

Swindale Parks Recruitment – TOP TIPS – helping you stand out from the crowd and land the perfect career move.

Email Address

Use an appropriate email address for job hunting. Avoid using a comedy email address or putting it on your CV. It could cost you an interview or worse your ideal job! First impressions are very important and applying for your next Sales or Marketing job from ivorbigun or juicy Lucy@.... Is just wrong, wrong, wrong! Job hunting isn't a joke, it's a serious business.

Rejection Rate

Being rejected by companies is disappointing and frustrating. Reduce your rejection rate by applying for positions that fit your skills and experience. Don't apply to be a head chef at a Michelin starred restaurant if you've got 6 months experience at a fast food outlet. Swindale Parks are all for ambition and career advancement but be realistic about the kind of jobs that you can and can't do. You can waste a lot time and positive energy applying for jobs that you are unsuitable for. Recruitment is a costly process meaning most recruiters will work to strict selection parameters, giving them little room to think as creatively as you.

CV

Sales person or not your CV is a sales document, or put another way your own personal promotional brochure, most likely to be read when you are not present. The impact of both spelling and grammatical errors could be a one way ticket to the shredder. Get a friend with an eye for detail to proof read your CV before you apply. Secondly the devil is in the detail so make sure your dates add up – boring as it is you only have to do it once and it will avoid any awkward moments mid interview! Oh, and wherever possible keep it to a maximum of two pages

Covering Letter

Some consider them old fashioned and unnecessary, but a well worded 'covering letter' can set you apart from your job seeking competitors. The trend it appears is to send out as many CV's as possible with no real thought as to why you are suitable for each of the roles applied for. An effective covering letter should make it easy for the recruiter to understand why you are applying and why you are suitable for the role. If you aren't able to justify this to yourself maybe you should reconsider your application (see Top Tip No. 2)

First impressions count

Your covering letter has captured the imagination, your CV has aroused their interest now all you have to do is back up all that you have promised at interview - unfortunately all of your hard work could be undone in a matter of seconds! It is a commonly held belief that the opinions we form about people are done so within a minute of meeting them, so this is a vital time in the interview and could determine whether you sink or swim.

So, first and foremost make sure you look and feel the part. Pride in your personal appearance will only have a positive effect on your confidence levels. Think about your introduction, and prepare to deliver it with confidence and with a smile – "hello....., it's a pleasure meeting you" – is a safe bet. Plan to arrive 10 minutes early, having to start an interview with "I'm so sorry for being late", is to be avoided at all costs. Of course if you are running late through no fault of your own then let your interviewer know.

Making a positive "first impression" is essential and will set the scene for a positive interview experience BUT alone it won't secure you the role.....we'll come on to that

Questions, questions

The interview is in full swing and having made a great first impression how do you maintain your momentum? Perhaps surprisingly we feel it's not just about impressing your interviewer with your insightful answers to those tricky questions being posed, you can contribute to a successful outcome for both parties by taking a proactive role in the meeting. How? Firstly you may need to change how you view the interview process, think of it as a two way street. It is as much a chance for you to ask questions about your interviewer, the role and the company as it is for them to quiz you – more of an exchange of information than an interrogation.

Having made this change in thinking just how are you going to achieve what you want out of the meeting? Preparation is the key, arriving at the interview with a list of suitable questions is always a good start, by suitable we mean the kind of questions that will increase your understanding of the role etc and not "How long do I get for lunch?" or "What are the working hours?" Also try to integrate your questions into the discussion rather than treating them as a script, simply reading them out can effect the flow of the conversation and whilst help you gather important information may quickly erode any rapport that has been developed between you and the interviewer. Remember your objective as well as promoting your own features and benefits is to find out everything you need to know that will allow you to make a considered decision about whether you progress your application further. Your questions will not only do this but they also demonstrate your interest in the opportunity and say something positive about how you conduct yourself in a business situation

Interview Don'ts

If you are smartly presented, adhere to basic social etiquette and contribute sensibly to a progressive meeting then you are well on your way to your new sales or marketing job. However there are some blunders to avoid:

- 1.** Don't be late, but if you can't avoid it make the call – and don't say it's because you overslept!
- 2.** Don't drop your guard - your interviewer may be relaxed but you need to keep your wits about you - so, answer questions concisely, without waffling, and maintain a professional body posture at all times.
- 3.** Don't think you can wing it; preparation is a must – if you know very little about your prospective future employer then this just makes you look ignorant (and quite frankly you don't deserve to receive a job offer).
- 4.** Don't be negative, especially about former employers or bosses, this is always frowned upon.
- 5.** Don't lie – by all means emphasise the positive and minimize the negative, but most important of all be honest.
- 6.** Don't dress down – if you look the part then you'll feel the part, and if you feel the part you'll perform well in the interview. The shinier your shoes the more confident you'll feel – trust me. How many times have you heard the adage "first impressions count".
- 7.** Don't try and dominate the meeting - but play your part – after all, interviewing is a two way process. Ask the interviewer questions that will enable 'you' to decide whether you want to work for him or her.
- 8.** Don't provide a reference from a disgruntled former employer or colleague – choose someone who has lots of positive things to say about you.
- 9.** Don't forget to close! Sales person or not why walk away from the meeting not understanding how you have performed? Ask the interviewer the direct question, "am I the kind of person you are looking for?" You have the perfect opportunity, as they are sat right in front of you- don't leave it to chance!

Killer Questions

Picture the scene - the interview is going well, you are getting on famously with the interviewer and a job offer is so close that you can almost smell it - surely nothing can stop you fulfilling your destiny and claiming your prize!! Wrong – you haven't allowed for the killer interview question!!! Every interviewer has one, a favourite 'teaser' designed to test your ability to think on the spot and react under pressure. The killer question will be the straw that breaks the camel's back for many an unsuspecting interviewee – make sure you are not one of them. To ensure you don't come unstuck with the finishing line in sight think about the kind of questions you may be asked and even rehearse your answers. Here are some to get you thinking.....

1. What is your biggest weakness and how do you manage it?
2. What is your greatest strength and give me an example of how you have exploited it to your benefit?
3. Who will you miss most when you leave your current employer and why?
4. What do you have to offer that the other applicants don't?
5. What value will you add to my business?
6. I think you are over qualified for this job?
7. What would your priorities be in your first 12 months of the role?
8. I don't think you can do the job. Do you agree?
9. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
10. Describe a difficult situation you handled well??
11. Describe a difficult situation you handled badly?
12. Define profitability?

And our personal favourite and aptly numbered.....

13. What's 30% of 90!!!

How you respond is just as important as what you say, your preparation will allow you to be calm, relaxed and considered when put on the spot. Rather than appearing to jump in feet first and blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. Take a moment to collect your thoughts before confidently delivering your upbeat, positive answer.

If you can't work out what 30% of 90 is don't guess and don't prolong the agony – be honest and move on. The interviewer will appreciate your candour.

ABC Always Be Closing

"So, when do I start?" A question like that is about as blunt as you can get at the tail end of the interview and whilst it may not be subtle it certainly gets to the point of what the interview is really about. Closing an interview shouldn't just be considered the remit of sales professionals; it is really an exercise in common sense, not clever sales technique.

Closing isn't necessarily about walking away with a job offer; it certainly isn't about brow beating your interviewer into submission! It is however about understanding how you have performed and what happens next – what could be more common sense than that? Having invested all that effort researching the company, money in getting to the interview and time preparing yourself to perform to the best of your ability, why would you walk away from the meeting without knowing where you stand? If you can do that, you are closing and if you are closing your taking positive steps towards securing the job you want!

Theses tips are far from exhaustive but we hope they help. Happy Hunting!