

Interviews

The four Ps of interviewing

If you wanted to pick someone's brain about interviewing, Kent Kirch, the global director of recruitment for Deloitte, would be a good one to choose. Kent divides interviewing into the four P's:

Preparation, Practice, Personal presentation, Pertinent questions.

1. Preparation

You will be expected to know about the position, the nature of the tasks you have to complete, an awareness of the industry and specific points about the organisation.

Kent says that Candidates should have "looked at the Web site, read the [company's] brochure, talked to people who've worked there -- that's kind of baseline homework," he says. "If you haven't done that, it can really make it uncomfortable in the interview, because you're not going to understand what the interviewer's talking about."

Applicants should "sit down and think, 'What are they going to ask me when I'm in that interview?'" Kirch also says it's perfectly acceptable to ask some questions when setting the interview up, including:

1. Who will I be talking to?
2. Any suggestions on how to prepare?
3. Should I expect a particular type of interview format?

"You have nothing to lose by asking," says Kirch. "It shows that a candidate is interested in what's going to happen."

2. Practice

Practice running through potential interview questions and answers with someone else in advance.

Candidates can often anticipate the kinds of questions -- if not the exact ones -- they'll be asked during interviews, particularly if they've done their due diligence. Once you've determined the probable questions, Kirch advises practicing in front of someone.

"They always talk about preparing yourself -- looking in the mirror and answering the question," Kirch says. "It's much more difficult to give your answer to a live person and ask them what they thought of your answer than to look yourself in the mirror and do it."

3. Personal presentation

Remember to dress appropriately, be mindful of interview etiquette and body language.

Dressing appropriately is key, says Kirch, adding that many times young people will show up wearing a coat when a suit would be more fitting. "Or even if they do come with the right tie or suit, sometimes it's that they're not well-presented," he says. "It could be a lot of different things that are easy to fix, but it just doesn't help them when they're up against a lot of competition for a position." Again, doing your homework should reveal the appropriate attire.

Be sure to cover all the standard interviewing etiquette points as well. "Even the basics -- like a good handshake, not being nervous, smiling - because they don't see the real you if you're uptight," Kirch explains. "And basic eye contact; a lot of people put a lot of weight into eye contact. Maintaining that is really important."

4. Pertinent questions

Always have at least 1-2 questions to ask the interviewer at the end, it shows your interest in the organization and the position.

Kirch says it's disappointing in interviews to get to the end and say, "Do you have any questions I can answer for you?" and they say, "No, I think you answered them all," and that's the end of it. It reflects negatively on the candidate."

Include developing a tough question in your preparation to finish things off. "For me, I just love it when someone asks a really difficult question - something that takes some guts to ask, asking really well-thought-out questions that show you know the business that that interviewer is in," says Kirch. "You know their company to some extent, and you've thought about your question. It all goes back to preparation, and it tells the interviewer you thought about this interview before you walked in the door."