

The winds of change

Spring is the season of rejuvenation, so what better time to start looking for a new job? **Katherine Graham** looks at some commonly asked questions that might come up in that all-important interview.

FOR THE FIRST JOB interview I ever had, I was flown up to Joburg. The flight was a red-eye special and on the way to the airport, my father grilled me in the car, firing off a barrage of questions. At the time, I was slightly perplexed, thinking he was disturbing my attempt to stay calm. But with hindsight, I see the value of what he did. He was preparing me for the interview, so that I could face it with greater confidence and ease.

His efforts paid off. I got the job and learnt more in a year than I'd learnt in three years at university. Over a decade later, when I was trying to switch from online to print media, I faced an endless succession of job interviews. That's when I finally overcame my fear of the dreaded interview and realised that the process is just as much about whether or not you want the job as it is about whether or not they want you.

Here's some advice from the experts. 'You need to do your homework about the company and the position you are applying for,' says Viv Gordon of Viv Gordon Placements. She recommends finding out who will be interviewing you and their job title.

Experts say that only **50%** of available jobs are advertised in a normal market.

It may sound obvious, but make sure you know how to get there. 'Aim to arrive at least 10 minutes early,' says Phillipa Geard of RecruitMyMom, 'it creates a really bad impression if you are late.' She also advises that you eat a decent meal beforehand. 'You don't want your stomach to be growling in the middle of the interview!'

Phillipa shares her top 10 list of frequently asked interview questions:

1 Tell us about yourself.

Here you should list your main attributes, your qualifications and career history, emphasising those skills relevant to the job on offer.

2 Why do you want this position?

3 What have been your greatest achievements thus far?

Think of something fairly recent and work related. Identify the skills you used in the achievement and quantify the benefit it had for the company.

4 What makes you suitable for this position?

5 Give me an example of when you have had to resolve a conflict situation.

6 Give me an example of when you had to overcome a difficult obstacle.

The aim of the above two questions is to find out whether or not you can approach problem solving logically. Mention a work situation not caused by you. Explain how you defined the problem, what the options were, why you chose the one you did and what the outcome was, always ending on a positive note.

7 What salary are you expecting?

Market research is key here. Don't ask for too much, but also don't sell yourself short.

8 What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Choose your weaknesses with care. Try to mention those that could also be perceived as a strength, such as being a good initiator of projects, but you need to work harder at following them through to completion.

9 What did and didn't you enjoy about your previous employment?

'Don't get personal and bad mouth your former employers,' advises Viv. 'It's really bad form to do this. Respond in the most diplomatic way.' For example, because the company is so large, it takes a long time for decisions to be made.

10 Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

A final word of advice: Don't take it too hard if you don't get the job. Try to get feedback from the company or ask yourself if there was anything you could have done better. As Viv puts it, 'Lick your wounds, keep your chin up and move on to the next one.'

