

How to succeed at interview

Estate agents preach 'location, location, location' whilst sales recruiters on the other hand advocate 'preparation, preparation, and preparation' before facing an interview for a sales job. Fast re-wind a thousand years or so and the famous Chinese general Sun Tzu taught his men "know your enemy before the battle. For if you know your enemy and know yourself," he wrote, "you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." But that wily victor of a thousand encounters also counseled, "If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat." Whilst an interview is never as deadly as a battle, the principles of preparation and self-knowledge are the same. So be prepared.

IF you are working with a professional sales recruitment company, they will help you with broad background information on their client. But they will also expect you to do your own research because your response to the interviewer's questions will be more natural if you have put the effort in beforehand. Interviewers do not take kindly to candidates who know nothing about their businesses or the position they want to fill because it suggests that they are not interested in the opportunity they are presenting. So find out about the company and the job role.

The intelligent and skilled candidate will use the interview process and structure to

demonstrate why they are a competent sales person worthy of attention. A good sales recruitment company will brief a candidate on how to do this - and in its most basic form it can be assumed that an interview will be very similar to a sales call. It will have a beginning, middle and an end - which translates into establishing a customer's needs, highlighting the features, advantages and benefits of a product or service before finally closing the sale. This is what interviews are for. They provide the opportunity as well as the structure for both interviewer and candidate to converse and exchange ideas and information to bring about a successful commercial outcome to the encounter.

Skilled candidates will bring their CVs to life for the interviewer and in doing so will also overcome the objections that are going to be raised and answer the questions in such a way that they reflect positively on their applications.

If you are already in sales, you will know from experience how to structure a sales call - an interview is no different except that on this occasion YOU are representing the 'product' you know best, the job in hand is to sell yourself - relevant to the needs of the business you hope to work for. If you have made an application via a sales recruitment company you will start out with an advantage over other applicants who have merely been circling jobs in the classified columns. Sales recruitment companies who do their jobs properly are well versed in briefing candidates on how to achieve their best. So whether you are an experienced sales person or a beginner, you will narrow the odds in favour of being successful at interview if you make contact and take on board the advice they will be only too happy to give you.