PERFORM AT INTERVIEWS

Getting an interview means the employer wants to know more about you. Not every interview is the same. Interview styles and techniques will reflect the personalities and policies of the prospective employer. You should expect to experience a variety of these in your job search. The best way to increase your chance of success at an interview is to be prepared. Like in every military encounter, preparation is the key to success.

ROAD TO SUCCESS

Practice talking about yourself with confidence.

- Prepare answers to common interview questions, write down your responses and commit them to memory and practice them.
- Be ready to explain what you did in past jobs, including things you liked or found difficult and why you left your previous position.
- Prepare examples of situations where you took responsibility for work tasks and achieved a good outcome for an employer, team or project.
- Prepare for the close of the interview by having a pre-prepared statement about why you are the best person for the job and/or some questions that are relevant to the business and your role.

Research the employers.

- Gather information from your networks, review the job advertisement and the company website.
- Research the organisation online, get to know their priorities, values, culture and prominent people. If your employer is a public company, explore the ASX website.

Know the different types of interview formats and questions.

- By being aware of the interview situation you are going into you will be able to focus your efforts to your best advantage.
- Different interviews and selection processes require slightly different approaches in how you pitch and present yourself. (Tailored tips for group and panel interviews are available on the Job Jumpstart website).
- When a recruiter calls to arrange an interview, ask them factual questions about the interview format and selection process they use, including expected duration and testing techniques.

GET STARTED

1. Turn employer facts into insights about what the employer is really looking for.

For the best result, do your homework on the business and be genuine in your response about the crossover between what the business does and what is important to you. The interview is your opportunity to demonstrate your interest in working for the employer, show your understanding of their business and your commitment to meeting their goals. Once you have all the employer information at hand, take the time to review it for meaning. What would help you fit in with this organisation or industry? What is essential to the job? What do you have to offer that would set you apart? Quoting some relevant facts and figures to an employer about their business may be helpful in demonstrating that you’ve done your homework on them. Taking it a step further, and using your research to highlight what you can bring to the role and business, will help you stand out from other candidates in the interview process.

jobsearch.gov.au/jobseeker-info/employment-assistance-for-veterans
2. Find the time for adequate interview preparation.

Pitching yourself in the right way can be challenging for people of all experience levels and abilities. You are being interviewed because of the information in your résumé. Now the employer wants to hear about that information combined with your passion and enthusiasm. Everything you do will be observed. Different interview types and styles (e.g. one-on-one, panel, group, telephone, informal chat), require different preparation. Try to find out what the format is beforehand so you can prepare appropriately. Be prepared for a range of interview questions covering off your skills and experiences, aspirations, strengths, past behaviour, how you dealt with challenging situations and successes. Also consider hypothetical situations you may face in your new workplace and be ready to explain how you would handle them. Whatever the situation or environment, know the essence of what you want to say about you and don’t be over-awed by the situation you find yourself in.

3. Quantifying and memorising your achievements using everyday language.

If you spent time tailoring your résumé before applying for the vacancy then you may have some good examples of your achievements already picked out for this job. Don’t assume that the interviewer will remember everything you included in your résumé. Remember, in everything you do, remove or replace military terms with language a civilian employer will understand. Avoid language like “I have commanded teams of various sizes on many deployments in different situations”, or “I managed a team to achieve the Commander’s intent at sea and ashore”. While these examples aren’t using military-specific terms, they make statements that only you will know the exact context of. If you wish to use statements like these, add examples of what you refer to. For example “on my last overseas deployment to Iraq, I managed a team of 10 staff for nine months to provide close protection and surveillance at airports, compounds and small villages.” Or “I managed a team of four highly skilled technicians over six months to operate the ship’s combat radar systems whilst under pressure on high-intensity operations”. Refer to the ADF Transitions Skills and Training guides to assist you with this. Contact your ADF Transition Coach or ADF.civilrecognition@defence.gov.au.

4. Negotiating your salary.

Generally, it is not appropriate to start talking about salary, superannuation and other benefits until you’ve been offered the job. However, it is good to go into an interview prepared with some understanding of the salary range you expect and an understanding of how to react if the employer brings it up. Start by conducting research to determine the average market value for someone with your experience and skills. There are a number of freely available, private sector websites that provide this information. Search for Australian websites using the terms ‘salary guide’, ‘pay scale’ and ‘salary review’. Pay rate information is also available on joboutlook.gov.au. You may also consider joining the professional association relevant to your field as it may be able to assist with this information.

SUCCESS STORY

Army Lieutenant Colonel: Challenged by the task of self-promotion

A company requested me to present for an interview, along with three other applicants. Not having interviewed for a job for over 25 years, I was excited, but also somewhat daunted by the opportunity. While I had interviewed other people before and felt very confident in all professional situations, talking about myself in a self-promoting way was much harder than I imagined. As this role was high-profile, I decided to invest time and resources to help prepare me for this interview, including getting candid feedback about my responses to standard interview questions. I found this preparation very challenging as my natural tendency was to use military language and speak more of the team’s achievements, rather than my own. While I knew what I was saying probably wouldn’t fall on the listener the right way, I had never thought of rewording it to suit an employer. Taking the time to practice was crucial to getting my interview performance to where it needed to be and becoming competitive for the positions I wanted in the open job market.

NEXT STEPS

Use the factsheets and workbooks on: jobjumpstart.gov.au

SEARCH FOR:

- Job Interview Basics
- Succeeding at Job Interviews
- Learning about Panel Interviews
- Learning about Group Interviews

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