

Making a Positive and Lasting Impression

Aneurin Bevan said:

“why look into the crystal ball, when you can read the book”

Consider this at each stage of the process. A client is always likely to favour someone who has a proven track record... “has been there and done it”, rather than take a risk on someone who is unproven. Ensure that you always illustrate your achievements in as quantifiable a way as is possible, both in your CV, and in interviews.

It is one thing to know what potential employers are looking for. It is quite another to communicate how you are suited to meet those requirements. You may only have one hour to convey these attributes. How should you go about it?

Some of the pointers detailed below are quite simplistic. Whilst they may seem like stating the obvious, the implication of not heeding them will be that a lasting, but negative impression will be created.

- Find out who the interview is with and establish their roles and responsibilities. This will help you anticipate the questions you may be asked.
- Research the company. Nowadays, due partly to the internet, there is no excuse for not having a good grasp of the company’s business, products and competitors, prior to the interview. You should be able to relate your experiences and skills to their business.
- If possible, talk to people who are employed by the company or have worked there in the past. Ask them about the culture, challenges and needs of the organisation. This “insider” perspective will help you create a dynamic interchange of sharing information, thoughts and observations.
- Arrive early. Allow time for traffic, parking etc. Allow for the possibility that when you present yourself to reception, they may be unable to get the message through as the PA is engaged etc. If you are late, ring the client to let them know. Try to speak directly to the client, rather than leave a message.
- Dress appropriately. Whilst dress codes may differ between organisations, we’d advise you to err on the side of conservatism. Whilst we all know exceptions to this rule, be guided by the attire of

business leaders appearing on TV. 9 times out of 10 this means a business suit. Aim to look impeccable.

- Smile and make eye contact, both when you initially shake hands and throughout your meeting. The first 30 seconds are important... make a confident start.
- At the start of the interview, establish how long has been allocated for the meeting. Don't risk running out of time before you communicate your "best story".
- Treat the interview as a one-off. Use every weapon available to you in conveying a positive impression. If you don't do well, it will be a one-off!
- Highlight examples of your work and provide tangible results of the business (such as revenue and profit increases, market share increases, customer retention etc). Be prepared to detail items such as turnover, value of contracts won, size of teams managed etc. Have examples ready to back up each statement. Try and relate the examples to the client's business. Think in terms of adding, "what that means to you is... xyz" to each example. If you are not able to do this, the client may be thinking, "so what?"
- Be succinct, honest and direct in your manner... don't do all the talking.
- Give convincing answers... ask good questions (see **Questions to Answer** and **Questions to Ask**).