



HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN INTERVIEWS

The day of your interview has arrived and you really want this job. You are sitting in the reception area beside several other candidates, who all look experienced, clued up and confident...but are they? They may be able to do the job, but have they got what it takes to shine in the interview?

At some time in our working life we will have to encounter the dreaded job interview. To succeed in business we have to climb that career ladder, competing against other individuals for that 'great opportunity'. Most industries are highly competitive and the shipping, logistics and removals industries are especially so. So how do you snatch that job from under your competitor's nose? Alchemy Recruitment has specialised in recruiting within these industries for over ten years; they provide an interviewing service for their clients, and CV preparation and interview coaching for their candidates. Detailed below is some useful information and tips compiled by Alchemy to help you sail through that interview and secure your desired job.

Interview Ground Work

Personal Image

Personal image is increasingly important in business life but how much thought do you put into creating positive first impressions? Research shows that in today's fast-paced society it takes just seconds for many interviewers to judge the visual image we present: 93% of first impressions are based on our 'personal package'. That leaves just 7 percent for the words we use. Great CV? Now's the time to back it up with a quality personal presentation.



Communication Skills

Research also shows that senior management recruiters now rank soft skills, communications and personal presentation skills as high, if not higher, than qualifications. 80% of COE's and Senior Directors intimated that grooming had an affect on the perceived ability of their colleagues' performance. Portraying the correct image is the key to creating the right first-time impression on the recruiter. A CV will get you through the door, now you have to reinforce that with the personal 'wow' factor.

Perception

Think about how you come across when meeting people for the first time. How do you want to be perceived? Ask yourself: what values are important to you? How articulate are you? Then test yourself and obtain feedback by asking friends and family the same questions.

Preparation

Remember that the interviewer is a skilled professional, so know in advance what they are really looking for. Preparation is essential. Potential employers are frequently astounded by the high number of candidates who are not prepared for the interview and have no information about the company.

- Be punctual and clear regarding the time of interview, the interviewer's full name and position within the company.
- Make sure that you know the company's precise location.
- Understand the position you are applying for, take a detailed job specification with you if possible.
- Research the company; obtain a brochure, utilise their website, evaluate what services they provide, what products do they offer and which markets they target.
- Be ready for questions regarding your present employers: turnover, work ethic, your function in the company etc. Never run down or criticise your current employer. Speak positively as to your reasons for moving on.

- Ask questions, an interview works both ways. The interviewer will endeavour to evaluate through questioning whether you have got what it takes to carry out the position available. You in turn must come back, questioning whether the intended career move meets your expectations.

Suggested points to be raised:

- Reason for the vacancy?
- A detailed description of the position?
- Induction training provided?
- What sorts of individuals have done well?
- Any plans for expansion?
- Career prospects, advancement?
- When answering questions do not 'waffle', be clear and to the point.
- Avoid discussing the salary, holiday and benefits etc. at the first meeting unless the interviewer gives out highly positive 'employment' vibes. In which case do not be caught off guard, be ready to specify your requirements.

According to Alchemy's research, the following questions are most frequently asked by recruiters.

Be ready for:

- What made you join the Shipping/Logistics/Removals industry?
- Are you a member of any trade organisations?
- Why would you like to work for our company?
- Why do you want to leave your present employer?
- What do you want to be doing in your career five years from now?
- Highlight your main achievements. Give me details on a specific freight movements you have personally handled.
- What interests you about our specific services to the industry?
- How does this differ from your current employer's services?
- What have you learned from your previous employment?
- What aspects did you enjoy the most and why?
- What are your major weaknesses and what are your strengths?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
- What do you do when you are not working?
- Whom do you know in the industry (BE CAREFUL – name dropping is not wise, do not disclose our colleagues or associates, it takes matters out of your control and could go against you).

Attitude



Be punctual, arrive slightly early for an interview and be prepared to be kept waiting (a well-known interviewer's tactic – so do not lose your cool).

Lateness is inexcusable, but if you do have a problem and you are running late, alert your agency or the client as soon as possible.

Positives



Application form – fill it out neatly and completely.

Address the interviewer by their surname, if you are not sure of the pronunciation, ask the interviewer to repeat it.

Shake hands firmly.

Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright in your chair, look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good talker.

Look the interviewer in the eye during discussions.

Follow the interviewer's leads but try to obtain a full description of the position and duties expected early so that you can relate your appropriate background skills.

Accentuate your good points to the interviewer in a factual and sincere manner. Keep in mind that only you can sell yourself and make the interviewer aware of the potential benefits you can offer to the organisation.

Conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in the position where you can choose a number of jobs - rather than only one.

Answer questions truthfully, frankly and as succinctly as possible.

Remember you are the best person to market yourself, alerting the potential employer to your skills and experiences relevant to the position available.

Negatives



Avoid smoking even if the interviewer smokes and offers you a cigarette.

Avoid answering questions with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

Provide an explanation whenever possible and describe your skills and experience which relate to the position.

Never make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers.

Turn off your mobile phone!

Dress Code

We say 'suited and booted gets you recruited!' Yes we are individuals; this is why your application was chosen but you must look the part, smart and professional. What you do or do not wear in your own time is of no consequence at interview.

Male Candidates

Smart and classic are the key words here. Always try for a navy blue, dark grey or black suit, white or blue shirt and sober tie. Ties are a reflection of your personality but should be appropriate to the occasion (No Disney characters please!!)

Well polished shoes, not boots or trainers.

Dark coloured socks.

Remove all earrings, large rings and medallions.

Clean shaven or well-rimmed beards and moustaches, clean nails and tidy hair are all essential.

A smart briefcase or simple folder for your CV and certificates (plastic bags or crumpled sheets of paper do not look good.)

Female Candidates

Aim to look modern and 'switched on'.

Proven outfits are suites (skirt or trouser) and an appropriate blouse. Skirts should always be kept to appropriate lengths, preferably just above the knee, and blouses discreetly buttoned up.

Keep jewellery to a minimum, with earrings limited to one pair and no nose rings.

Subtle make-up is the answer and do pay particular attention to the colour and condition of your nail varnish and lipstick.

Hair should be clean and tidy and above all, under control!

Again a smart briefcase or folder your CV and certificates.

Avoid the Pitfalls

Poor personal appearances.

Overbearing, aggressive, conceited 'know-it-all' attitude.

Inability to express thoughts clearly, poor diction or grammar.

Lack of confidence – nervousness.

Over-emphasis on money – interested only in remuneration.

Evasive – making excuses for unfavourable factors.

Lack of tact, maturity or courtesy.

Criticism of past employers.

Failure to look the interviewer in the eye.

Limp handshake.

Failure to ask relevant questions about the job and company.

Closing the Interview

IF you are interested in the position enquire about the next interview stage if applicable. If the interviewer offers the position to you and you want it, accept on the spot. If you wish for some time to think it over, be courteous and tactful in asking for the time. Set a definite date when you can provide an answer.

DON'T be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to consult with colleagues first or interview other candidates before making a decision.

IF you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in your possibilities may seem to discourage you in order to test your reaction.

THANK the interviewer for the time spent with you!

NOW GO FOR IT!

