

Interview Basics

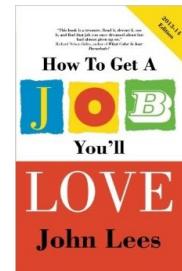
31 OCTOBER 2014



Plan for 2015

Alternating Choosing a direction - Job hunting

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|-------------------------|--|--------|
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Career Hot Buttons | 16 Jan |
| ◦ Job hunting: | Finding Opportunities in Cambridge | 23 Jan |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Understanding Ourselves – House of Knowledge | 30 Jan |
| ◦ Job hunting: | Planning and Process of Job Hunting | 6 Feb |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | General Discussion | 13 Feb |
| ◦ Job hunting: | Speculative Applications | 20 Feb |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Choosing a Sector | 27 Feb |
| ◦ Job hunting: | Getting the most out of LinkedIn | 6 Mar |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Building a Skills Inventory | 13 Mar |
| ◦ Job hunting: | Making Contacts to Find a Job | 20 Mar |
| ◦ Job hunting: | Interview Top Tips | 27 Mar |



Choosing a Direction
based on John Lees
“How to get a job you’ll love”
johnleescareers.com

We will break for Easter on Good Friday 3rd April

Agenda

Before the interview

Arrive well

Selling yourself

Ask questions

Do's and Don'ts

Examples of common mistakes

Before the interview

Learn about the company

- Read the website, especially the about us section
- Google them and look for news stories

Know your CV

- This is your specialist subject and you need to know it, including any figures
- Think about what examples you will use for each skill in your CV

Reread the job description

- List out the skills they are looking for
- Google any terms you don't understand
- Try and anticipate possible questions and prepare answers and examples
- Think about the questions you want to ask them

Know who is interviewing you and write it down with their contact number

Arrive Well

Arrive early

- Know where you are going
- Don't be late

Wear a suit or smart clothes

- If in doubt dress smarter
- Helps you feel more confident

Start building rapport straight away

- Chat with the receptionist – they may ask for the receptionist's opinions
- Chat to anyone you meet and ask questions

If they offer accept a drink, even if you don't want it

- It can give a useful pause before replying to a difficult question

Have a good handshake

- Not a bone crusher or soft one, just a firm quick handshake with a smile

Selling Yourself

Be as open as possible

- The way you sit and speak should project confidence and calmness
- The more open you are, the better rapport you will build and people hire people, not skills

Try and mirror your interviewer's body language

- If they are in shirt sleeves, take your jacket off when you sit down, sit how they sit etc

Focus on achievements

- Include facts and figures from your CV
- Use positive stories where you achieved something

Explain what you can do for the company

- Show how your skills will help in the role

You need to be positive and sell yourself

- No one will do it for you
- Don't be embarrassed

Don't forget - answer the question!

Use STAR answers

Situation

- Set the scene, don't leap into the middle of the story
- Can be a chance to point out you have worked in the area

Task

- What you were asked or needed to do, it can also help to explain why you were asked

Actions

- What you did, be careful here to be clear about what you personally did, rather than the team
- Try to include specific details as these make it more interesting and real

Result

- Probably the most important part, and easy to skip over
- Try wherever possible to include numbers (but you need to learn and remember them accurately)

Ask Questions

Interview is a two way process

- You need to find out about them too
- People like to talk so ask open questions
- If you get them talking it gives you a breather and time to collect yourself

Asking good questions shows that you are interested

Ask the right questions of the right people

- Don't ask HR technical questions as you'll fluster them!
- Equally don't ask technical managers about Org structures; ask HR.

If asked “is there anything you would like to ask?” always ask something

- Safe topics are on Org structure - Team sizes - Future plans - Company culture/ Social schemes
- Can show an interest in the interviewer – eg “what do you most like about working here?”
- Should also ask about the next steps in the process

Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Try and relax and be confident - smile
- Use examples to illustrate points you are making
- If you're running late call ahead to let them know- make sure you have contact details with you

Don't:

- Get defensive - you'll get asked difficult questions or questions you think are pointless but don't clam up, deal with them
- Give monosyllabic answers
- Be late- if you are, make a point of apologising and have a good reason
- Don't get lost

Common Mistakes Examples

Not showing genuine enthusiasm for the company and their products/services

- “This is such an interesting company”

Not showing genuine enthusiasm for the job

- “I really want this job”

Assuming that the interviewer is familiar with your background and your work

- Your CV got you the interview, don’t assume the interviewer has studied it

Not asking [smart] questions

- Some candidates don’t ask even a single question – do they really want the job?

Being desperate

- Trying to get a job is like trying to get a date, and desperation is positively repelling

Common Mistakes Examples

The biggest mistake that I have seen made both myself and by other people is **treating the interview like a test of intelligence rather than a question of "Do I want to work with this person?"** Some example manifestations:

Arrogance in any form

Being close-minded about what you want to work on

- being more interested in only working on what you think is cool than in building a successful company/product
- This a big one -- engineers tend to be more concerned with the unique skillset they have, and companies tend to be concerned with the pragmatic skillset they need.

Brushing off questions as not important / something you'd look up

Being overly negative about your current employer or peers

Arguing with your interviewer.

- Even if you're right, arguing is usually not a great way to collaborate. And you're usually not right.

Not being enthusiastic about the company and the product.

- This includes at a minimum doing your research on what it is and does, but also having given thought to where it's going and how'd you contribute.

Not having questions to ask.

- I recommend asking the same question to multiple interviewers; it's always good to hear multiple perspectives.

Common Mistakes Examples

Not preparing for the interview

- Most of these specific foul-ups lead back to that (Assuming that the major gaffes here are nerves rather than attitude)

Monosyllabic answers/resisting talking about you.

- This is especially common with people who are new to being interviewed.
- You need to tell me about how you think you're going to be a good fit.

Not having any (good) questions.

- At LEAST ask something about what you'll actually be doing and who you'll be doing it with.
- Job postings very rarely give a sense of what an actual day in the job will feel like.

Not being familiar with the company.

- This is way more common than it ought to be.
- There's an internet for a reason, folks.

Misfiring on the dress code (usually in the direction of being too casual).

- Yep, that still matters.

Common Mistakes Examples

Weak handshake.

- Most won't reject you outright for a bad handshake, but it doesn't do you any favours.
- They're simple to learn, and prove that you're deliberate and thoughtful about how you present yourself.

Interrupting the interviewer.

Directing answers to 'the important person' rather than whoever asked you the question.

- I interview in panels a lot, and don't always mention that I'm the direct supervisor for the position being hired. If you don't ask, you're in trouble.
- If you don't ask AND you direct all your answers to the man/the older person in the room, you're toast.

Making a statement the interviewer has to correct.

- If you don't know, ask, don't tell.

Making jokes.

- High risk, low reward, even for the ones that land.
- Especially avoid self-deprecating jokes, or jokes that are designed to 'bro out' with the panel.
- I'm interviewing potential employees, not potential friends. We can joke around later.

The Interviewer

The interviewer is not there to fail the applicant

- The interviewer is there to ask questions and test the applicant

Imagine that the person across from you does not know you at all

- It is your job to make them like you and make them be your friend during the interview

The interviewer is just another human

- Your job is to take each question as if the interviewer is asking your help in something
- So be polite and expressive to the degree possible

The interviewer really wants to find someone to do the job

- They do not want to have to go through the process again!