DIGITAL NATIVE

Get your 1st tech job

A simple guide to interviews

Welcome

Congratulations! If you're reading this guide, it probably means that you've been invited for an interview.

This guide draws on our experience of job interviews from:

- Being in the same position that you're in, a candidate
- Supporting our employers with their interviews
- Being involved in large recruitment campaigns
- Sitting on interview panels
- Recruiting for our teams

This is not a definitive guide to how to succeed at interviews, our opinion is no more valid than yours but hopefully some of the simple advice in this guide may put you one step closer to gaining your dream job.

Finally, job seeking is tough and if you feel you're not getting anywhere there are services out there that can help.

Good luck!

Firstly, let's think what is the function of an interview?

An interview is where the employer is looking to:

- Get more information from you than is on your CV or application form
- Assess your verbal communication skills
- Understand why you've applied for this role and how it fits into your career goals

And most importantly – decide if you will be a good fit for their organisation and easy to work with!

What types of interviews are there?

There's lots of great information on the internet about the different types of interviews but a useful way of looking at this is:

Small Employer – interviews with smaller employers can typically be characterised as:

- Less formal
- Less structured
- More conversational

Large Employer – interviews with larger employers are:

- Formal with set, pre-written questions for you to answer
- Often based around the competencies needed in the job
- Evidence based asking you to provide examples of when you've done something
- Based on an assessment centre approach where you may be asked to give a presentation, undertake a group exercise and have an interview

How should I prepare for an interview?

Like most things in life, you'll increase the likelihood of success if you prepare for an interview. Things you may want to do include:

- Plan you journey and ensure you arrive 10 – 15 minutes before the interview time
- Check the weather – will you need to wear a waterproof coat or take a umbrella ~~brolly~~ if it's raining?
- Know who to ask for when you arrive and also who to contact if you have any problems on the day
- Research the company – understand the products or services they provide
- Read the job description and understand what the role involves and what the employer is looking for
- Read your CV or application – you're likely to be asked for more information about what you've written
- Think of examples to evidence that you have the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for the job. The STAR method **The STAR Method** is a great way to structure your answers.
- Think of two or three questions you may want to ask at the end of the interview to show how keen you are
- Decide what you want to take to the interview – this could be a notepad and pen, copies of your CV, your laptop if you're expected to present or show examples of your technical skills

When you arrive

The three things to remember when you arrive are:

- Smile – this shows that you're comfortable and happy to be there and it will also make you feel confident
- Firm handshake – again this shows confidence and will give you confidence
- Small talk – as you walk to the interview room you may be asked "how was your journey" or "what's the weather like." Make sure you avoid uncomfortable silences by not giving one word answers, for instance:

Example One - "How was your journey?"

"It was fine, I only live 15 minutes away and I drove over at the weekend to check the route and parking."

Example Two – "What's the weather like outside?"

"I was pretty lucky, the forecast was for rain but I managed to get here without getting soaked."

During the interview

Once the interview has started here's some things to remember:

- Smile and make eye contact
- Sit tall with your shoulders back
- Treat everyone in the room equally, don't assume that a person is just there to make notes
- Make sure you understand the question you've been asked and if you don't ask them to repeat it or rephrase it
- Think about what you want to say before you say it
- Be truthful and make sure you focus on answering the question you've been asked
- Don't be scared to say you haven't done something or you don't know something but say you're keen to learn and try to give examples of similar things that you've done
- Try not to be negative about past experiences and try to draw on the positives, e.g.:

Negative – "Why did you leave university?"

"To be honest I wasn't impressed with the lecturers or the course."

Positive – "Why did you leave university?"

"I'm glad I went to university as it made me realise that I learn best by doing things and learning from my successes and mistakes which is why I've decided an apprenticeship is the best option for me."

One important thing to remember during the interview is that the interviewer doesn't know anything apart from what you tell them. It's really important that you help them and take the time to use the **STAR** format as much as possible when answering questions.

What should I do if it's all going wrong?

During the interview you may find that your mind goes blank, your nerves get the better of you or you know that your answer isn't making sense.

If this happens it doesn't mean the interviews over or that you won't be successful.

Ask "Can I restart my answer please?" or "Can I just take a moment to gather my thoughts please?" Take a sip of water if it's available, refocus and restart the interview.

This shows that you had enough self-awareness to know it wasn't going well and you had the confidence and resilience to get things back on track.

Top Tips

1. Make sure you've prepared fully for the interview

2. Prepare answers to the most asked questions, these include:

    - What do you know about the company?
    - What made you apply for this role?
    - What makes you want to be a (Software Developer, Data Analyst etc)
    - Where ~~do you see yourself in five years' time~~? would you like your career to be in the next few years?

3. Make sure that you're honest, consistent and believable

Summary

Hopefully this guide will give you some hints on how you can improve the likelihood of interviewing successfully by convincing an employer that you're right for their role.

Good luck!