



Nail the Interview: New Process Awaits Job Seeker

As the old saying goes, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." For job seekers, truer words were never spoke. Particularly today, when job openings attract applicants like honey does bees, setting yourself apart from the legions of others applying for the same position can prove quite difficult.

A greater number of graduates paired with an oversaturated market of individuals looking for new work has only increased the competition. More than ever before, job seekers are fighting an uphill battle to get themselves noticed, a battle that seemingly grows more demanding with each passing day.

Such a reality only heightens the importance of making a strong first impression, one that will make you stick out in the interviewer's mind, hopefully earning you a second interview along the way. While nearly everyone is aware that appearance and education go a long way toward making a positive impression, there are several other areas job seekers can address to make themselves stand out from the rest.

- Preparation. In addition to knowing all about yourself, you should know about the job you're applying for as well. Candidates who enter interviews with little or no knowledge of the open position rarely, if ever, get a second interview, much less a job offer. Research the position as well as the company. Don't be afraid to write down questions that might arise during that research and refer to them throughout the interview. Doing so will show the interviewer you're genuinely interested in the position and the company, setting you apart from applicants just looking for a job. Include in your research any recent company developments that perhaps made headlines in the news.
- Expect the unexpected. A side effect of the boom in job seekers is that recruiters are expanding their horizons to better whittle the applicant pool. While in the past interviews were more predictable with respect to questions asked, the wide and largely qualified applicant pool many job openings create has forced recruiters to ask less predictable questions to help them choose between otherwise equally qualified candidates. Therefore, preparing for such questions can be a great way to set yourself apart.





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In addition to the more traditional inquiries, topics such as conflict resolution, problem solving and how well you work with others are now subjects many recruiters prefer to broach. The more specific your answers, the more likely you are to stick out in the interviewer's mind. A popular trend among many interviewers is presenting hypothetical situations and asking applicants how they might deal with such situations. Think about the job before your interview and what situations might arise that the interviewer could present hypothetically. Strong responses to such questions will certainly make you stand out.

- Be mindful of mannerisms. Though most job seekers are smart enough to look the part with a nice suit and haircut, many don't realize their behavior during the actual interview. Regardless of how nice your suit is or how good your hair looks, fidgeting, failing to make eye contact and even taking too many notes while the interviewer is speaking can distract the interviewer from you and what you have to say. Even if your insides are racing, appear as calm and collected as possible on the outside.

If offered a glass of water, take it. You'll want to speak as clearly as possible anyway. When responding to questions, be mindful of how long you've been speaking. While you'll want to avoid "yes" or "no" answers, rambling on will only make you appear nervous and ill-prepared.

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