



Ace your interview

A quick and easy guide with tips, tools and techniques to help you prepare for and ace your interview!

Many people find job interviews daunting, if not down-right scary. But, Alcea's here to help you.

I want to share with you that there's a different way to feel about interviews and there are tools and techniques that can help you find the interview process positive, sometimes exciting and always a reminder of just how awesome you are.

Who am I to tell you how to ace an interview?

Well, after moving career sectors three times in my twenties (from Antiques to Energy via Publishing) and then leaving the world of 'proper jobs' behind and setting up my own business as a freelancer and contractor I know a thing or two about interviews. And, frankly how to ace them. Whether it's a competency based two-hour long interview or a half an hour 'chat' the key strategies for how to ace them are the same, I get offered around 90% of the jobs I go for. Not bad right?!

For example, in 2019 I had five contract interviews and got offered all five roles (I chose to accept three). In addition to that I picked up new freelance clients so had interviews for those too. It works out to be almost one interview a month! And that's just for a single year. Take into account the career changes, the job changes, the contracts and the freelance pieces and over nearly twelve years I'm something of a self-made expert.

Which is good for me, but great for you. Because I can help you get to where I am now quicker!

I know many people are terrified of job interviews, but I'm not. In fact I actually often enjoy a well set-up interview. That's because I see it as the ideal opportunity to do two things:

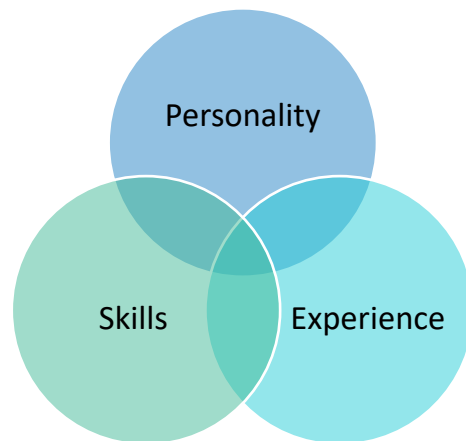
1. A job interview allows me to showcase a selection of experiences and skills that I've had (it's a great reminder of the capabilities that sometimes I forget I've got) and
2. It gives me an opportunity to interview the company I'm meeting with. What are they like? Do I want to work with them? What kind of people are they and how do they talk about their company?



You see I don't ever think that an interview is a scenario where all the pressure is on you, the interviewee. Yes, the focus is on you to be the best version of yourself and to showcase articulately, warmly and professionally why the package you're presenting (your personality, your capabilities and your experiences) are the right fit for the role on offer.

The one thing most people forget is that there's also pressure on the interviewer to represent the company in such a way that it makes it a desirable place for you to work. And, this is the thing to remember – the interview is a two-way discussion!

What does an interview gives you the opportunity to showcase...?



Simple, you!

But, to pick hairs slightly – the interviewer wants to see the professional version of you and that's a mix of your personality, your skills and of course your experience. It's a combination of all these things that make you the right fit for the role.

On paper you might be the perfect candidate but if your personality doesn't feel like it'll be a good fit for the business, team or wider culture then you'll struggle. And, that's not to say that that's a bad thing. I've gotten jobs where my personality didn't fit in with the wider culture and whilst it can be a brilliant career move in my experience it doesn't lead to a happy ever after in terms of a long standing role.

The fact you've got an interview is a great sign that your skills and experience on paper look great. So, the interview is the time to build on that positive impression and bring all three aspects together.

Think of it like this, your CV and application is all old school black and white TV but the interview is an opportunity for you to shine in bright cinematic technicolour.

So how do you know if you're personality, skills and experience are right for the role and that the company is right for you? Well, it all comes down to preparation and research.

Time to prepare: Before the Interview

Ok, you've done great so far, you've done the work to get an interview. Which means your CV has showcased your skills, experiences and interests to a point that the company wants to meet with you. Now is the time to use a different set of skills... you can no longer rely on the paper work, now is the time to show who you are in person. For that you need to have a different set of skills and techniques up your sleeve to draw on. Very few people are naturally great at interviews; it's a combination of learning particular techniques and skills and then practicing.

Ok let's break it down, here's a checklist for you – tick off as you prepare for your interview.

Do your research. Part 1:

Find out everything you can about the company. Google them, find out if they've been featured recently in the news, and if so what for.



Do your research. Part 2:

Get social, most companies now will have some form of social media footprint. So hop onto all the channels you can think of; Linked In, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the most common platforms used by businesses. Read the style of language, the content and see what the comments are from customers who've engaged. Is it a different type of language to their website? Are they polite? Are they funny? Use this to build your picture of the company.

Do your research. Part 3: Linked In is your friend. Now's the time to search out the names of the people who will be interviewing you. Knowledge is your friend here, what does their profile say about them as people? Are there any links you have or interests you share? Building connections with some polite chit chat at the start of the interview can help settle nerves and build some rapport – all essential for landing that job!

Do your research. Part 4: If you've used a recruiter to find the role then they're there to help you. So, if they're good they'll automatically send you information to help you prepare, the job description, some pointers on the style of questions likely to be asked, the names of the

interviewers. But don't be afraid to ask for more. Do they know any key aspects about the role or the company that can help you build up a clearer picture of the company? Knowledge is power.

☐ **Dress to impress.** Now this can mean different things to different people and it can also flex between the corporate and culture expectations of where you're interviewing. So, my main tip here is to find out what the norm is for the workplace and go for a smarter than normal version of that. So that could mean you're in a full on suit or it could mean you're in black jeans and a blazer. If in doubt though – always go smart! Also, if cash flow is an issue and you're worried about finding the right outfit, charities like [Smart Works](#) are out there to offer help.



☐ **Arrive early.** Lateness for an interview just sends all the wrong messages. Don't shoot yourself in the foot before you've even started answering the questions.

☐ **Time to Power Pose:** Have you heard of Amy Cuddy? Well if you find interviews nerve-wracking then she's the woman you need along with her [power poses](#) which have been proven to boost confidence and self-esteem.

☐ **Get rested:** Rest is essential for a rested mind and a calm body ahead of the interview.

This is your time to shine: In the Interview

☐ **Meditate:** Breathing exercises before the interview can be really calming. This will slow down your heart rate, centre you and will help you get calm – particularly helpful if you're anxious and worried the nerves will get the better of you.

☐ **Smile:** it's really that simple. **Shake hands and break the ice:** (Or a new-norm coronavirus greeting – I'm not sure these have been formalized as yet...) and take a few minutes to make small talk. Chat about the weather if you have to but break the ice with a nice and easy topic.



Take a breath and relax: If you're hunching your shoulders due to nerves take a deep breath in and as you exhale let your shoulders ease away from your ears and back to a normal position. This is a key body language trait and will instantly help you ease into your situation and project confidence to the interviewer.

Ground yourself: Root your feet to the floor to help you feel physically supported and grounded. This should help you feel more in control and balanced.

Give yourself some time: Not sure on how to answer a question, ok take a second and have a sip of water.

Be conscious of your body language: These may seem obvious, but don't slouch and don't close off your body by crossing your arms. Do be expressive and animated. People love to see passion and engagement.

Stay memorable: After the Interview

Following up is one of the things that can set you apart from other candidates. Dropping a short email is thoughtful and shows dedication. Two really good things to be remembered for.

Not sure what to write? Ok try this:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me during our interview, it was great to learn more about the role and understand the needs the business has. If you have any feedback about my interview or if you have any follow up questions please don't hesitate to drop me a note.

Wrapping up: Remember you can do this

Alcea offers pre-interview coaching, mock interviews and career coaching. So, if this has peaked your interest and you want to find out more. Email me at: alceaconsulting@outlook.com to book your free 20 minute taster session.

Oh and one more thing... best of luck at your next interview. Remember you've got this! Alcea