

Part 5: How to perform well in an interview

To succeed in interviews, you need to be able to do 3 things:

- ✓ Demonstrate that you understand the job that needs to be done
- ✓ Clearly explain how you have the right skills and experience to do the job
- ✓ Satisfy the interviewers that you will fit in

1. The psychology of interviews

Unfortunately, interviews aren't very good at predicting who will succeed in the vacant job. Research has shown that interviews are typically as accurate as flipping a coin at predicting job success!

They are also a highly subjective process and are subject to a high degree of bias. The main biases are given below.

1. The power of first impressions - the handshake is everything

Human beings don't need to know someone in order to believe that they know someone. The first impression really does count - this is often called the Primacy effect. Consider the following experiment:

Psychologists compared the results of trained interviewers conducting a series of interviews with a series of strangers watching just the first 15 seconds on video of each interview - simply showing the applicant as he or she knocks on the door, comes in, shakes the hand of the interviewer, sits down, and the interviewer welcomes the person.

The ratings of the strangers were very similar to those of the interviewers. On 9 out of the 11 traits the applicants were being judged on, the 15 second video observers significantly predicted the outcome of the interview.

2. The Halo effect - Success in one thing means success in general

An applicant who is well turned out, pleasant and self-confident without conceit is likely to be thought to have the skills needed for the job whether he or she has them or not.

Note that the reverse is also true - **the Horns effect**. A negative perception is generalised to other aspects of the person. For example, if a person is overweight, this can be generalised into greed, lack of control and lack of social ability. If a candidate is nervous at interview, they may be generalised as always nervous.

3. People like me

Research has clearly shown that interviewers and supervisors have an unconscious tendency to favour people who are physically and professionally similar to them.

4. The Beauty Bias

Research in cognitive psychology shows that job candidates who are more attractive physically have substantially higher odds of being hired. This is unfair, but true. This is one reason why you must try to look your absolute best. Though you can't control how your parents made you, you can control your clothes, hairstyle, make-up, and grooming. Use them to your greatest advantage.