

How to do a great interview

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“And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” President John F Kennedy, Inaugural Address

So you are preparing to be interviewed for an important job. What on earth does the 35th US president's famous injunction to the American people have to do with you? The answer is, more than you might imagine.

When you are going for a job you really want, it's quite natural to focus on what's in it for you: a better position, more kudos and better pay. But, in fact, one of the most powerful things you can do is to turn that thinking on its head. In other words, ask yourself not what the company can do for you – but what you can do for the company.

Thinking like this - the way your interview panel will think - throws up all the key questions you must answer to present yourself in a truly positive light:

- What will I bring to the team?
- How do my skills fit what they are looking for?
- How will I add value to the business?

This is the best possible platform for your interview preparations. Because an interview is like a pitch – you are effectively pitching yourself. If you are to enjoy your moment in the spotlight, you need to be thoroughly prepared.

Get someone to ask you the key questions (or ask yourself), then tape your responses and listen back. How does it sound? Are you convincing, positive, enthusiastic? Practise, and practise some more until you have it right. A big bonus is that a lot of what you have said on tape will come back to you during the interview. You are far less likely to waffle, and more likely to shine.

- **Be confident and engage the interviewer.** Make eye contact, smile and communicate your enthusiasm and interest with your body language, your posture and your voice. President Clinton was famous for creating a fantastic first impression by emphatically making a connection with the people he met. You can do the same.
- **Use your nerves.** Chewing your fingernails, sitting on your hands and avoiding eye contact will show you are nervy and make everyone in the room feel jumpy, too. Far better to use the sense of anticipation that is natural before a big interview to inject energy into your performance. If you are well prepared, you will be able to do this.
- **Know the organisation.** Find out all you can about the company you want to join. Don't just use the obvious routes of website, annual reports and accounts, but also try to get hold of press cuttings or even speak to someone who works there if you can. Your aim is to get essential background on the company and the issues it is facing.
- **Know your interviewer.** Will it be the boss? He or she is likely to act on instinct and be short on time. Make sure you prepare a few memorable examples that incisively highlight your capabilities and personality. Or will the procurement director interview you? This is a different challenge altogether: plan ahead how to demonstrate that you tick all the boxes of the job specification.

If you are confidently prepared, your ability, experience and enthusiasm will come through. This is your moment – enjoy it.

To talk about your specific requirements, please contact **Claire Gillingwater** on +44 (0) 7900 056 819 or +44 (0) 208 347 6754 or via Claire@dunnell-gillingwater.com

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