

# Standing out at a job interview

**Getting noticed when applying for a job can mean the difference between a job offer and a rejection letter. But how can you stand out from the crowd? What do prospective employers look for before and during an interview? Try following these simple dos and don'ts to get noticed and get hired.**

**Targeted approach** - Don't have a scattergun approach when applying for jobs. "Firing off 100 job applications to a range of potential employers is likely to be much less successful than a targeted approach," says Lynnette Morgan from Career Services. With a targeted approach, you'll be able to customise your CV and cover letter based on the advertised role's requirements and KPIs. "What you're trying to do is make it easy for the employer to see that you're a good match for the job. Read the advertised job description thoroughly and be prepared to provide examples of your work experience," says Morgan.

**Preparation** - "I've four words in mind when I'm helping people with interviews - preparation, preparation, preparation and fear," says Morgan. "If you're not nervous about an interview, then you don't appreciate the opportunity you have."

Try mock interviews with friends or consultants - role modelling is an excellent way to prepare for an interview or practice in front of a mirror. Prepare your responses to tricky questions, and line-up some questions you can ask the interviewer based on your research. "Don't bury your head in the sand. If something can be of concern to the prospective employer, then address it. Don't



go into an interview hoping it won't come up," says Morgan.

As part of your preparation, research the company you're applying to. Read their annual report, press releases, management information and other details available. "It is not advisable for the candidate to give the impression that they know it all, but it is important to have a good grasp of the organisation and the key players in the industry," says Peter McLaren from McLaren Associates.

**First Impressions matter** - "Confidence, mannerisms, dress sense, eye contact - just the overall presentation and professionalism matter in an interview situation," says McLaren. Morgan feels that one might recover from a poor first impression, but will be behind the eight-ball. In this information-rich world, communication skills are critical. Demonstrate your acumen here through your CV, first phone call, interview and other communications with the organisation.

**Getting the CV right** - As your first communication piece, your CV needs to make a fantastic first impression. To do this,

customise your CV for every job you apply for. "Match your skills to the advertised job, and show the organisation that you're a good investment," says Morgan. "Simple rule of thumb: target a 3-4 page CV for the open job market and a longer one with all your achievements and employment history for recruitment consultancies."

McLaren says, "CVs should be well presented, but not lengthy. Not more than six pages. Photographs do not add value - in fact, they might be detrimental".

**Demonstrate a positive attitude** - during the interview it's important to demonstrate your enthusiasm, adaptability and willingness to encourage others with examples from past work experience. Tell interviewers about situations where you took the time and effort to find creative solutions - it's valuable to show your initiative. Demonstrate your strong work ethic by discussing a past project, challenges faced and how you overcame them.

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