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The Art of Selling Yourself at Job Interviews

Job interviews are particularly useful for both potential employers and employees. It is a chance for the employer to get to know the candidate's experiences and background better and as such, be able to ascertain the candidate's suitability. On the other hand, it is an excellent opportunity for the candidate to show the potential employer what he or she will get should the candidate be hired.

Job interviews are like sales calls, or rather, an invited sales call. Should you get selected for a job interview, bring along all your best "products and services", i.e., yourself, and be prepared to sell, sell, sell!

Here are six strategies which will be helpful in increasing your chances of clinching that much coveted job!

Strategy One: Engage in a Spot of Detect Work

Learn all there is to know about the company. If you want to sell something to someone, you would need to know a little of this person's background in order to "tailor" your offering to suit him/her. Visit the website or ask to be sent some background information about the company. This will enable you to ask intelligent and appropriate questions during the interview. This knowledge will also prove useful when interviewers ask questions that relate to the company, such as, "Why do you want to work here?" and "What could you contribute to our organisation?"

Strategy Two: First Impression Counts

Always arrive at least 10 minutes early and treat everyone you meet with professionalism and kindness. You never know if the receptionist could contribute to your assessment!

Looking Great

This point has been dealt with to death but you will be surprised how often this is overlooked. As the saying goes, "clothes make a man". How we dress speaks volumes about ourselves. Looking great does not mean buying expensive clothes. Professional-looking attire that fits well is all you need. It is always better to dress conservatively for interviews. Lastly, pay attention to the small details that are sometimes overlooked - Are your shoes well polished? Is your shirt missing a button? Is your breath fresh?

Oh, Behave!

Our mannerism is equally important as our attire. There's nothing worse than a well-dressed person behaving badly. Always start with a smile and a firm handshake. Address the interviewer by his/her last name, e.g. Mr Tan or Ms Chew. Remember to switch off your mobile phone before entering the interview room. Be mindful of your body language throughout the interview. Always maintain eye contact and sit upright. Unless you are suffering from a sudden bout of fits or happen to be sitting on an ants' nest, avoid fidgeting as it shows uneasiness and screams a lack of confidence. Other actions to avoid include shaking your legs, darting eyes, slouching and the constant crossing and uncrossing of legs.



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Flash that mega-watt smile!

Yes, we all know how nerve-wrecking job interviews may get but that does not mean you should forget how to smile! Smiling helps you to relax and makes you come across as confident and approachable.

Strategy Three: Here is what I have to sell

Bring along extra copies of your resume, reference letters, and certificates to “back up” your resume as well as other supporting documents which will help set the foundation of credibility. It could be a rather clumsy and awkward moment should the interviewer ask for supporting documents and you do not have it with you. You may also wish to bring along a notepad for taking notes.

Strategy Four: Sales Presentation

Your main goal here is to impress and convince the interviewer that you are the right fit for the job. You need to be specific here and emphasize your achievements and skills that particularly relate to the position.

Listen carefully to what is being asked; take a few quick seconds to think it over and then answer. Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question. It is alright to take a few moments of silence to gather your thoughts before answering. Try not to "beat around the bush" or take a long time to give the answer the interviewer is seeking.

Strategy Five: Honesty is the best policy

State truthfully your qualifications and your skills. Bragging is one thing, outright lies will trap you. Can you remember all the details of the lie? Will you be able to remain consistent? In the event you are hired, it would be a disaster if your employer realises that you cannot perform as you had said you could.

Strategy Six: Close the deal

At the end of an interview, ask the interviewer, "Based on this interview, is there anything that would keep you from hiring me for this position?" Depending on the nature of the job and the interviewer, you may or may not get an indication then. If not, offer a firm handshake and make eye contact.

After you leave, always send a thank you letter to the interviewer immediately. If there were several people that interviewed you, send them each a thank you note. It is good to keep the letter short but to also reiterate your interest in the position and your confidence in your qualifications.

Don't call the employer immediately. If the employer said they would have a decision in a week, it is acceptable to call them in a week, again to thank them for the interview and reiterate your interest.

If you receive word that another candidate was chosen, you may also send a follow-up letter to that employer, again thanking him or her for the opportunity to interview for the position. Let them know that should another or similar position open in the future, you would love to have the opportunity to be interviewed again.

Don't know how to self-promote?

Here are some tips on how to effectively sell yourself to the interviewer.

- When answering questions, start with phrases such as “I believe”, “I am confident”, “I will bring to this position.” Always be sure of your own capabilities and present yourself with confidence.
- Keep your presentation short and sweet to around two minutes or so. Use positive words that enhance this selling opportunity such as dependable, team player, efficient, initiative, organised, good negotiator and focused.
- While you want to highlight your achievements, always be mindful of your tone so that you don't come across as bragging. There is a fine line between being confident about your accomplishments and being arrogant. Don't cross that line.
- Be prepared to answer behaviour-based questions as this is an increasingly common method of interviewing. Behaviour-based questions could begin with *“Tell me about a time when...”* or *“Give me an example of a situation where...”* In answering such questions, be sure that you have concrete evidence of situations where you've demonstrated creativity, initiative, excellent project management skills and/or strong capabilities in problem-solving and conflict resolution.
- Prepare and ask questions that will help you to better understand what the recruiter is looking for in a candidate. This in turn will help you “sell” yourself in a manner that appeals to the recruiter. Some examples include:
 - What skills should one have to excel in this position?
 - What personal attributes are you looking for in a candidate for this job?
 - How would you describe the company's culture?
 - What type of employees will fit in well with the culture?
- Show a keen interest in the position by explaining at the end of the interview how you will fit well into this job with your qualifications, experiences and personal attributes.