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**Interview Tips**

These tips are provided as a guide to assist potential candidates in preparing for an interview.

**Timing is Everything**

It is a good idea to arrive 5 or 10 minutes early for your interview. This will give you a few moments to gather your thoughts, go over your notes and compose yourself.

If you find yourself being unavoidably delayed, a courtesy call to let the panel members know that you have been held up, and what time you will be available, is very important.

**Dress to impress**
First impressions count! Whatever the position you are applying for, you want to present a professional image and demonstrate to the panel that you are prepared to go that extra mile. Think about what you are going to wear, will it show the panel members exactly who you are and that you are ready to get on with the job?

**Just be you!**
Let your inner professional shine through! Speak clearly, be enthusiastic and articulate your skills and knowledge. Don’t be afraid to show your personality. This is your opportunity to prove that you can become part of their team.

**Negativity is a no no**
So you have previously had a bad experience? Found some personal weaknesses? That’s OK! Don’t focus on the negatives – instead why not impress the panel by discussing how you have grown and learnt from these situations and all of the steps you are taking to improve things.

Not sure that you have the skills to meet the position requirements? Candidates are normally shortlisted on the key selection criteria so the chances are you have met those in the eyes of the reviewers. This is the perfect opportunity to dazzle the panel with your forward thinking and articulate how you plan to learn and acquire further skills on the job. Remember, people aren’t necessarily unsuccessful because they don’t possess the required skills – in many cases they failed to convince the panel that they would be able to quickly develop the necessary skills and abilities.

A simple philosophy in recruitment is to hire the attitude and train the skill…so show us your great attitude.

**Nerves are normal!**
Remember that nerves are totally natural, and can sometimes be a good form of energy. One way to combat those ‘bad nerves’ is to practice what you are going to say. Re-read the position description and the candidate information pack on the website and think of questions you might be asked. Practice with your family or a friend!

**Preparation, preparation, preparation**
Arriving to your interview unprepared demonstrates that you are really not interested in the position. Know your plan of attack.

* Read and re-read the position description and selection criteria. These documents will give you an idea of what questions might be asked of you in your interview;
* Know the requirements of the job, and how you meet or exceed these requirements;
* Think of questions that might be asked; and
* Practice.

Some people think that you shouldn’t take notes into an interview. Preparing notes and taking these in to your interview is a great way of ensuring you don’t miss anything out. Dot point skills and stories that are relevant to the position are always good to have.

How many of us have been so nervous that we forget the question. We see it all the time and we don’t mind re asking the question but don’t be afraid to write down key words from questions you are asked either, this might help you formulate your answer and remember what was asked.

You probably should be prepared for some of the following questions-

Why did you apply for the job?
What has been your biggest achievement to date?
What have you done that demonstrates initiative in your career?
What are your strengths and weaknesses in past/present job?
Why are you the best person for the job?

Work your answers to these questions into your responses and show the panel just how organised, energised and enthusiastic you really are!

You might also get asked a question that starts like this “Tell us about a time when …….. If you get that sort of question it is a targeted selection question and the panel will be looking for you to explain your answer. The panel will be looking for a specific incident or experience that you have had in the past.

Try to think about the STAR answer.

**S** – Situation, background set the scene

**T** – Task, specifics of what was required, when, where, who.

**A** – Action, what you did, skills used, behaviours, characteristics.

**R** – Result – Outcome, what happened?

**Answering those questions**
Breathe and try to relax. Did you know that taking a breath before giving your response will allow your thoughts to flow more naturally and your voice will sound more in control. Above all, speak clearly, concisely and honestly. Remember that the best answer is not always the longest – get straight to the point.

Direct your answers to the person asking you the question, but don’t forget to give the other panel members some eye contact as well to include them in your response.

**What do you do if you don’t know the answer?**
First of all, clarify the question by asking for it to be repeated or rephrased. Maybe you just misunderstood.

**Still don’t know?**
It’s OK to say you don’t know BUT make sure you draw on similar experiences and demonstrate your ability to problem solve. Say something like “I haven’t come across that situation but if I did I would...”.

**Asking questions**
When the panel members have finished asking you their set questions, you will be given the opportunity to revisit any questions, ask any questions or add any further information. This is the perfect opportunity to demonstrate to the panel members how excited and eager you are to obtain employment with the Shire. You may like to talk about things such as: the industry, services, policies, benefits, work environments and even career development opportunities and training.

**Your final statement**
At the end of your interview, you will be given the opportunity to go back over the questions and to add any other information. If you feel you have left out some details or may not have answered as well as you would have liked use this time to go back over any questions. Always better to get it right the second time, than not at all.
Leave the panel with a lasting statement – something they will want to remember. Your concluding statement will be the last thing the panel hears from you. Keep it short and simple – 3 points in 3 sentences, and 2 major reasons why you should get the job. Sell yourself!

**So you didn’t get the job? What next?**
First of all, remember that not being offered the position is not a reflection of you as a person. Perhaps the panel didn’t feel you were quite ready to take on the responsibilities of the position, or maybe someone with more skills or experience came along.
If you were unsuccessful you can always seek feedback from the Convener of the Panel (usually the Manager of the Area that is hiring) but make sure you are in the right frame of mind (be certain your ‘grieving’ period is over) or you may not hear and process the information.

Think about the feedback you got. What can you learn? How can you use this information to improve your performance in the future? What new skills can you learn and what old skills can you improve on to better your chances in the future?

There are plenty more jobs out there – keep looking for the one that is right for you!

Good Luck.