

# How to face a job interview?

Whether you are a novice facing your first interview or an experienced professional, the prospect of facing a personal interview can be quite unnerving. No one knows us better than ourselves and often, the psyche of the interviewee is the result of a critical self evaluation against the profile desired by the employer. "Is my experience adequate? Can I really handle the assignment? How far do I go while negotiating package?" are some of the questions that would run in your mind. Don't worry! These are normal questions and only help you in better preparing for the interview.

Believe me! Even an experienced interviewer does go through moments of pressure as finding the right personnel is not easy and requires great communication and assessment skills. A weak and unskilled interviewer can easily miss the spark in a person. I remember years back walking into an interview conducted by a HR Executive, who had almost rejected a young female candidate just because she was a mother of an infant. He had assessed that she would find it difficult to balance career and home responsibilities. He was right perhaps, but for that great determination in the candidate, which came to the fore, when I intervened and probed further. That candidate was selected and went on to become one of our top performers.

Normally, all interviews follow a pattern to assess the interviewee's skills. Do remember that from an interviewer's perspective, when the day is long with too many interviews, they do look for moments of respite, and the interview to you may seem to go out of focus. But, every moment of your presence is being assessed by your interviewer, even if the questions sound informal. I remember having asked interviewees at times to sing a ghazal, narrate a shayari or an impromptu speech or anything of such kind taking cue from the interests mentioned in the CVs!

In general, the following steps help you to prepare and complete an Interview successfully.

## **1. Fact finding**

As an interviewer, it has been a pleasant experience to meet candidates who know much more about the organization, than even some employees. Sadly, the converse is also true with candidates just walking into an interview with absolutely no knowledge of the organization. "What do you know about us?" is a common interview question and the easiest to face, provided you spend just a little time in fact finding.

Practically all organizations have a website which provides you with the basic information. It is important to know information such as the numbers of years in business, background of promoters/management, business divisions/product range, financial information such as turnover, profitability, dividend payout % etc. If the organization is listed on a stock exchange, the current share price can give you an idea about the market perception of the organization. Then, there are independent financial websites which can give you critical evaluation of various companies. Additionally, talk to friends, relatives and if you can establish contact, with employees or even ex employees to probe further. However, you would need to make a judgment of this information yourself, as information especially from ex employees shouldn't be taken at its face value.

## 2. Preparation:

The following tips would help you to prepare yourself, for the interview.

- **Documentation:** Keep all your certificates, testimonials, experience letters etc neatly in a document folder. If you are an MBA, an IT Project Specialist or a Design Professional, then you can carry summer training /project reports / portfolio. In other words, do carry supplementary documents to prove your credentials.
- **Dressing:** It is necessary to dress appropriately for an interview. A formal wear like suit is generally the best and recommended for either sex as this enhances your personality. In the absence of a suitable formal wear, you may use the best from your wardrobe. A neat hair styling, clean nails and polished shoes are a must. You may use an anti perspirant or a mild perfume just to make you feel comfortable.
- **Arrive early:** Arrive at the venue atleast 10-15 minutes early as this would give you the opportunity to settle down comfortably before the interview. Use this time also to assess the surroundings, especially the reception area and look around for Product displays, Brochures, Awards, Recognitions, Industry affiliations etc. Keenly observe employee behavior and interactions, as this would give you an idea of the environment. Additionally, you will get to know other candidates and might get clues about the interview process.

## 3. Approach:

- **Confidence:** Be a picture of confidence. Take the nervousness out of your mind and consider an interview as a meeting for discussing a common subject or an interaction and not as if the interviewer is waiting to pounce on you.
- **Ice breaking:** The first probably ten seconds are crucial in an interview, as most interviewers make the first impression in these ten seconds, especially for all those positions such as Sales and Marketing where your personality is a key factor. After knocking the door, enter confidently. Greet the interviewers' with a smile and wait for a signal to take your seat. Sometimes, an interviewer may deliberately not signal you in which case don't stand nervously there. Feel comfortable to ask, "May I sit down?"
- **Be attentive:** Once you are seated comfortably, be attentive and wait for the question. Nothing can be more irritating for the interviewer than to find you are lost somewhere necessitating repeating the question.

## 4. Body language:

Skilled interviewers can assess you just by your body language. Don't sit there sweating, fretting and anxious. Instead sit back comfortably with legs in front and not cross legged. Use your natural body language and don't try some experimentation just to impress the interviewer.

## 5. Anticipating:

- Every interviewer has to assess an interviewee as required by his organization. The most common factors that are assessed by an interviewer are:
  - 1 Personality
  - 2 Communication
  - 3 Knowledge/skills - as required for the assignment.
  - 4 Attitude
  - 5 Experience
  - 6 Inter personal relations.
- You may therefore expect questions that will help an interviewer assess you on the above factors. If you anticipate you can be better prepared to answer the questions. Generally, interviews start with open ended questions and then end up with asking some close ended related questions.

Some of the typical questions are:

- 1 Tell us about yourself?
  - 2 What do you know about us?
  - 3 What are your career objectives?
  - 4 Where do you see yourself in five years?
  - 5 What are your strengths and weaknesses?
  - 6 What motivates you?
  - 7 What have been your achievements?
  - 8 Why are you interested in our organization?
  - 9 What do you think will be your job profile?
  - 10 What are the skill sets that are essential for this assignment?
- For most of the above questions you can take between one to two minutes as a general thumb rule. Do anticipate and be prepared for further specific questions related to the above.
  - Additionally there can be specific job related questions. Some times, you may be subjected to stress tests or some aggressive and often offensive questioning. You need to understand the motive of the interviewer and answer positively, which can then work in your favour.
  - If there are breaks in your academics or in your work experience, an experienced interviewer can easily make out that in your CV. Be prepared to explain the same appropriately instead of lying about it. This is in fact an opportunity for you to let the interviewer know about your sincerity.
  - If you are appearing for positions such as Sales, Secretarial, Creative, Editorial / EDP / Programmer etc, do expect and be prepared for a simple skill test which may happen as part of the interview process. A mock sales call is a very commonly used methodology for sales positions.

## 6. Seeking clarifications:

- It is natural that you may not understand some questions or the context of the question. Feel comfortable and at ease to seek clarifications. This would help you to understand and answer the question properly.
- Do remember that you are in a discussion or an interaction. It is a good idea for you to ask some questions at the end of the interview or in between, if the situation demands. Often most interviewers give an opportunity to the interviewee to ask questions or clarifications at the end. Some typical and intelligent questions that can be asked by you would be:
  - 1 Would you kindly tell me something about your organization?
  - 2 May I know about your growth and expansion plans?
  - 3 What kind of career opportunities does your organization provide?
  - 4 How do you promote your products?
- Please show genuine interest while the question is being answered and you would be free to ask further clarifications. You may avoid asking questions related to working hours, leave, holidays etc as these can lead to different perceptions unless you are seeking positions in call centre/BPO/factory environments. Most organizations have standard norms on these issues and are not very different.
- Negotiating the offer, if made, in respect of remuneration package, designation, location, joining time etc has to be done tactfully. An increase of 15 to 20% is something normal and wouldn't require much of justification. However, if your expectations are more, prepare yourself to explain convincingly.

## 7. Closing:

- Once you are finished with your questions, you will get the closing signal from the interviewer.
- Just as the first impression is important, it's good to leave the interview on a good note. Do thank the interviewer/s for their time and greet appropriately before leaving.

If you have done well in the interview and your profile matches with the requirement, you will hear from the organization. However, if you don't hear and eventually not selected, there is nothing to lose heart. Some times, candidates are short listed and kept on active files of organizations for future use. So be patient, keep trying and don't lose your confidence.

Best of Luck!