



A complete Sales and Marketing Course that aims to give you the understanding, confidence and insight you need to perform to the best of your ability at interview.



Brian Cahill

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Effective
Interview Skills

How to Sell and Market Yourself

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Hi. I'm Brian Cahill.

I have over 30 years commercial experience with Gulf Oil, International Computers Limited, L.M. Ericsson, Philips and Siemens in IT, Sales and Marketing, Line and General Manager positions. I have also worked with the Management and Skills Training organisation delivering courses in Sales, Customer Service and Telephone Techniques.

I have also been involved in the Recruitment business working as Business Development Manager for a specialist consultancy targetting the IT, Finance and Legal sectors.

The information is based on my business knowledge and on my experience reviewing thousands of CV's and personally interviewing hundreds of candidates.

Most candidates represent themselves poorly on their CV and very many do not interview well - **despite having the credentials for the job**. In todays ruthlessly competitive markets, if you can't sell and market yourself in the face to face situation of an interview then I'm afraid you have little chance of success.

Knowing who you are, knowing how to write who you are and knowing how to verbally express who you are, are key to your success. Not one, not two **but all three**.

I hope my examples, suggestions and advice help you re-evaluate yourself and make a real difference to you. Getting a job is not easy - it's tough. However, it can of course be done. It just takes some time, some patience and some determination.

Best of luck!

BRIAN.

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INTRODUCTION



"Effective Interview Skills – How to Sell and Market Yourself" aims to give you the understanding, confidence and insight you need to perform to the best of your ability at interview.

Your CV and the interview itself are inextricably entwined. To someone who does not know you, your CV **is** you. Like it or not, they will have formed an opinion of you, and the person they believe they will meet at interview, based on the information contained in your CV.

If you have read **"Effective CV Writing – What Employers and Agencies Want to See"** you will know that your CV has brought you to this stage - and that is its primary function. But your CV - no matter how brilliant - will not get you a job. **YOU** get you a job. And you get a job at interview.

Face-to-face, in front of one person or several, with nowhere to hide, it is up to you to meet and exceed their expectations and to make sure that you create an image in their mind that you are the right person for the job - generally to the exclusion of all others.

So, is this about interview technique? Yes it is - but that's *not really* what it's about.

When you strip away everything else this is about selling - and this is a sales course. And what are we selling?

↓
YOU!

No matter what you are involved in, everybody sells, every day. And the biggest sales job is selling yourself successfully to people who don't know you. Exactly what happens at interview! If you follow the topics through you'll get some useful advice and guidance which can have a really positive influence on your performance at interview. But like most things in life it's directly proportional to the amount of effort you put in.

The people who do well at interview are the people who know themselves - and the time to find out whether you know yourself is when you're compiling your CV. If you haven't already done so I would strongly advise you to read **"Effective CV Writing –**

What Employers and Agencies Want to See” because here you will find out how to best represent yourself on paper. At interview you simply build on that foundation and confidently sell yourself face-to-face.

My guess is that if you're reading this then you're looking for help - otherwise why would you be here? And if you've taken that first step to search the web for advice then it should be a simple matter for you to judge whether *effectiveinterviewskills.com* is the place for you.

Remember, this is about selling and marketing yourself - not just about interview technique.

It's ferociously competitive out there so equip yourself with the tools and skills you need to sell yourself effectively, confidently and persuasively.

Success is not a given. It's earned.

Good luck!



Chapter One

WHY "EFFECTIVE"?

In business people want people who are effective. People who are capable, knowledgeable, confident, convincing and efficient.

Being effective comes from two sets of skills that make up your being

1 Knowledge Based Skills**2. Directional Skills**

Using the analogy of a bicycle...

**Knowledge Based Skills or
Power Based Skills**

- * Academic - Degree, PhD etc
- * Professional Body Qualification
- * Technical Qualifications

**Personal Skills or
Directional Skills**

Perceived abilities...

- * Speaking
- * Reading
- * Writing
- * Thinking
- * Reasoning
- * Listening
- * Creativity
- * Motivational
- * Leadership

These are often referred to as Input /
Output Skills

Combining the two within a solid frame gives us a strong, well-balanced machine with the rear wheel providing the power and the front wheel - the direction.



Power

Direction

**For maximum performance it is vital that the wheels are the same size.
In other words that your interpersonal skills match your knowledge
skills.**

But of course...

A bicycle is going nowhere unless you get on it and pedal! This takes effort - and this comes from your attitude. If you just want to freewheel everywhere you'll never meet any challenge head-on and overcome it. Pedal hard for the summit and achieve your goal. Meet the next challenge with the confidence you have gained and keep on going.



Chapter Two

STRUCTURE

Effective Interview Skills is a complete sales and marketing course and its approach is based on the following premise:-

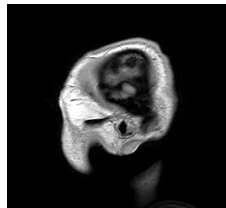
That in order to sell yourself you've got to...

1. Know **who** you are
2. Know **how to write** who you are
3. Know **how to express** who you are

If you can successfully do all three you will put yourself in an excellent position when it comes to getting a job.

Knowing Who You Are

This is, without doubt, the most complex, difficult and time -consuming part of the overall approach because it deals with intangible. What makes you, you? Your personality? Your genes? Your life experiences? Your enthusiasm for life? Without knowing yourself you cannot truly represent yourself either on paper or in reality.



An MRI scan revealing intense brain activity

There are many companies who will write your CV for you for a fee and I'm sure your CV will be top-quality. However it is my personal opinion that you can't effectively sell what someone who doesn't know you has written about you. Interviews are about selling yourself persuasively and about handling aspects about you that are written in your CV. It certainly takes a lot of the hard work away if you follow this route but all you'll really gain from it in the long run is a nicely presented CV not a rock-solid foundation of yourself that will be able to handle anything that comes your way at interview in a calm, controlled and winning manner.

Check out Johari's Window for an interesting approach to knowing who you are.

Knowing How To Write Who You Are

Your CV **is** you. At least until the interview takes place. So it had better be the best it can be at representing you because you won't get on if you don't stand out. "Effective CV Writing – What Employers and Agencies Want To See" shows you how to paint a picture of "you" in words...



... a picture of you that you will have no problem expressing in reality.

Knowing *How To Express Who You Are*



Communicating your message effectively is the final piece of the jigsaw. You need to understand what factors come into play when being interviewed. Once you understand them you can harness them to make sure you come across confidently and enthusiastically.

Preparing yourself to win at interview is not easy. It takes effort and stamina. It takes staying-power and determination. As in any race, you have to have the will to win.

If you have the will to win and the mental strength to follow a course from beginning to end this book is the right place for you. If you want a quick fix solution requiring little or no effort, this isn't the place.

Chapter Three

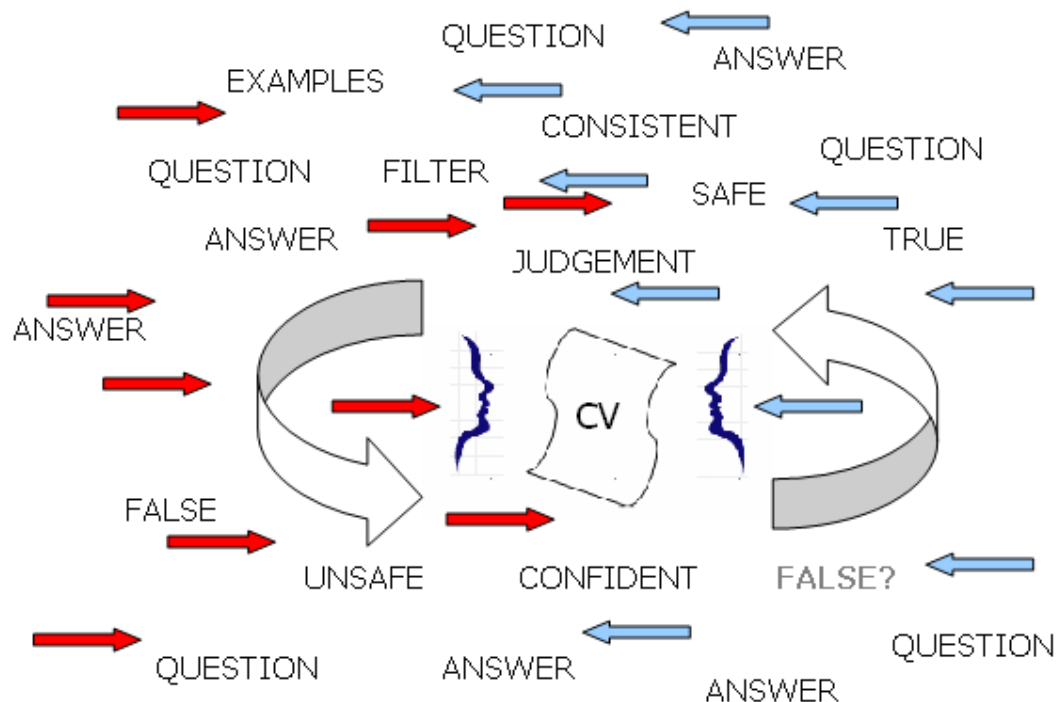
WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of the word **interview** is "an oral examination of an applicant for a job or college place". Its origin is from the French "*entrevue*", from *s'entrevoir* meaning 'see each other'

So there you have it - *an oral examination of you, taking place face-to-face.*

The word "oral" means this is about *communication* and the word "examination" infers a degree of *in-depth questioning*.

You will be subjected to questions about yourself, your skills, your experiences and your suitability **as represented by you in your submitted CV**. Your CV is therefore the basis of the interview.



There's a lot going on at an interview!

If you have prepared properly and know exactly what is stated on your CV then you'll have nothing to worry about. Of course, everyone worries about being asked a question they either don't know the answer to or just make a hash of it. The interviewer is unlikely to make a judgement based on one question.

Chapter Four

YOUR CV

Make no mistake, this is not about how to write a CV - it's about Marketing and Selling a product. And the product is YOU.

You won't get on if you don't stand out. So you must become your own best product.

This for some people is the beginning of the problem. It does not come naturally to many to be assertive or to be seen as promoting themselves. However, in the race for jobs there are not so many timid and shy candidates who win. **Self-deprecation, modesty and understatement don't result in employers and agencies beating a path to your door.**

You must learn to sell yourself, and your CV is the starting point. Just think... will the candidates you're in competition with be thinking the same? Or do you think they will be working hard at presenting themselves in the best light?

*No-one is advocating that your CV represents anything less than the truth about you, your experience and your abilities. **It's just that there are ways of presenting information about yourself.***

Research would indicate that most recruiters would, on average, spend less than two minutes reading a CV. Two minutes! Some, I would venture to suggest, are consigned to the waste-bin with nothing more than a quick glance.

Your challenge is to make the most of the window of opportunity to grab their attention before the window slams shut.



"Effective CV Writing – What Employers and Agencies Want To See" has been designed firstly to make you think, then to make you work and then to make you act. You must condition yourself to think like a recruiter.

Look at your current CV and answer this question... *would you employ you?*

The aim of the book is...

- To assist you in getting a job
- To raise your awareness of the main problems associated with CV writing
- To give you a basic framework you can apply to your own CV
- To provide you with a better understanding of the processes involved
- To help you get to interview stage
- and to convince you that *Everybody Lives By Selling Something*. In this case it is **YOU**. The information in this site won't get you a job. **You** get you a job.

It can help organise your knowledge, your experience, your skills, your wants - and assist you in avoiding the pitfalls and errors that many candidates make.



Stand out!

**The most unique selling point any person possesses,
no matter what the product or service,
is themselves.**

Writing your CV is not the end of the hard work, it is the beginning. Believe in yourself, put in the effort and you *will* succeed.

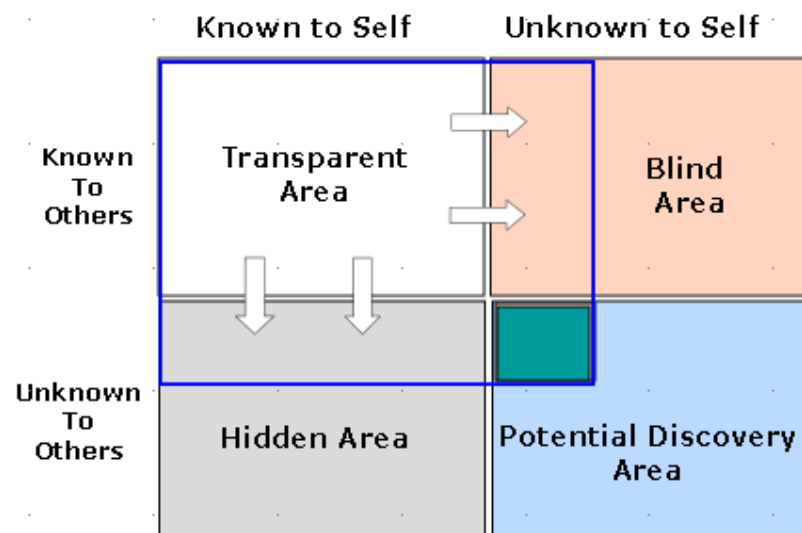
Chapter Five

KNOWING YOURSELF

Before you can successfully sell and market a product you have to be intimately familiar with its features, strengths, benefits and weaknesses. Selling and marketing yourself is no different.

Knowing yourself covers many aspects and the reason you need to know yourself is because of the necessity to interact with others. The better you know yourself the better you can adjust your approach if necessary at interview.

One way of considering yourself in relation to others is to see your personality as a series of windows, with each window representing a different aspect of your personality *as seen by yourself and as seen by others*. This is **Joharis Window**.

**The Transparent Area**

Things known to you AND known to others. There is free communication between you and others about these aspects of yourself.

The Blind Area

Things known to others but unknown to you. Others perceive these aspects in you but you are unaware of them yourself. These aspects can include both strengths and weaknesses you don't realise you have.

The Hidden Area

Things known to you but which you choose, for whatever reason, to hide from others. These may include your feelings about others that you keep to yourself.

The Potential Discovery Area

Things unknown to yourself AND unknown to others. Both you and others may be unaware of, or perhaps vague, about many aspects of your personality. It may just be an unusual set of circumstances that reveals a different aspect you didn't know you had and which others hadn't perceived in you before.

Clearly what you are attempting to do is increase the size of the transparent area by pushing out the restrictions imposed on your true personality by the Blind and Hidden areas. By doing this you move into the Potential Discovery area as represented by the small green box.

Discovering your true potential takes self-awareness, intelligent listening and a positive attitude to what you may perceive as criticism. It also involves working with friends and colleagues to find out how they feel about you - what things come across strongly to them? What weaknesses, what strengths do they see?

This has been a very simple look at Joharis Window. If you have found it interesting the web has in-depth articles and advice on the window and how to use it.

The point is...

You must be comfortable with yourself when you go for interview. And the better you know yourself the better you can sell yourself. However, the challenge, if there is one, is to accept the fact that dealing with unknown aspects of your personality requires an openness that may not come naturally. Try experimenting, you might just find out something that will pleasantly surprise you!

Chapter Six

BASIC INTERVIEW ERRORS

- **Failing to prepare**
Just no excuse. Do you want a job or don't you?
- **Not really interested in the job**
Don't waste your time and theirs
- **Only going to brush up my interview technique**
Rarely works - usually means you turn in a poor performance
- **Being late**
Just no excuse.
- **Don't know who you'll be meeting**
Just no excuse.
- **Don't know much about the company**
As above.
- **Inappropriate style of dress/shambling appearance**
How many times do you need to hear it? Appropriate dress! Casual can still be smart.
- **Talking too much**
They want to know about you. Your opportunity will come.
- **Talking too little**
They want to know who you are. That's the purpose of the interview.
- **No eye contact**
Come across at best as lacking in self-confidence. At worst - shifty.
- **Lack of enthusiasm**
If you make it to interview Do you think everyone else isn't interested in the job?
- **Overvaluing yourself**
Big mistake. Can be terminal.
- **Too laid back**

Sit up properly and look as though you mean business.

- **Lacking in energy**

Tired answers and tired manner are not generally up there in winning.

- **Unsure about self-achievements**

Why? Did you not write your CV yourself?

- **Talking in generalities**

Be specific.

- **Rambling answers**

Yawn.

- **Not turning off mobile**

Dear oh dear.

- **Taking call on mobile**

Rude. Arrogant. Terminal

- **Unfamiliarity with CV structure and content**

You did write it yourself didn't you!

- **Acting disinterested**

If the job doesn't interest you politely say so. Better for everyone.

- **Too casual**

Acting casual has no place in an interview

- **Too interested in perks**

Come across as shallow with completely wrong focus

- **Getting too technical**

Often applies to techies. Interviewer wants to understand the scope of what you can do not necessarily the intimate technicalities of Java programming

- **Talent vs arrogance**

Talented people can look arrogant if not careful. People buy talent not arrogance

- **Inability to sum yourself up**

Practise a two minute summary of yourself - the so called "elevator pitch".

- **Making inappropriate comments about your present or previous employer**

Absolute no-no. If you talk about them in disparaging terms you may do the same to the new company.

- **Suggesting how the company could be run better**

Unless specifically asked to provide an example don't do it.

- **Asking too many questions**

There's a time, place and limit.

- **Not knowing when to shut up**

Praestate, dicete, tacete. (Stand up, speak up, shut up!)

- **Poor listening ability**

Listening is hard. It is an active pursuit and requires sharp brainwork. Fail to listen and you'll fail. Full stop.

- **Don't look like a team player...**

Special Aptitudes:

The habit of wide reading, an ability to think logically, a skill to assemble facts and to communicate findings articulately. The health and vigour of an accomplished athlete.

Travel:

I have lived in Kenya, Zambia, the Lebanon, Lesotho, Thailand, the Phillipines and the United Kingdom

Publications:

Who owns and controls the mass media in the US and Britain? Is its ownership satisfactory from the viewpoint of safeguarding democracy?

The New World information order in the light of economic policy

Nationalism – Is it a myth?

South Africa – a critical analysis.

Team player?? You decide.

- **Don't know the job specification or requirements**

Why on earth not?!

Chapter Seven

IMPRESSIONS



Everyone we meet creates an impression on us - whether you meet them socially or in business. Their qualities and attitudes to things are, however, mostly internal and can't be seen. The impression they leave on us therefore is mostly governed by external appearances. Very simply, the impression they leave is either "good" or "bad".

Someone who leaves a good impression tends to be liked and respected.

Someone who leaves a bad impression tends to be disliked and distrusted.

The problem is that *you form a mental set very quickly. Often on information that is misinterpreted.*

The first 4 Minutes

Research indicates that 4 minutes is the time it takes to form an impression. And once formed, that impression is very difficult to change. After 4 minutes you will have made up your mind about that person **and that initial impression will stay until you are proved wrong.**

But of course YOU create an impression about yourself every time you meet someone for the first time - as will inevitably be the case at interview. If you start badly it is going to be an uphill battle all the way - all the messages are negative. If you start well - it is relatively plain-sailing, the messages are all positive.

When you meet face to face all sorts of parameters will be measured - consciously and subconsciously...

- Your appearance / grooming. This will be noticed first. Dress appropriately - today's business environment is no longer suit and tie but even casual dress can and should be smart.
- The physical greeting. This has got to be genuine and not contrived. A firm handshake - not necessarily crushing grip - is vital. No limp or sweaty handshakes please!
- Your smile (or lack of). Can't be substituted by words. An engaging smile is one of the strongest communication forms.

- Your speech. Should be clear and measured. Avoid being loud - take your lead from the interviewer. Avoid mumbling!
- Your opening line. Should be short and direct. Perhaps you have been asked about your journey there or a comment on the weather has been made. Try and think of possible topics - current news items for instance that could make for an initial opener. Reply calmly - then shut up!
- Your eye contact (or lack of). Like the smile, eye contact is one of the most potent forms of communication. And it doesn't lie! Make sure that you look the interviewer straight in the eye while initially shaking their hand and then maintain eye contact throughout. Nobody is saying you have to stare-down your opposite number but lack of eye contact makes people look uncomfortable and as if they have something to hide.
- Your enthusiasm for the meeting. You're going for a job goddammit. Be enthusiastic! If you can't be enthusiastic what are you doing there in the first place?

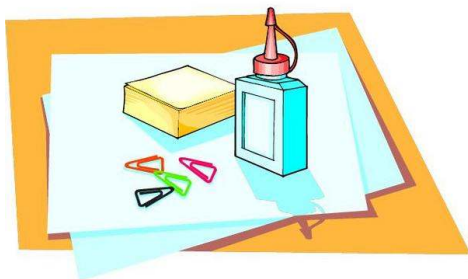
A lot of decisions are going to be made very quickly... Do I like this person? Do they like me? Can we form a lasting relationship? Is this going to be a worthwhile use of my time?

Body Language

Dr. Albert Mehrabian, currently Professor Emeritus of Psychology at UCLA, is best known for his publications on the relative importance of verbal and nonverbal communication - otherwise known as the 55-38-7 rule. In other words...

- **55%** of the message we convey to other people is conveyed through **Body Language**
- **38%** is formed through the **Tone of your voice**
- **7%** only - is conveyed through **Words**

So... Body Language is an extremely powerful communicator!



Body Language

As you've read, Body Language is vitally important to making a good first impression. When we communicate we use Words, Tone of Voice and Body Language to provide the delivery of our message.

Remember...

Words - 7%

Tone of Voice 38%

Body Language 55%

So what makes up Body Language?

In simple terms...

1. Posture

The way you carry yourself says volumes about who you are. Your posture can indicate interest, disinterest, emotion, self-belief, perceived status. This last one is interesting because it will change depending on who we're with. You may be a leader within a certain group of people but defer to others when the group comprises different members.

At interview you are aiming to create a good, positive rapport between you and the interviewer. And research would show that when people are at ease with one another they subconsciously adopt similar postures and use similar gestures.

2. Territory

All of us are surrounded by a zone or space which we regard as *our personal space*. I'm sure you've been in a situation face-to-face with someone where you feel that they're standing just a bit too close - it becomes a little uncomfortable, but not necessarily threatening.

There are generally regarded to be 4 personal areas which differ by their distance away from you:-

- **Intimate** - you allow people to come within 15 - 20 centimetres of you
- **Personal** - you like someone but not intimately and will allow them within 50 to 100 centimetres of you
- **Business** - generally between 1 and 3 metres it covers business meetings and social gatherings
- **Public** - over 3 metres. You don't know people and need to keep your distance until you are made to feel more comfortable

You must remember that you are always going to be more relaxed when in your own environment. But interviews are rarely, if ever, on your territory are they?

And of course...

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression!



Chapter Eight

YOUR VOICE

Your voice is the second most important element of communication -

Body Language

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-

From the picture... do you believe the message conveyed by the person is more likely to be positive or negative? Whoever she's talking to can't see her - all they have to go on is her tone of voice (she's smiling, so likely to be appealing) and the words she uses (can't hear her but a subjective judgement would lead me personally to believe that the interaction with the customer is going to be pleasant and positive)!

The same applies at interview - your voice is a powerful communicator.. Use it positively and you'll be well on your way, use it negatively and you almost certainly fail to be selected.

VARIETY OF VOICE

So what makes up your voice? Four elements...

- **Pitch**



The pitch of your voice can be a significant determinant in how you are perceived at interview. A lower pitched voice is generally regarded as being more attractive, conveying a picture of someone who is affable, influential and easy to listen to. A high-pitched voice conveys someone who is excitable, tense or anxious - qualities you don't want to portray! Practise deep breathing while waiting for the interview to begin.

- **Power**



This is about inflection and emphasis **NOT VOLUME!** Try saying these words out loud...

Hello? *Hello.* *Hello!*

The word is the same in each case but the meaning conveyed is completely different. There are many sources of information regarding exercises you can do to improve your use of inflection. Take a look and see what you can learn. Using inflection conveys the power you want without the volume. A must to avoid is speaking in a monotone. Implies that you're not enthusiastic or passionate about anything - including yourself.

- **Pace**



The key to speaking at an appropriate pace is remembering that you need to speak at a rate that allows the interviewer to understand what you're actually saying. Listening is a two-step process - you have to physically **hear** what is said and then **translate** what you have heard into meaning. If you speak too quickly, this vital step of the

process is lost. Unless you are a naturally even-paced speaker, slow down and don't come across as excited. Enthusiasm at an interview is fine - excitement is not.

and lastly...

- ***Pause***



The use of the pause is an art which must be practised. But many people are not comfortable with silence and so fill the gap with meaningless words which only serve to weaken their point or reply. You may find yourself at interview searching for a word. Don't blather with fillers - pause (it may seem like an eternity), breathe in and you'll find with practise that you think faster and can retrieve the appropriate word.

Be as expressive as possible when you speak and remember to smile. Speak in short sentences. Be focussed. Use silence to your advantage. Use it to think ahead; use it to give the interviewer a break from listening.

Use the 4 "P"'s to your advantage. They can help you win!

Chapter Nine

SELLING & BUYING

Your interviewer has the task of buying. They are in the market to buy the services of someone who can perform the duties required of the role. To buy someone who is skilled, best qualified and, in their judgement, the best fit.

So if **they** are buying **you** must be selling. And you win simply by creating a picture of that person in their mind.



You must also remember that whether they are recommending the candidate for further interview or making the final decision they are likely to be under some degree of stress - no-one wants to be seen to have made a wrong decision, especially when it comes to recruiting people.

They may also be fitting in a number of interviews in the one day. Interviewing in a thorough, professional manner is tiring; it involves a lot of listening, probing, interpreting and mental note-taking. This *may* mean that they don't always hear or interpret everything you say as clearly as *you* think it comes across.

Minimise miscommunication by...

- Thinking before you speak. Phrase out what you have to say in short, simple sentences. Remain alert
- Do not volunteer information. Just provide the information needed to answer the question
- Get and keep to the point
- Stay positive. Never say or imply anything about a past employer that is less than complimentary

Being face-to-face is not something to be afraid of. It is a natural part of the business process. Be prepared. Be confident. Be enthusiastic!

Chapter Ten

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Many candidates have either no experience of or no clear idea of what may transpire in an interview. We hope these hints and tips will help you achieve a more effective interviewing technique.

Before the interview...

- **Find out** as much as you can about the company.

Use the web, use the recruitment agency if applicable, use any contacts you may have. Try to find out about sales, number of employees, competitors, products and plans for the future. Check for any advertising they may be doing.

- **Select** an appropriate style of dress.

This can be a little difficult to judge in today's casual dress code market. First impressions still last and interviews are of a serious nature. I would suggest a smart, professional look.

- **Develop** a list of questions to ask when invited.

There is nothing worse than to be given the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge by asking some searching questions and to have nothing to say.

- **Make sure you bring** several copies of your CV - just in case!
- **Make absolutely certain** you know the exact location of the interview and how to get there.

IF you know you are going to be late ring and let either your recruitment agency if applicable know so they can inform their client or ring directly yourself. **DO NOT** bother to turn up! Your recruitment agency won't touch you and their client won't either.

- **Arrive** ten or fifteen minutes early.

Absorb the atmosphere. Read anything on tables and walls. This time will

allow you to relax, reduce your anxiety and mentally prepare. Take a few deep breaths and think of something pleasant.

- **Make sure** you know the name of the person who is interviewing you.



-
- **TURN OFF your mobile, i-phone, blackberry etc! But.. if you have forgotten to do so and it rings - DO NOT TAKE THE CALL!**

(A candidate once did this to me at interview. It ended there!)

Chapter Eleven

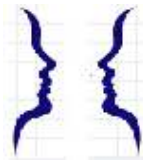
THE INTERVIEW ITSELF

This is the moment of truth - you're face to face and the interview is about to start. Remember - this is about information exchange and assessment. Statements you make will be compared to your written CV. Verbal *and* non-verbal communication will take place. You win or lose at interview.

- **Start** on a positive note.
 - a firm handshake, good eye contact, a sincere smile and a friendly greeting will get things going your way.
- **Be prepared** for small talk.
- **Research** shows that interviewers can sometimes be under stress when they conduct the interview – particularly if they are fitting a number of interviews into a packed working day or if they are not well-used to professionally interviewing candidates. This may mean that they don't hear or interpret everything you say as clearly and correctly as *you* think it comes across.
- **Minimise** miscommunication by...
 - Thinking before you speak. Phrase out what you have to say in short, simple sentences. Remain alert.
 - Do not volunteer information. Just provide the information needed to answer the question.
 - Get and keep to the point.
 - Stay positive. Never say or imply anything about a past employer that is less than complimentary
- **Don't be afraid to speak up.**

If there is something you're unsure of... say so. If there's something you don't understand... ask. If your interviewer seems to be deliberately provocative give a reasoned response if you disagree – they may just be testing your reaction. It is far better to get these things out in the open early in the process than let them become obstacles later on.

Face to Face



Picture this...

You have your interview. You've done all your research. You have your list of questions. You've rehearsed the interview over and over again in your mind. And now you're sitting in reception waiting...

- Are you making polite conversation with the receptionist?
- Are you going to be greeted by someone who is going to escort you to your interviewer?
- Is your interviewer going to meet and greet you personally and escort you to the interview room?
- Are you looking at your surroundings and making judgements as to what type of company they are?
- Are you re-reading your CV?
- Are you re-reading the job-description?
- Are you calm? Controlled? Prepared? Ready?

This is where the interview starts - not in the interview room or office. (In reality the interview started in your mind long before you even reached the interview location).

In short, you must be prepared for all eventualities and be able to make in-flight corrections as necessary without becoming flustered or phased. You are meeting face-to-face and you must be ready if you are to do well.

- **Be who you are.**
Avoid trying to guess what the interviewer wants to hear. Experienced interviewers will see through this.
- **Avoid politics and religion**
... unless you have taken them at primary degree level. Do not tell jokes.
- **Do not take notes.**
You cannot write, listen and speak at the same time.
- **Wait for the interviewer to discuss salary and benefit options.**
They will want to know what your expectations are, but try and avoid being absolute – give a range instead. If asked what your current salary package is, give a clean answer. Do not hedge or become evasive, it makes employers edgy.
- **End the interview cleanly.**
If you like what you have heard and seen and want to be considered –

remember this is an opportunity for the company to “sell” you as well – tell them of your interest.

- **There is no such thing as an “informal” interview in reality.** Even if this is how the interview is portrayed be as prepared as if it was your first meeting.

Remember the purpose of the interview at all times. Your prospective employer wants to know three things above all...

- Can you do the job?
- Will you do the job?
- Will you fit in to the organisation?

Questions

There are two aspects to questions:-

1. **What the interviewer asks you**
2. **What you ask the interviewer**

What kind of questions could I be asked?

There are three types of questions typically found at interviews:-

1. “Hypothetical”, or “scenario” type questions

These are questions that place you in a hypothetical situation and are designed to test your skill at answering questions rather than in testing job-related skills.

Example: Suppose you arrive at the office late to perform a time-critical task outside normal hours and you find that you have forgotten your access key. What would you do?

2. “Leading” questions

Questions that hint at an answer but under the control of the interviewer. It calls on you to make a judgement on how to answer

Example: Working on your own doesn’t bother you – does it?

3. “Behavioural” questions

Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behaviour from your past experiences and concentrate on job-related functions. They may include:-

a) “Open” questions: these require more than a yes or no response.

They often begin “tell me...”, “describe...”, “When...?”

Example: “Describe a time where you had to be flexible in planning a work load”.

b) “Closed questions”: used mostly to verify or confirm information given.

Example: “You have a degree in politics and economics... is that correct?”

c) "Why" questions:

Used to reveal a rationale for decisions you have made or to determine your level of motivation.

Example: "Why did you decide to do this rather than do that?"

Here are some possible questions you may be asked...

- Tell me about yourself
- What do you know about our company / organisation?
- What do you look for in a job?
- How long do you think it would take you to make a meaningful contribution to our company?
- Give me an example of...
- Why are you considering leaving your present position?
- What did you like most about your most recent position?
- What were your most recent, significant achievements in your present position?
- Can you work under pressure and to deadlines? Give me some examples.
- If you had your choice of company or job - where would you go?
- What are your salary expectations?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Are you goal oriented? What are your main ones?
- What strengths do you believe you have?
- What weaknesses do you think you have?
- Where do you see yourself in three years? (or five years etc)
- If you could start your career all over again - what would you do differently?
- Which of your achievements are you most proud of?
- What would you like to have accomplished in your present position but haven't? What stopped you?
- What do you perceive to be the toughest aspects of the job if you were offered the position?
- What problems face our industry in the next five years?
- How long do you think the challenges you will face in this position will interest you?

- What do you do in your spare time?
- How do you deal with stress / tension / boredom?
- Who do you think has taught you the most in your lifetime? Why is it valuable to you?
- Why are you particularly interested in these hobbies?



If you have been interviewed by someone else previous to this interview watch for this question!

"I just want to make sure that my colleague has explained the job properly to you. Can you outline to me **your** understanding of the role?"

Sounds easy but I've seen candidates completely thrown by this question to the point where they are speechless. Very hard to recover from this!

Now...

- **What questions do you have for me?**

Most experienced interviewers tend to agree that candidates who do not ask questions are rarely hired. Your questions can lead to a more open and relaxed interview for both parties. Conducting an interview is hard work - it involves active listening which can be tiring as it consumes brain power. Giving the interviewer the opportunity to speak for a change can give them a breather and potentially look at you in a different light.

This is your opportunity to gain control of the interview for a short while at least **so ask those questions when invited!**

How You Come Across

As the interview progresses how you come across to someone is an ever-changing collection of metrics.

Here are **some** of your aspects that could be being interpreted by an interviewer:-

- **Friendliness**
Distant / Aloof Reserved Approachable Warm/friendly Outgoing
- **Poise**
Ill at ease Tense At ease Self-assured Extremely self-assured
- **Personality**
Poor Dubious Average Very good Excellent
- **Conversational Ability**
Talks very little Hesitant Average Talks well Excellent expression / fluency
- **Alertness**
Slow to grasp ideas OK Quick Bright
- **Drive & Initiative**
Poor goals Lacking effort Some initiative Strives hard High Goals

- **Knowledge of field**
Poor Limited Average Well informed Excellent all round knowledge
- **Qualifications**
Not relevant Some relevance Average but OK Relevant Ideal
- **Skill set**
None appropriate Some relevant Average, but OK Suitable Ideal
- **Experience**
Nothing relevant Some relevance OK, spec covered Above average Ideal
- **Reaction to Authority**
Major concerns Some concerns No foreseeable problems No problems

How do you think you would rate?

Chapter Twelve

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

The time that follows an interview is just as important as the time before and the time during...

- **Before it becomes a blur**

Review what went well and what didn't go so well. It's your opportunity to become better next time.

- **Make notes**

of anything that you believe was agreed to. This allows you to check an offer made to you against your recollection.

- **Use your Recruitment Agency** if applicable.

The client is their customer. They are being paid by them for a successful outcome so it's in their interests to make sure things go well. They are also in a good position to give you positive and negative feedback. Top quality agencies will assist you in any way they can to make sure you present yourself in the most positive light. It reflects on them!

Chapter Thirteen

AGENCY INTERVIEWS

If you are registered with a Recruitment Agency you need to know what goes on behind the scenes.

Recruitment Agencies are in the business of placing candidates with a client for a fee.

**Why Are They There?**

Recruiting the right people is rarely anything less than complex, time-consuming and risky. Many organisations either do not wish, or do not have the resources to , attract and screen large numbers of candidates. Professional recruitment agencies have coded and categorised databases which allow them to match both client and candidate - generally with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

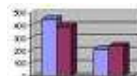
For the client the benefit is that only the most suitable candidates are presented to them and for the candidate they should only be put forward against the most appropriate job spec and indeed many agencies have specialist knowledge of specific market sectors.

**How Do They Operate?**

Professional agencies have developed and cultivated close working relationships with companies over time. They have won their trust through coming to understand the business they are in, the structure they have and their ethos. This takes time, effort and money since no fee is due until the candidate is placed, has started work and in many cases has completed a time-based probationary period.

**Who Pays Them?**

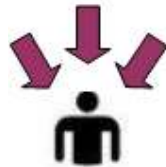
Their clients pay them. Candidates generally do not. First and foremost their allegiance is to their client and not to you. Naturally, since this is a matching process, it is in their interest to develop a good relationship with their best candidates in order to ensure they are successfully placed. That way they earn more money.

**Targets / Quotas**

Recruitment Agencies are staffed by sales people. They can be called Recruitment Specialist, Recruitment Advisor, Placement Consultant **but they are all commission based sales people**. The business has in the past been notoriously ruthless in axing

staff who do not make their quotas which in turn leads to a high turnover of staff and therefore less stability for the candidate.

When you are in sales your first concern is for yourself - fail to make target and you could be out of a job yourself.



The Pressures

Targets, quotas - call them what you like, but they impact both the recruitment consultant and you the candidate. You must understand that the consultant is there to make target - not to find you the perfect job. They are under pressure on a weekly and monthly basis to make their figures. They therefore, quite understandably, look for those candidates who, in their judgement, will give them the best chance of making that all-important sale.

There are only so many working hours in a day and a consultant needs to use them wisely. They must "cold-call" companies looking for opportunities, maintain contact with existing clients, read countless CV's, interview promising candidates, evaluate job descriptions, keep tabs on the competition, attend sales meetings, prepare sales reports, scan databases for candidate matches, arrange interviews, follow up with candidates post-interview, provide two-way communication between client and candidate, ease the blow if a candidate is considered unsuitable, explain to their client why a candidate isn't going to accept their offer - the list goes on!

They also need to make sure that a candidate they put forward for client-interview is regarded as a high-class match. Mismatch enough times and they will probably lose that client on the basis that they cannot be trusted to match the brief to the candidate. They waste a clients time at their peril!



What Do They Want In A Candidate?

- They want a clean, clear CV
- They want a professional, reliable, presentable client
- They want a candidate who will follow through if offered the position. The ultimate waste of their time is when a candidate decides not to accept an offer which has been made
- They want a candidate who isn't going to waste their time
- They want a saleable candidate



Questions To Ask Them

- Are they just a web-based agency or do they have offices?
- If you accepted by a company that they have put you forward to that fees are to be paid by the employer not you
- Do they reformat CV's into their own preferred format or will they send yours untouched?
- Will they send you the job spec if it's not available on the web
- Who do they pass information to? Tell them if there is any organization in particular that must not be circulated (They will almost certainly ask you "why"!)
- Do they offer support and guidance during the process?
- Do they have personal relationships with companies or do they just "spray and pray"?
- How do they keep you informed? Is there a recruitment consultant assigned to you?
- How do they find vacancies?
- What information can you give me on the company or do you expect me to find it myself?

Chapter Fourteen

THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

A telephone interview rarely gets you a job offer on its own. It generally acts either a precursor to a face-to-face interview or as a successor to a prior interview and is probably conducted by someone more senior or geographically remote. Being prepared for a telephone interview takes organisation because you never know precisely when its going to come. Make sure you have your CV to hand - preferably by the phone or at least where it is immediately in sight.

As you've read in "**Impressions**" Body-Language makes up 55% of the medium in any communication. So the telephone interview immediately removes over half of the tools you have to get your message across. Now you just have the words you use and your **tone of voice**.

When the phone rings... be calm. Be positive, friendly, and collected: "Thank you, I've been expecting your call would you wait just a second while I close the door?" Take a couple of deep breaths, get your CV and any relevant papers, put a smile on your face (it improves the timbre of your voice), and pick up the phone again. Now you are in control of yourself and the situation.

Beware of over-familiarity. You should always refer to the interviewer by his or her surname until invited to do otherwise. Let the caller do the talking initially - they will direct the call. Be polite and clear - do not fill silences or pauses with "Um", "Err", Mmmm, etc - these are much more noticeable on the telephone.

Be businesslike not personal. Telephone interviews are screening calls designed to allow the interviewer to judge whether or not its worth spending time interviewing you face to face.

At the end of the call reaffirm your interest (if indeed you are) and that you would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the position further at interview.

Chapter Fifteen

BEHAVIOUR BASED INTERVIEWS***What is Behaviour Based Interviewing?***

BBI focusses on experiences, behaviours, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. It is based on the belief that past behaviour and performance predicts future behaviour and performance. You may use work experience, activities, hobbies, volunteer work, school projects, family life etc - as examples of your past behaviour.

Current employment literature indicates that there is a strong trend towards this type of interviewing. In addition to questions found in many current resources, you should also consider the following in your interview preparations.

What Do Employers Evaluate in A Behavioural Interview?

Employers are looking for 3 types of skills:

- Content Skills
- Functional Skills - also called Transferable Skills
- Adaptive Skills - also called Self-Management Skills.

Content Skills -- Knowledge that is work-specific such as computer programming, accounting, welding, etc. *expressed as nouns.*

Functional or Transferable Skills -- Used with people, information or things... such as organising, managing, developing, communicating, etc. *expressed as verbs.*

Adaptive or Self-Management Skills -- personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self directed, punctual, etc. *expressed as adjectives.*

How Can I Best Answer Behaviour-Based Questions?

Think of "**PAR for the Course**". A complete answer to a behaviour-based question must explain the task or problem for which you were responsible, the specific action you took, and the results of your actions. Your answer must contain **all of these components to be a PAR answer. Tell the interviewer a "story" (with a beginning, a middle, and an end) about how you used a practical skill.**

- **Problem (P)** -- Advertising revenue was falling off for the Daily News and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.
- **Action (A)** -- I designed a new promotional package to go with the rate-card and compared the benefits of Daily News circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a sales-training company who discussed competitive selling strategies.
- **Result (R)** -- We signed contracts with fifteen former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by twenty percent (quantities are always good) over the same period last year.

How Can I Prepare for A Behavioural Interview?

- Analyze the type of positions for which you are applying.

Try to get an actual job description. What skills are required by employers? What are the responsibilities? What are the challenges?

Complete a "Technical Skills Matrix" to make it easier for both the recruitment agency and the prospective employer to really judge what you can do, as

distinct from what you might have covered in theory.

Use a consistent scale e.g. 0-5 to rate your skill level.

- Analyse your own background. What skills do you have (content, functional, and adaptive) that relate to your job objective?
- Identify examples from your past experience where you demonstrated those skills. How can you “tell a story” about your use of particular skills or knowledge?

Concentrate on developing complete *PAR* answers and remember that a good story has a beginning, middle and end.

- Wherever possible, quantify your results. **Numbers illustrate your level of authority, responsibility and influence.**
- Be prepared to provide examples of when results didn’t turn out as you planned. What did you do then?
- Before starting the interview process, identify 2 to 3 of your top selling points and determine how you will convey these points (with demonstrated *PAR* stories) during the interview.
- Once employed, keep a personal achievement diary to help document demonstrated performance (*PAR* stories).

Direction Exercise

And finally... just to see how well prepared you really are, try this direction exercise.



Direction Exercise

You must complete this task in the shortest possible time.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

1. Read carefully all of the following directions before doing anything.
2. Print your name (last name first) on the line following the word "NAME".
3. Draw a circle around the word "all" in direction number 1.
4. Underline "name" in direction number two.
5. In direction number 4. draw a circle around the word "underline" and in direction number 1 cross out the word "anything".
6. Draw a circle around the title at the top of the page.
7. Circle the numbers 1, 2 3, 4, and 5 and put an "x" over number 6.
8. In direction number 7 circle the even numbers and underline the odd numbers.
9. Write "I can follow directions" above the title at the top of the page.
10. Now that you have read all of the directions as stated in direction number 1, follow direction number 3 only. Do not follow any directions other than number 1, number 10, and hence number 3. Omit the others entirely.

Well? Did you pass?

Of course it's just a bit of fun. But the serious side is to convince you that rushing headlong into a task is not the best way to go about anything – especially an interview.

Take your time. Do your research. Prepare thoroughly. (You do want that job don't you?)

Of course you do.

And you *can* get it

If you put in the effort!

Because, do you know something? Most people won't.

Good luck!