

Increase the Odds of a Job

Failing to prepare for an interview means you are preparing to fail to get the post, writes Margaret Harris.

Most people know that they need to be on their best behaviour when they go for a job interview — dress smartly, be polite, make eye contact, be confident but not arrogant — in short, behave the way your mother taught you to.

Presenting yourself in this professional manner can only help your cause — to get a job. In the present climate, when jobs are in short supply, candidates need to be absolutely sure that they are not sabotaging their chances of getting the job of their dreams.

However, one candidate that Janice — a manager at a communications firm and who did not want to be named — interviewed had no such fears.

“He walked into the interview with a cup of tea, which he proceeded to spill all over the table. He sat back in his chair, folded his arms and all but put his feet up on the table. He had very little to offer in terms of skills, but believed we would be crazy not to hire him.

“In fact, his behaviour was so bizarre that I kept thinking we were on Candid Camera. Needless to say, he did not get the job.”

According to CNN.com, some of the mistakes that candidates make in interviews include:

Answering a cellphone and asking the interviewer to leave her own office because it was a “private” conversation.

Telling the interviewer that he wouldn’t be able to stay with the job long because he thought he might get an inheritance if his uncle died — and his uncle wasn’t “looking too good”.

Asking the interviewer for a lift home after the interview.

Telling the interviewer he was fired for beating up his last boss.

When offered food before the interview, he declined, saying he didn’t want to line his stomach with grease before going out drinking.

Saying she was a “people person” not a “numbers person” — the interview was for an accounting position.

So, what should you do when being interviewed for a new position?

According to Tracey Czakan, Kelly Group’s marketing executive, beyond the basics of being on time for the interview, dressing appropriately, shaking hands with a potential employer and turning your cellphone off, there are other important criteria that candidates should be aware of.

“These criteria assist the employer in determining the best employment ‘fit’,” she says.

Candidates should always be well prepared for the interview. They should take the time to gather some knowledge of the company’s history, goals and activity as this will prove to the interviewer that they want to be a part of the organisation. “A candidate should know the different aspects of the job they are applying for, the company’s core business and vision, as well as the industry conditions in which it operates,” says Czakan.

But it is important that this knowledge is expressed appropriately.

“Candidates can be overly talkative, litter their speech with ‘like’, ‘you know what I mean’ and ‘um’ or speak in monosyllables, all of which is frustrating for the inter-

viewer. Furthermore, a candidate can be vague and uncertain in his or her answers,” says Czakan.

She also suggests that candidates should not discuss salaries and benefits upfront.

“But if a discussion on salary arises, the candidate should be able to specify an amount that is market competitive.”

Your attitude can also make a big difference to whether you are offered a job or not.

John Tschohl, the founder and president of the Service Quality Institute, says a positive attitude can keep you employed, as well as contributing to getting the job in the first place.

“Be positive. No one — not your customers, your co-workers or your managers — wants to associate with someone who is always negative or complaining. On the other hand, a can-do attitude and a smile go a long way towards building solid relationships and earning the respect of others.”

Honesty is paramount — and fabricating work histories or qualifications will not end well.

Czakan advises that “most companies have credential checks, instantly disqualifying dishonourable candidates”.

Preparation, a courteous attitude, honesty and a few pertinent questions will all contribute to making the interview more pleasant and will increase your chances of getting the job.