generally don't get the job.

If you give an answer of less than 20 seconds it's probably too brief. Over 2 minutes is waffling!

Try and answer the question with the information they've asked for and then BE QUIET and wait for the next one!

Be comfortable with silence - it can be a great show of strength.

Make notes if you want to.

You could pre-prepare a two minute summary on yourself (summary of CV) – that really sells your skills, experience and expertise and refer to the relevant part of the summary to answer questions.

WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE PARTY?

It's key to stay focused on what you can do for the employer, rather than what the employer can do for you. Businesses have two main preoccupations: the problems they are facing and the solutions that people within the business are coming up with. An interviewer is trying to figure out whether you'll be part of the problem or part of the solution.

Be very clear about your strengths and HOW they will contribute to your success in the job. If you're unclear about this before the interview you need to clarify it during. Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer what the 3 most important aspects of the role are. Effectively you are making an oral proposal of what you can do for the potential employer to help them with their problems. This ideally needs to be followed up with a written proposal on the same theme – a thank you note!

They also need people who can bring in more money than they are paid!

GETTING INFORMATION

A black and white photograph of a man in a suit sitting in a barber's chair. He has a white towel draped over his shoulders and is looking up with a surprised expression as a barber uses a straight razor on his face. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a window with a grid pattern.

The interview process is a two-way street. They're trying to find out about you and you're trying to find out about the organisation and the role. Hopefully you'll have defined the type of position you are ideally looking for & what you want from a new position - as well as what you don't! It's imperative you prepare some questions before the interview (write them down and take them in with you if needed - you might think you'll remember them but it's highly likely you'll miss something).

Also interviewers like preparation and nothing screams prepared quite like a list of questions! And it will save that moment of awkwardness where they ask what you'd like to know and there's an embarrassing silence as your brain is suddenly devoid of any ability to think of anything.

Clients love to feel that they're involved in a commercial discussion rather than a one-sided interview - put them on the spot with questions to answer.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

A grayscale photograph of a dentist in a white coat and glasses examining a patient's teeth. The patient is reclined in a dental chair, wearing a white protective bib. The dentist is using a dental mirror to inspect the patient's teeth. The background is slightly blurred, showing a typical dental office setting.

When it comes to questions, think along the lines of Industry, Company, Role, People etc.

Industry:

- What kind of challenges do you feel the industry currently faces?
- Why do you feel your industry has experienced the growth it has over the last year?
- Who do you class as your strongest rivals right now? Why?

Company:

- What is your strategy this year?
- What do you feel are the opportunities for the business this year?
- How do you feel you compare to others in the industry?
- How would you describe the company's culture?

Role:

- What kind of relationship do you have with these accounts currently?
- What are the main responsibilities within the job?
- What is your expectation of someone doing this job for you?

People:

- What traits do your best people have in common?
- What do you look for in people when you are looking to promote?
- What kind of progression would I have if I was succeeding within the role?

WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU?



These are the five questions most employers will want to know the answers to, even if they don't actually ask them outright! Think about the job and what it entails – you could play out the interview questions in your head and how you are going to respond.

Why are you here?

Why are you interested in our company and not one of our competitors?

What can you do for the company?

If the company were to recruit you would you be part of the company's problem or part of the solution? What are your skills and how much do you know about the sector, product/service or selling style?

What kind of person are you?

Do you have the right kind of personality to get on with the people at the company and line manager and will you share the same values that are important to the company?

What makes you stand out from the other people interviewed?

Do you have better skills or attitude, will you work harder, longer, faster, go the extra mile. Have higher standards etc?

Can they afford you (package details)?

What will it take to get you on-board? Can they afford to pay it? Have you been matched correctly in terms of package?

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF

Bring Evidence

Put together a brag file with evidence of your previous success as this will also demonstrate likely future results. It could include sales league tables, incentive plans or review/appraisal reports. Have you won any awards? Get them included (possibly not if you were the top in the company go-karting challenge though). At the very least know your facts and figures eg how you were targeted, how you've performed against that target (% and values needed). If you haven't hit targets, why?

Never Run Down Previous Employer

All businesses worry about their reputation as a bad one makes it hard to recruit. Plan to say something nice about your previous employer. Even if you parted on bad terms, say something simple like, "I usually get along with everybody, but for some reason my past employer and I just didn't get along. I don't really know why. It's never happened to me before, hope it never happens again." Personality clash. Etc.



GETTING IT CLOSED...

It is very important that you close the interview by asking for the job – if you can ask for the job, you can ask for the order. You don't have to lock the door and refuse to leave until the employer relents, offers you a 2nd interview but cancels it later! On a serious note its important to go through the process.

You MUST cover any concerns during the interview - it's near impossible to do so afterwards.

Suggested Close

You: (Client)..the position sounds very interesting, it gives me the opportunity to utilise my (such and such) experience, which I believe will be of value to the organisation. What's the next step?

Client: We will be organising 2nd interviews.

You: From our meeting today, will you be inviting me back?

If the answer is yes

You: Well let's put a date in the diary now, what days do you have available?

Organise the date and clarify exactly what is required from at the 2nd interview i.e. presentation, assessment centre and who will be involved. Then leave – don't talk yourself out of the job!

If no – don't panic! Ask them why? When you have heard their objection, it may be a misunderstanding you can immediately clear up and this also gives you the opportunity to re-sell yourself.