

The Interview

OK, finally you have an interview. The fun part! Or is it? For a lot of people, an interview strikes terror into them. It's not a firing squad, your world will not end if you miss out. It's just a meeting of like minded people, they want to hire say an accountant/engineer, you're an accountant and you want that job. See, you already have something in common.

Only apply for jobs you are qualified for, yes of course you can aim higher. But be realistic, don't waste our time or yours. Make sure we can identify your skills, responsibilities and achievements. Remember "past experiences are an indicator of future potential." Do your research, sell yourself whilst ticking our wish list! Prove IT – Prove IT!

1st – 2nd – 3rd Interview – It's tough out there. Employers and tertiary institutions have more candidates than they have places. Whether they have one or fifty places, it doesn't matter. Ultimately they have to make a choice and this can be hard.

Be prepared for multiple interviews, especially with big corporations, who can get people back three to five times before making a decision. At each interview stage, go in with the attitude that you will move to the next stage. Use each opportunity to grow your confidence, to be more in control and more knowledgeable. By focusing on achieving a positive outcome, the odds will increase in your favour.

Panel interviews – These can seem threatening the first time. Usually there are three to four people on a panel, and maybe someone taking notes. Never assume the note taker is just that. They may well be an observer from the Human Resource department. Give equal importance to each member of the panel. Enter the room confidently with positive body language, good eye contact and a smile. If possible, try to shake hands with each member, even if they are sitting behind a desk.

It really helps if you know who's who on the panel. Identify the person you will be working for and make sure you have positive eye contact with them. Then identify the role and purpose of the other panel members. Better still, try to get their names prior to the interview, usually freely supplied, if you ask. Then do research on them. What positions do they hold in the company? What have they published? What is their standing in the academic fraternity, or the business world? What big deals have gone down lately or are about to? Remember to always deal in the positive.

When questioned, answer directly to that person, but make sure that you engage the others with good eye contact, body language and gestures. If panel members all defer to one particular person, make sure you impress that person, but not at the exclusion of the others. After the interview, they will confer, make notes and later nominate the successful candidate/s. Panel members usually have an equal say, so work to impress them all, because whilst they are all looking for the best candidate, they may have different views, needs or agendas.

Good luck in your next interview, James E Lynch