

## Interview tips - 10 key points for contractors and freelancers

Contractors have a greater chance of winning an ongoing stream of lucrative contracts if they have learned the [killer interview technique](#). It's not the best or most technically qualified contractors who win the most highly paid and interesting assignments; it's those contractors who are the best at understanding and applying contracting sales and marketing skills.

A killer interview technique is a key [contractor sales](#) and marketing skill. Here are ten golden rules on how to pass an interview:

### 1. Interview preparation - the basics

[Preparing for an interview](#) is largely common sense. Check exactly who the client is that you will be meeting at interview, how to pronounce their name, their gender, where the interview is located and the dress code. Well before you leave, check traffic and public transport reports for delays and plan your departure time accordingly. Finally, add the client's contact number into your mobile in case you are delayed.

### 2. Interview preparation - homework and research

Check the job advert and full specification carefully and confirm you meet all the requirements. Try to work out what problem or challenge the client is facing, and prepare a list of questions for the client that will help you drill down into their challenges. Finally, find out about the client's organisation in reasonable detail, and do research on your interviewer, using social media sources and LinkedIn.

### 3. When you arrive - the 'pre-interview'

Arrive at the client's offices in good time, particularly if security is tight or the facility you are visiting has elaborate entry procedures; you can always sit in the car or grab a coffee nearby if you are very early. Be polite and friendly to everyone you meet, and scan reception for further background, like the latest media clippings or awards. Be prepared for small-talk, as this breaks the ice, and assume the interview started the moment you entered the building.

### 4. Understand ideal interview structure - it's a sales pitch

Your interview should ideally have four main sections:

A general chat about the company and small-talk, to break the ice

Discuss and understand needs - your opportunity to use your pre-prepared questions to conduct a diagnosis

Create and sell your solution

Close.

These sections are akin to a sales pitch, because selling is exactly what contractors should be doing in an interview - so sell 'you', your skill set and your experience as a solution to the client's needs.

### 5. Know what the client is looking for at interview

The client is likely to be looking for all, or a combination of, the following:

Likeability

Specific skills and bonus skills and knowledge

Initiative and motivation

Communications and listening skills

Commercial awareness

Interest in and knowledge of the client's organisation.

### 6. Fact-find during the interview and create a client solution

This stage is crucial. You must ask questions to identify the solution without it seeming like you're conducting an interrogation. The client may not fully understand the problem or challenge they face, particularly if they are a commercial manager and the project requires specialist or technical skills. Having asked the right questions, you must create a solution and confirm you are the person with the skills and experience to deliver it.

## 7. How to avoid losing control of the interview

You will lose control of the interview if you don't work sequentially through the interview structure in rule 4 above. You may find yourself being asked to talk through your experience before you get a chance to identify the solution. There may be another interviewer who is the client's specialist at what you do, and in trying to test your expertise they could take you into irrelevant technical territory. Keep to your four-point plan.

## 8. Classic interview mistakes

Common interview mistakes that contractors make include:

Lack of preparation and poor timing

Focusing on what the contract does for you, and not what you can do for the client

Failure to address the client's challenges and lack of commercial awareness

Telling lies, or being a 'know-it-all'

Inability to listen to and address questions

Talking and interrupting too much.

## 9. Close the sale – ask for the business at the interview

Say you would be really interested in working on the assignment. Make sure you close with something like: 'Are you satisfied that I meet your requirements?'. This provides an opportunity to address the client's concerns. Ask the client when their hiring decision will be made.

## 10. Follow-up with the agency

Call the agent, if they don't call you. Ask for and listen to feedback. Clarify when you might hear about the role. If the contract has been offered to you, this is the stage when you start negotiating with the agent about the final rate; never before.

Published: Monday, December 13, 2010

© 2016 All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Please see our [copyright notice](#).



ABCe verified website - last audit confirmed 134,482 monthly unique visitors

© Copyright 2016 Byte-Vision Limited UK. All rights reserved [Copyright notice](#)