

Make First Impressions Count - Presenting Yourself to Employers

We asked a group of Human Resource managers from 5 local companies for their advice on how graduates should present themselves when applying for jobs. This is what they said...

1. What has really impressed you about a particular job candidate?

A candidate who came to the interview knowing what our organisation did – they had done their research and knew the services and products we offer globally (not just locally), who our competitors are, what the job entailed, the skills needed etc. (HR, Butterfield Bank)

One candidate who was applying for a job with us phoned prior to applying and asked to have a tour of the offices and a conversation with the line manager of the vacancy. She asked lots of questions about the business and the role and took a note of the answers she received. (HR, Guernsey Post)

We like candidates who are well rounded; they've got a bit of work experience, volunteering, helping Dad in the family business, anything that shows they can cope with real life as well as undergraduate study. (HR, anon)

A professional approach, the ability to communicate fully and the ability to complete forms and other tasks as requested. (HR, anon)

2. What has really disappointed you about a particular job candidate?

A candidate that came for an interview for a junior trader role stated in the first 10 minutes that he didn't want to work weekends. He was notified by email that for this role he must be prepared to work shift work which includes evenings and weekends. He didn't read his email thoroughly, showing a lack of respect and dedication that is required for such a role. (HR, Sporting Bet)

I once interviewed someone who answered every question by telling us how awful his previous employers had been. This was really disappointing as we were unable to learn about his skills and abilities and why he wanted to work for us. We were hoping to recruit someone who was enthusiastic and motivated to do well, but all this candidate told us was how negative he could be. (HR, Guernsey Post)

An assumption that having a degree was enough to get them a graduate level job with matching salary and benefits, without having to follow a training programme and undertake professional study. The candidate did not feel they had to complete an Application Form (having provided a very bare CV) and was totally oblivious to the fact that they needed to make the effort to earn a position. (HR, Butterfield Bank)

One graduate we interviewed last year didn't seem to be able to remember anything about the projects he'd done at University! Having a degree is not enough, you have to be able to understand and talk about your subject. (HR, anon)

3. What are the common oversights/mistakes on application forms/CVs?

Not putting enough information on the form. (HR, anon)

Lack of information or looks like it has taken them about 2 minutes to type it up. I suggest getting someone to look over it before you send it off. (HR, Sporting Bet)

The biggest mistake applicants can make is to send through a standard CV with no covering letter or explanation of why they want the job. It is not enough to be a strong applicant; you need to say why you are interested in working for a particular employer and what specific skills you have that suit the job you are applying for. (HR, Guernsey Post)

Bad handwriting meaning the forms are illegible! (HR, Butterfield Bank)

Don't lie. We check certificates and take out references, even if we fail to spot it at interview, it will come out and you'll be out of a job. If you haven't got the minimum qualification or experience that's asked for, than tell us why you still think you can make the grade. (HR, anon)

4. What are the common mistakes at interview?

When candidates haven't researched the Company – remember you will be asked why you want to work for the Company. When asked if they have any questions they would like to ask, no is not the correct response you want to hear – always ask questions. (HR, Sporting Bet)

Lack of preparation. You might say to the interviewer: "I have excellent communication skills", but what the interviewer really needs to know is whether you've, for example presented to large audiences, written complex letters, been a student representative etc.

Prior to an interview you should identify the likely questions that you will be asked and try to think of examples you have from your past that help to answer those questions. (HR, Guernsey Post)

Fidgeting, no eye contact, lack of preparation. If you don't get asked the question that gives you the opportunity to sell yourself properly then say it anyway. (HR, anon)

Lack of preparation - this is evident the moment an interview starts if a candidate has not taken the time to research the organisation and what it does. It gives the interviewer/organisation the impression of "can't be bothered". Similarly, candidates often do not think about the questions they may be asked. There are always common questions asked at interviews and when a candidate cannot easily answer these it is often because they simply have not thought about how to answer such questions. (HR, Butterfield Bank)

Not evidencing answers. (HR, anon)