

14 WAYS TO ACE THAT JOB INTERVIEW

Shirley de Kock Gueller asked Suzanne Rosson, Managing Partner in Halifax of national career management consultants KWA Partners Inc, for tips to help you showcase yourself in the marketplace against strong competition.

1 Be prepared: Bone up on the company you want to work for—get hold of its brochures and annual reports; search the internet. Know its mission and its management style and any problems it may be experiencing and how your skills fit their needs. Make sure the opportunity is a good fit for you. Identify difficult questions the interviewer will ask—why you left your last job, what you can bring to this job, what are your long terms goals—and intelligent questions to ask the interviewer related to your research of the company. And practice with a friend. Know how to articulate your skills and experience.

2 Be on time or, better still, arrive 10 minutes early. Do trial runs at the same time the day before to make sure of the address, assess the traffic flow, ascertain the best route and find convenient parking.

3 Be appropriately and stylishly yet comfortably dressed—dressing up shows respect for the interviewer and your level of sophistication to match the job. Be well-groomed, with neat hair, trimmed fingernails, polished shoes, conservative jewelry, and don't wear perfume. Too many people suffer from allergies. First impressions are lasting. Don't smoke, chew gum or suck candy. Don't fidget or fiddle with your hair or clothes. Turn off your cell phone or other electronic devices before you enter the receptionist's office. Such interruptions tell the interviewers where they lie on your scale of importance.

4 Be well mannered and polite to all the staff, junior or senior. Shake hands firmly and thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you. Exchange business cards.

5 Be confident and calm; talk quietly and with assurance; know what your objectives are and how you will fit the company's needs. Don't give the impression you're shopping around.

6 Be professional, at ease but not familiar. Don't use first names unless invited to, but introduce yourself using yours. Address the interviewer by name, correctly pronounced, using his or her academic or courtesy title, and know his or her job title and role in the company. Speak clearly and don't sit down until invited to. Follow the interviewer's small talk, which will always precede the business part.

7 Be enthusiastic. Ask informed questions about the company, its way forward, culture and people and, without gushing, let them know you would consider it a privilege to work in that environment.

8 Be aware of body language. Avoiding eye contact is as bad as staring the interviewer down. Sit still, and not on the edge of your seat. Don't riffle through papers such as your resume, which could indicate a lack of confidence. Smile, but don't tell jokes, no matter how nervous you are.

9 Be a good listener, wait for the questions to be formulated and answer promptly, clearly and concisely after making sure you understand what is being asked. Take a minute to think rather than launch into the wrong answer. Avoid monosyllabic answers where you can, and use proper English, not slang.

10 Be honest about your strengths. Never lie, but be selective about your limitations, acknowledging them if necessary as not as strong as other specific skills.

11 Be resistant to talking about money, benefits or vacations, but if the subject is raised, quote your last salary, suggest a salary range if you have to and make it known that you are open to negotiation. After all, there may be huge opportunities for advancement within the company.

12 Be positive—about yourself, your quest to grow, your high standards. Don't be negative about your previous employment even if it wasn't right for you. Let it be known that you can do this job. Don't assume prematurely the job is yours, no matter how good the atmosphere. Stress your achievements because a job interview is the only time you can promote yourself. After all, no one else will.

13 Be aware that time is money. Don't waste the interviewer's time but don't give the impression you want to rush away. Before you do leave, ask what the next step is.

14 Be ready to follow up. Send a thank you letter, which is a subtle reminder why you would be right for the job.

Good luck!