

How to manage the Interviewer

Interviewing is a complex process where personal dynamics take centre stage. By developing an awareness of the main personality types, you can help you improve your ability to adapt to the interviewer's individual style. Developing such a flexible approach can impact on the direction and style of the interview and ultimately its outcome.

Below are the four most common personalities you are likely to encounter in your job search:

Friendly and Relaxed

Some interviewers have a relaxed, almost casual approach to interviews. This is a very good way to put applicants at their ease but if you are not used to this style, it can be very easy to be let your guard down and perhaps to reveal a little more than you intended.

When faced with a "chummy" interviewer, always maintain a professional approach. Don't get too comfortable and keep in mind the key strengths you would like to communicate during the course of the interview.

Nervous and Inexperienced

It is easy to forget that many interviewers have not had any formal training. This is particularly true in small and medium sized enterprises, where interview skills are often learnt "on the job". If an interviewer appears uncomfortable or nervous, this is probably because they are inexperienced and are out of their comfort zone. Frequently, inexperienced interviewers talk liberally about the company and role and leave very little time for the job applicant to expand on their experience. Other times, the interviewer may ask closed questions that really only require a yes or no answer.

In these situations, try to take the lead. Expand on what skills and experience you are bringing to the table. This is delicate balancing act as you do not want to appear too forceful.

Distracted

If an interviewer has a large volume of candidates to interview, they may well become tired and consequently less engaged towards the end of the day. Another thing to bear in mind is that interviewers are often under pressure to meet other work deadlines and consequently may appear distracted at the initial stages of the interview as their mind is still on other projects.

In these situations, your best approach is to maintain your self confidence and to concentrate on giving concise answers - highlighting your achievements and backing them up with solid examples. Remember to show your enthusiasm for the job.

Stress interview

Stress interviews are designed to see how you act under pressure. Questions are asked to throw you off balance and to see how you can cope with the unexpected. When faced with such questions, it is important to remain professional and not to take the line of questioning personally. Regardless of what question is asked, it can be turned to your own advantage. For example when asked "Why have you been out of work so long?" your initial reaction might be to become upset or indeed indignant. Instead why not focus attention on what you have achieved since leaving your job?....e.g. doing an advanced Excel course, getting involved in your local business association etc. Stay calm and positive.

Conclusion

In an ideal world, interviewers would all be trained on how to conduct the perfect interview. They wouldn't get tired, lose concentration, or recruit in their own image. The reality is, however, that interviewers are human with their own quirks and idiosyncrasies. Understanding this, and adapting your style to each unique situation, could ease your path and greatly enhance your performance on the day.

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of *Interview Techniques*, a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with *Recruit Ireland* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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