

What do interviewers really think ?

So you've got the perfect CV, you've done your interview preparation and you're confident you're the right person for the job – but is it enough? Some people say an interviewer makes a decision about you within 3 minutes of you entering the room. It's known as the “halo” or “horns” effect – make a good impression at the start and the interviewer will look to find information to support their initial impression, or if you've made a bad entrance you'll struggle to keep their interest long enough to prove them wrong.

The best way to make a great start is to “look the part”. Find out about the company dress code and get some honest feedback about how you look from someone who works in a similar role or company. Think about your non-verbal behaviour and avoid slouching as this could signal laziness or a lack of confidence. Take a long look in the mirror and ask if you would employ yourself?

Typically managers want to make their life as easy as possible so they often want to work with people who approach work in the same way as they do – this is called ‘recruiting in your own image’. Alternatively, the company may be looking for a replacement for someone specific, to work in the exactly the same way as they did. Clearly jobs can be done effectively in a number of ways, but organisations dislike disruption – so even if you have the skills, you may get rejected because you don't ‘fit the company mould’. It helps to ask questions about how the manager likes to work or why the previous person left the role as this will give clues on how they want the job to be done. You will achieve two things - firstly you will challenge any preconceptions the recruiter may have in their sub-conscious and secondly, it will give you some good information about whether your approach is right for this organisation.

No matter how good your “technical” performance is on the day, you will never really know what recruitment bias your interviewer may have. Although it can be uncomfortable, do ask for feedback if you are unsuccessful at interview as this will help you understand what didn't work for you on this occasion. Don't lose hope, simply recognise you can't please everyone, all of the time. Becoming an employee is a two-way process and if they don't think you are right for them, then they are probably not right for you either!

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