

INTERVIEW EXPERTS E-BOOK



The Interview Experts Bonus

E-Book

Hello and welcome to the Interview Experts E-Book.

Have you ever been for an interview for a job that you really wanted and then, didn't get it or have you ever come out feeling you could have performed better? Are you about to attend an interview and you're worried that you'll say or do the wrong thing? Or you just want a better job but lack the confidence to go for it.

I have spent many years as a recruiter training and coaching individuals on how to make a big impact within the very small amount of time you are allocated in a job interview. The people I have coached have ranged from graduates looking for their first break, to senior level executive directors looking for their next board level position. In every case I was able to demonstrate that there are specific tools and techniques for ensuring that someone likes you, and more importantly – trusts you, in a very short space of time.

So - using over 15 years of my own experience as a head-hunter, I have put together this guide to give you a straightforward, honest and clear approach to getting it right. I have spent many hours researching and interviewing some of today's most respected experts in the field of recruitment whose jobs are to hire for many of the world's leading organisations.

These tips and skills are what successful people use to get the job.

Now, even if you've heard any of the advice before...and you probably would have done...please remember, repetition is the mother of skill so join me for a fast paced, decisive guide for the interview minefield and hear the top tips the experts offer to help you get the career you deserve.

Good luck and enjoy!



PART 1 - APPLYING / YOUR CV

Jonathan: The best way to put a CV together is to understand the purpose of the CV. The CV is a sales document. Its aim is to get you in the door, to get you noticed and to get you the interview. You do not need the CV to get you the job. You'll get yourself the job. The main aim is to get the interview, and therefore, lots of whitespace, not too much waffle, clear headings and keep it to two pages.

Mark: Bear in mind, this is a sales document. This is what your potential employer is going to judge you on initially, so it's absolutely vital that you get this right.

Tim: You get these CVs landing on their desk, on your desk – have you got the time to look at them? No, I usually delegate to my management team or to the manager responsible for that particular department, like, "You look through them, you do all of the weeding out and you come to me with your top three or four. I will then look at it."

Simon: A lot of companies now are looking to people that can condense information and can summarise it. If you can't summarise your own life and career then you're probably not going to be very good at summarising other things as well.

David: There is some kind of summary at the top that says the thing that you want to say about yourself. For example, you might have had a great performance at your previous company for the last couple of years and that doesn't always come out when you list out jobs and career timeline. So, it's very important just to say a few lines to say, "I've been rated very well in my last few companies and this is the sort of thing that I've been working on," and that just makes it stand out and gets the softer things across that you can't always get across in a timeline. That should be the first thing that they read.

Jonathan: For me, it's about producing something without mistakes. The CV vetting process is about knocking out and identifying people that aren't right and the first way that people do that, of course, naturally, is to look for badly laid out, badly planned, badly spelled, bad information. So actually, the simplest approach is to make sure that your CV doesn't have errors on it.

Rob: The CVs I like to read are very much like the report I like to read. I haven't got time to read through rings and rings of rubbish. I want to see concise answers. I want to see achievements. I want to see statements backed up with quality facts. I want it to be easy on the eyes – something I can scan through and it's a passport for me – a passport to get that person in for an interview.

Tim: I'm looking for that difference and that difference comes from someone taking initiative.

Mark: I'm actually interested in – where have you really made a difference, what have you achieved? Those are the most important things that people want to read about.

David: Tailoring your CV or at least, fine-tuning it for every application you make, particularly, if it's a company that you've targeted and it's part of your vision to go for.

Jonathan: Identifying where you're going to add value to a company, so, achievements in your past – evidence that suggests when you do this role, you do it well.

Simon: If you're a number one salesman at a company, that is something to boast about and you should put that down but you should also put down, number one, how many sales people because one out of two is still a good position to be in but it's much more impressive if you're number one out of a thousand.

Celia: You need to be very specific about what those achievements were and how those benefited the company, the team, your manager.

Mark: If you're sending into a named individual, which hopefully, you are...and if you haven't got a named individual then find out who the named individual should be...then send it into them and then, follow-up with a phone call.

Tim: The best way that I've ever experienced is someone having me read their CV or someone who actually called up and said, "I'm interested in working for your business," and I went, "Okay, go on. I'm interested to know why you think that," because I've never had that before – someone who's actually cold calling my business. They've done their work. They've done their research. They had actually heard about us and they wanted to get into our industry, and he called me directly. Now that, to me, is someone who's got sparkle.

Alison: For you to make that call says an awful lot about you. What it says – it says that you're not afraid of rejection which is vital in this world. If you want to get on in a job...let's say it's a sales job or any sort of job...the rejection is not personal, it's business.

Mark: Often, you'll only get a conversation with a PA to the HR Director, for example. But, it just shows that you're following up and sometimes, that PA will then

go back to their boss and say, “This guy sounded really good, followed up on his CV, sounds great. I think we should meet him.” Never underestimate the influence that PAs have on their bosses.

Tim: PAs are fantastic. People think they are barriers. To a certain extent, they are but they are also human beings. They also like to understand and recognise that they are the power behind the throne. If you understand that they are the power and respect them for that, it’s amazing what you can get from a PA. Utilise the PA to help you to get what you want.

Simon: Even ask that PA if there’s any sort of company information because that’s showing enthusiasm and that’ll get back to that Sales Director as well.

Tim: When your CV does come through – “So, what was it? Good, that’s the guy. Yes, let’s read that. Let’s put that on there.” They might not even read it – “Yes, he’s the one. Let’s put it on there anyway. Get him on the short list.”

Mark: If you haven’t got a job description at this stage then it’s a great opportunity for you to go and get a job description so that you can go and do your homework. With larger companies, that shouldn’t be a problem. Sometimes with smaller companies, that might be a verbal job description. You’ve got to make sure you have a pencil and paper handy, and make as many notes as you can when you’re making that phone call.

Tim: At the end of the day, it’s all about relationships. It doesn’t matter how big or small any organisation is – it’s made up of people. Cultures develop through relationships. The first protocol is you need to understand...not only understand...who it is you are going to be talking to so find out about them.

Celia: If you can find out a little bit more about the role, a little bit more about how many people have applied...

Tim: Remember, this company that you’re going for that you want the job in – they’ll be seeing a lot of people. They could be seeing three. They could be seeing five. They could be seeing ten. You imagine all those people that they’re seeing. Let’s say, they’re seeing them over a day or two days. That’s a lot of people to see. A minimum of an hour each – they’ll be glazed. They won’t really remember who the hell they’re talking to, let alone, how wonderful you were. Give yourself a chance. Make sure you’re the last.

WRITE DOWN 10 WAYS HOW YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR APPLICATION

PART 2 - PREPARATION

Jonathan: Researching a company before you go to interview is really, really important. Don't go if you're not going to do the research. This starts with the internet. Look at their website. Download as much information as you can. Talk to anybody that might work there. Look at Companies House. Try and get their records to find out how much they're turning over, how stable they are as a business. Part of your research is to ensure that you can demonstrate your keenness. Part of it is actually to make sure it's the right position for you and the right company. Too many people take jobs without realising what they're letting themselves in for.

Tim: The only way you do that is you read up on your company. You get yourself up on the business you want to work for. If you get excited by what you see, go and talk to some customers. Go and read up, look at the accounts. Look at the website. Talk to a few people. Get familiar with the business you want to work with.

Mark: If you know anybody that works in that company – ideal. Find them up, buy them a beer, get close to them and start learning as much as you can about that company. Now if you don't know anybody in that company, there are some things you can do to find out what's going on. Phone that company up and pretend to be a potential customer. See how they deal with you – what sort of response do you get, how are you handled and do a bit of mystery shopping in effect because if you're applying for a sales role, for example, it would be really useful to know – how are they handling potential sales inquiries at the moment? That information can be really useful as a discussion point in the interview.

Rob: The key things you need to know about the company itself – the products we sell, the market sectors we deal in, how we're performing in those sectors.

Celia: Have an understanding of how long they've been established, what their achievements as an organisation are, where they're going for the future.

Jonathan: Print off everything you can possibly think of. Can you get companies' reports? Can you get details, downloads from the websites? Can you get brochures? Are there press releases available? Is there anything in the newspapers about them? Cut it out and keep it and when you go to the interview, take it with you. It will stand you in very good stead.

Mark: Get to know something about that company that your potential interviewer doesn't expect you to know and ideally if you've got some new ideas for them then they will be much more receptive to you as a candidate. Don't think about getting the job. Think about doing the job when you're actually in that interview. So, what are the skills that this person's really looking for me to achieve? What's the objective of this job? Why are they hiring this person? Put yourself in the hiring person's position. If you were interviewing me, what would you want to know, what do you want to hear, what do you not want to hear?

Jonathan: Once they've looked at the company is look at the competition. It's a competitive market out there. Companies are pitched against each other.

Mark: If you've identified that the company you're going for an interview makes widgets then just type in widgets on Google and you'll see a whole list of other companies that make widgets so that gives you an idea of who their competitors are.

Jonathan: Don't make the same mistake I made. I joined Gillette and on my first interview with them in order to be clever, spoke about the diminishing market of razorblades versus the electric shaver. Because I hadn't done my research, I looked very stupid when they said, "Well, we actually own Braun so we'll be alright."

Mark: Source as many different press releases as you can because the press release from the company is obviously putting the positive spin on everything. The press releases from external companies will have a slightly different view on these things and it's good for you to go in with a balanced view of what's great about this organisation but what are some of the challenges that they're facing, and raise that in the discussion that you're going to have with the individual.

Tim: If it's a public company, read through the annual report. I don't mean read through all the figures. Obviously, you need to know if you're going into a company that's making money or not. Read the Chairman's statement. Find out what the strategic objectives are of the business. Find out what they're looking to do. Find out what they've acquired recently or got divested. Understand what you're going into.

Mark: FT.com, Hoover's – if they've announced they're a listed company, go to nasdaq.com. Have a look at their share price then under there, you can see what the analysts are saying about that particular company, what the recommendations are – is it a buy, is it a sell, is it a hold? Then, you can build up a picture of what external organisations think about this company.

Mark: You also want to make sure if the Dow...if the company's on a sound, stable footing financial-wise because if you want longevity out of a career in a company, you want to make sure that, that company's going to be around for quite a long time.

Mark: Phone up and ask them to send you company brochures. See what type of material they're sending out – what's the quality, what are the key messages that company is trying to convey to me as a potential customer?

David: A lot of industries have their own industry magazines which you can look up online or you can go and subscribe to, even go to your local library and get a copy.

Mark: Marketing departments, sales departments are all very good at handing out information to potential customers so there's nothing wrong with you ringing an organisation and demonstrating your keenness and speaking to these departments. See what they can send you. You may be surprised.

Tim: You can also get a copy of their mission statement usually. It's usually in their financial information, and what goals and objectives that company is looking to achieve. Certainly in most large companies, employees carry these sorts of things around their neck and if you can go in as a potential candidate and know these things off by heart, you're going to be, not only impressing your interviewer – you're going to be way ahead of the number of the employees that are already there.

Mark: Most websites now will have key individuals, board members. Go on there. Read about them. They've all got many buyers on there. Find out where do

they come from – previous employers because you'll probably see a pattern of companies that they like to hire from. Now if you're one of those companies – ideal.

Jonathan: Use Google. That's what it's there for. Put in the name of the person that you're going to meet. See what comes up. You'll either find them which is great if they printed any articles, if they've published any magazines – you'll get to see where and when. If not, however, you'll certainly find someone with the same name who turned out to be the first person that climbed the north face on Everest. To drop in any interview the similarities between someone who's got two names can be a great icebreaker.

Rob: Now, I'll be further impressed if they knew about what the various managers and corporate managers had said and commented to the trade press about our strategies.

Mark: Take all that interview with you when you go to the meeting and it actually demonstrates that you've done your homework.

Rob: I'm amazed the number of times candidates come in to be interviewed by me and they have not done that research. I mean, it's so easy to get hold of that information now on the web, in trade journals, in the financial press.

Mark: Role-play – great tool to use when preparing for an interview. You can do this in many different ways. You can ask a friend, a family member, your mother, your father or your partner to be the person that you're going to be interviewed by. Get them to act as the interviewer and don't prompt them too much. Just see what happens.

David: One of the top 10 things I've done – what are my likes and dislikes, what are my good projects and bad projects? If you've role-played them and you've got the answers in your head, they come out usually, but it certainly shows when you come in for the interview.

Rob: One guy I did interview and actually gave a job to, told me later that he had planned for it just with a work colleague, done the preparation in separate offices and it had worked well.

Mark: Visualisation – great technique to use particularly in interviews. Visualise the whole interview. Visualise the interview ending in a very positive way for you. Feel very confident. Visualise laughter. Visualise a very positive conversation during the course of that interview and it will happen.

Jonathan: Assuming you are going to get the interview, it's a small thing but it's really important. Does everyone in the household know you're expecting a call and will they all answer the phone in the correct manner? It's highly inappropriate if somebody were to ring to offer you an interview and they get on the phone who doesn't know who you are, what's the call about, says you're in the bath, says you're lying in the sun lounger in the back garden when you're supposed to be at work.

David: Have some sort of system in place whereby you've got your reasons for applying for every single job that you have done, otherwise, you're going to get caught out.

Jonathan: You want to be ready with a pitch that says who you are, what you've done and what it is that you're looking for in your next job so that you can get that point across clearly and concisely without fluffing your lines.

Alison: I remember one particular time where I had the CV which I liked. I made the call and the girl picked up the phone and sounded absolutely deadbeat on the phone – the way she picked the phone up, the questions that I asked her. She was just very low in energy and she didn't have a thing to say so basically, she blew it.

Tim: The day before you got your interview booked, confirm it. A lot of people don't do that. They'll just turn up. Okay, but you're making a difference. You're showing that you're interested. You also don't want to waste your time and you don't want to waste anyone else's time.

WRITE DOWN 10 WAYS YOU CAN PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

PART 3 - ARRIVING

Mark: Arriving at the interview is a critical part of the process and it actually begins the moment you drive into the company's car park. So, please do not be an hour and a half early for your interview, park in the company's car park and sit there for an hour and a half because it might be clocked and if someone's sitting there for an hour and a half they'll think, that person isn't very busy.

David: The last thing you want to do is pitch up late for your interview. It doesn't show a particularly good start and not only that – you're going to feel in the wrong frame of mind for your interview as well. The last thing you want to do is pitch in, sort of sweaty just having to run from the tube station to the office.

Jonathan: A good time is about five minutes before your interview is due to start. Once again, if this is a large office building, you may have to sign in downstairs and get to the twentieth floor. So, you've got to really think about the timing and it is absolutely vital. Too early – too much pressure on the interviewer. Too late is no good.

David: Frequently, with these companies and certainly, larger companies – they've got reserved bays or disabled bays and you don't have to find yourself either circling around the car park for 10 minutes or parking somewhere where you shouldn't do and then, being pulled out of your interview to meet for your car.

Mark: Be positive, be polite to absolutely everybody that you meet because you're being judged from the moment that anyone can see you. There are CCTV cameras in most organisations now so wherever you are, you're probably being looked at by somebody.

Mark: Dress code's really important. You are judged by how you look in the first 10, 15 seconds whether we like it or not. That's just the reality of it. Then, you need to identify what is the most appropriate dress code for that organisation. Lots of different ways of finding out. Obviously, you can just phone up and ask the receptionist or the PA what is the appropriate dress code for their organisation. Don't assume. It always used to be men were in suits, ladies were in smart, tailored clothes – not the case anymore, depends on who the organisation is.

Jonathan: If you're not sure, the best rule of thumb is to make sure that you dress conservatively. By conservative, I'm talking about dark colours in your suit jacket or ladies jacket and that the blouse or shirt underneath should be of lighter colour, preferably cream or white.

Mark: The other thing you can do is park outside 5:00, 6:00 in the evening the day before. Find out what people are wearing when they come out.

Jonathan: Comedy ties, comedy socks, cartoon characters, cartoon cufflinks and cartoon scarves are just inappropriate, no matter what the role you go for.

Simon: A good example is of a Managing Director finished the interview after five minutes because the candidate hasn't polished his shoes and will give...even though he feels he has a small point...give a very reasonable explanation by saying, "If someone's coming to something that important and can forget to clean his shoes then what else could he forget?" It's more a reflection of the person and certainly, the guy

that used to have psychometric testing, the occupational psychologist – he used to have a huge problem with people that didn't wear watches because it was a very bad sign of organisation.

Jonathan: If you've been asked to take a seat in reception, when the interviewer comes out...and don't forget, this is the first time they've ever seen you...you're actually standing by the reception desk. It makes you look impatient and it makes you look that you are unsatisfied at being kept waiting.

Mark: The PA or the receptionist – whoever meets and greets you, and takes you to the meeting room is absolutely vital in the whole process again. Don't underestimate their importance.

Simon: I used to work for an MD actually whose PA always used to show people into the boardroom, sit them down, give them a cup of tea or coffee before the MD would give the interview and before he went in, one of the first questions he asks his PA is, "What do you think of them?"

Rob: It's very important that they understand that it's the whole of the company that they're dealing with and not just myself, and they can't just switch a light on and start smiling just when they walk into my office. It's important that they're dealing with everyone in the organisation.

Jonathan: Be ready then, of course, if you've got your coffee, if you've got your brochures, if you've got everything ready – you're going to have to stand up and shake somebody's hand. So, pick the right seat. Make sure everything's put down – you're not going to knock a coffee over in the first 10 seconds.

Mark: Show an interest in them. Be polite but don't be over polite. Don't be smarmy. Nobody likes a smart ass but show a genuine, sincere interest in them as individuals.

Alison: Be enthusiastic. I think that actually exudes confidence, and someone who is bright and confident will inspire me. You can have as many qualifications as you like but if you're not bright and inspiring, I wouldn't be interested.

Mark: An interviewer wants to see and hear lots of enthusiasm. They're judging you as to whether they like you, whether you're going to fit into the team, how easy or difficult will you be to manage, are you competent, are you capable of doing the job they're going to ask you to do.

Liz: Ability to speak to an audience clearly, not an audience of a hundred people but one or two clearly and get your point across, and I think it's important to be able to enunciate your experience. It's very easy to write it on a piece of paper but when it comes to explaining what you've actually done, you need to be able to do that.

Alison: What motivates me about a person is how much energy are they going to have because when I've got people around me in my organisation, I want them to be up and energetic because that energy has an effect on the business. If you've got people that are very low in energy, very lethargic, haven't got much going on in their life, it doesn't really do anything for my organisation or actually anything for me personally.

Rob: Because at the end of the day if I'm going to work with them, I want to enjoy being around with them. I don't want to be with people that I don't enjoy their company.

Simon: The best interviews I've conducted from a point of view of people have gone onto be successful have always been when a person's attitude has impressed me in the interview.

Liz: I think interviewees can be too cocky or too humble. When you are hiring people, you want people who will be part of your team, you're proud to show around the company and meet people from outside. So, people who do themselves down, talking to their shoes and things like that – not impressive when you're interviewing. Similarly, you don't want to be taking Jack, the loud rant to be showing off in your team who's too cheeky and doesn't have enough knowledge and experience to offset that cheek, shall we say.

David: Switch your mobile phone off or put it on stun, silent or whatever it is you do and also, you don't have stupid ring tones playing the Looney Tunes theme when you're just trying to put across how serious you are and how dedicated you are to the new job.

Rob: I have had a situation where a guy came on for interview. It was a classic case of how not to do an interview. He turned up late. Whenever that happens, this guy in particular is all hot and bothered. He came in. He spent 10, 15 minutes excusing himself and explaining why the traffic jam prevented him from getting in. No sooner had he sat down, 10 minutes into the interview, the telephone rang which is a big no-no in any interview. Mobile phones should be switched off. He wasn't prepared or maybe, he was prepared but the impression he gave because he was so flustered was that he just wasn't the candidate – not the kind of person I want representing our company.

WRITE DOWN 10 WAYS HOW YOU CAN MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

PART 4 - RAPPORT

Stephen: So, you've applied for the job. Your CV highlights your achievements, you're well-prepared and you arrive at the interview full of enthusiasm. Our research has shown that if you applied just some of the advice you'd been given, you'll significantly get yourself ahead of the competition.

Simple, isn't it? What could possibly go wrong?

Well, let's go back to the experts now and see what they have to say about making the most of the first half of your interview.

Jonathan: Rapport is about getting somebody to connect with you, and vice versa, and of course if you do that in an interview, you explode your chances of actually getting that job.

David: For me, first impressions are essential if you speak to anyone that says that first impressions last, once you've made that impression with someone, it's very difficult to change their opinion of you.

Mark: Posture is really important. You want to walk in there – shoulders back, stand tall, you're smiling a little. Have a set of confidence about you.

Jonathan: Make sure once again you make eye contact with everybody in there. You may be introduced to other people.

Mark: Good, firm handshake but not too hard where you're going to break the guy or lady's hand.

Liz: Not the floppy, sweaty fish. That's not pleasant at all. A bit of confidence as you walk in the room. It's very unlikely that you're going to get bitten so you might as well come in with your head held high.

Rob: I would like to think that I subconsciously make up my mind after five or ten minutes. In reality, it's probably a lot sooner than that.

Mark: People like people who like themselves so make it really easy for this interviewer to ultimately offer you the job and whether they like you or not, actually does play quite a big part in this so there are a number of techniques that you can use to build rapport with the person you're talking to.

Mark: One who's sitting in the actual chair, leaning forward, showing enthusiasm...

Jonathan: Take the chance where you can to notice some spot – anything that you can feedback to the company such as if they were on a nice premises, if the people have been really friendly to you – take the opportunity to acknowledge it.

Tim: Ask a few questions of them and suddenly they're feeling great about themselves but they're interviewing you so it just adds a lot of ways of differentiating yourself from other people.

Rob: In my office, for example, there are lots of clues as to my hobbies and my family whether it be golf awards or photographs of my young son and wife.

Alison: Picture of my horse...I've got a Buddha statue on the sideboards, I've got maybe some other magazines – I've got some yoga magazines over there and it's nice when someone notices things about me. We can get into a conversation. Those are very interactive and immediately, you start building a relationship with that person when you're talking about something that you've got in common.

Jonathan: If you're asked to sit down at the decision-maker or the interviewer's desk, just be aware like you would if you were going into a friend's house or somebody else's home of your personal space and what you're going to take ownership of.

Mark: They'll ask you some humble, easy-going questions to break the ice. Obviously, answer those and see if you can have one or two of your own as well, like, "How long have you been in the organisation," type thing.

Celia: It's a proven fact that the more somebody emulates the body language, the more synergy that person feels with the other individual. It works. It's worth doing.

Mark: Mirror and match is what we call it but basically, it's by mirroring and matching their physical posture but don't be too obvious with it. That's the key to this but it's important that you do it.

David: If you can be subtle in how you do that and you can mirror somebody's actions, or their speech patterns, the tempo of their speech or their hand gestures.

Jonathan: If someone's really up there in your face, if they're leaning forward, sometimes, matching that can be good. Even if they sit back and they back off a little bit, maybe you want to consider that, too.

Mark: Listen very carefully to the tonality of their voice. Not so much the content of what they're saying isn't vital at the moment – how they're saying it is. If they speak very quickly then maybe you should speak a little bit more quickly than you normally would. If they speak with a very high pitch voice then don't try and copy the high pitch necessarily but maybe lift your voice an octave or two. If they speak very slowly and deliberately then you speak slowly and deliberately. Make it easy for them to communicate with you in the way that makes them comfortable.

David: There is a word of warning there. Just make sure you can do it if you're totally comfortable. If you're not, it can have the complete and opposite effect from what you're looking for.

Mark: It's also quite a powerful tool to break eye contact sometimes. If you got asked a question and you absolutely know the answer to it but you want to have more impact with that answer then what you can do is look away, pause then deliver your answer and you actually have a lot more impact. It's a bit like acting. Actors, actresses do this all the time.

Jonathan: Once again, the devil is in the detail and these are all of the subconscious decision-making techniques that mean decision-makers when they talk of people making a gut reaction as to why they employ someone, that's the gut reaction and that's where it comes from.

Liz: The use of humour in an interview. I think, something doesn't go a-miss. Crude humour – probably not, and anything that crosses too many boundaries – not a good idea.

Simon: There was a competency-based interview question that checks on humour and the question asks – give us an example of when you made somebody laugh. That just shows how difficult the subject of humour is in the interview.

Celia: It's much better to make sure that you're appreciating it, showing that you enjoy humour and that you do have a sense of humour rather than be the one that is cracking the jokes.

Jonathan: The best way to create an impression in an interview is to bring supporting material and this can give you a real advantage over other people attending.

Mark: It can be certificates. It can be records of sales charts and where you are in those sales charts. It could be a letter from a customer recommending how wonderful service you've provided.

David: Reviews from a previous employer or a current employer. Anything that you've done that's made it into the press or industry – any clippings that you've got.

Mark: If you're in selling, can you bring sales leads, tables, targets – anything that you've achieved. If you've been an employee of the month, have you got a photograph, is there an award?

Rob: References from Senior Managers, probably even better from customers or distributors, for example, that you may have worked on projects for.

Jonathan: Put it in, I guess, what is called a presenter or in some cases, a brag file.

Mark: Don't be shy, okay? An interview is not the place to be shy. Get that brag pack out on occasions when it's appropriate. But, get it out. Hand it over to the person. Get them to look at it, feel it, touch it. It shows that you're very confident that you can't just talk the talk, you've actually delivered something as well.

Jonathan: Providing it's neat and smart, crisp and clean. We won't necessarily set up a stall and lay it all out on the interviewer's desk but you can keep it with you in a briefcase and make sure that any opportunity when it does come up or if they ask you about it, you've got it there to bring out.

WRITE DOWN 10 WAYS HOW YOU CAN BUILD INSTANT RAPPORT

PART 5 – QUALITY QUESTIONS

David: It's really important to prepare for the interview for the questions you're going to be asked and the questions you want to ask.

Jonathan: Preparing your questions is absolutely vital to a successful interview.

Mark: It's really important you can demonstrate you've thought about this interview before you go. Many people turn up for interviews with the attitude that it's all in my head and that's fine.

Mark: The key benefits are that while you're asking questions, you are controlling the interview because you can't be answering while you're asking.

Simon: There's an old saying and many people said that if you're a good salesperson, ask a lot of questions. I don't believe that. I believe that good salespeople ask good quality questions and when someone's interviewing you, they're not looking for a big list of mundane, boring questions like what are the hours, is there a subsidised canteen and that sort of thing.

Jonathan: People love to talk about themselves. Remember the interviewer isn't a monster. They're a human being, too and people also like people to take an interest in them.

Rob: You've got to remember that I see a lot of candidates when I'm interviewing for positions so I want a two-way street where I'm being asked questions about our company but not just our company – about me, my background, what I want to do in the company.

David: It's a good way to engage them and get that rapport going as well as find out some insights into what it's like to work for the company.

Alison: It also helps warm me up towards the person because we get some conversation going. It's not just a list of questions.

Mark: So, why did they join the business? Where did they see the opportunities going for somebody like you in the business? Why should you want to join the business?

Celia: Why are they still with the company? What are their longer term ambitions? What are their big achievements in the company from their point of view?

Mark: What are some of the challenges associated with working in that organisation and try and get the questions at more of a personal level between the two of you. Never talk about salary, for example, early on in the meetings, holidays – all those sort of incidental things that you'll get to know at a later date should they offer you the job. Focus on being able to do the job. Why would you do the job? Where the opportunity is? What are some of the challenges associated with that?

Rob: I don't want people who are just to be yes-men or yes-women. I want them to be asking me, to be discussing things with me and putting me on the back foot be-

cause at the end of the day, it's those interviews that I'm going to remember once they've gone.

Mark: That also tells the individual that you're meeting – God, this guy's really interested in this role. He's asking me some great questions. This guy can really represent my company in whatever the job is that you're looking to do because when people interview these days, they're not just interviewing you for that particular job. They're also saying...people talk about bandwidth..."What is this guy or lady capable of? What is their potential?" That's just as important as your ability to do the job.

Jonathan: It's great to have backup questions and the backup questions– second phase questioning should be questions that relate to information you've received. So, be thinking about receiving information and following on with another question. So, things like, "You told me earlier the company's expanding. My question is which markets are you thinking of going into?"

Liz: Some of the best questions have been things like, "What would be the things that you can tell me that would persuade me to take this job?" because that pushes the interviewer into thinking quite hard about it.

Mark: Good questions always begin with who, why, what, where and when. It's actually a classic sales technique and they're called open questions. There's nothing too difficult about it. It's just recognising if you can start your questions that way rather than could I, do you, will you, have you.

Simon: The reason for that is that open questions generate more of a response. If I was to ask a closed question about a company's expansion, I'd say, "Has your company got any plans to expand?" to which the interviewer could just say, "Yes," or "No." The better way to ask that question would be to say, "What plans does your company have for expansion?" and that then becomes a conversation because they will answer by saying that this is what we've got planned, this is what we're doing, these are new products – whatever it might be and you can get involved back by saying, "Really?" and, "What timescale is that over?" and therefore, you open more of a dialogue and build much more of rapport with your interviewer than you would by just asking short questions that evoke short responses.

Liz: I've had the situation where someone's turned up with two sheets of A4 type-written questions. That's overkill, I'm afraid. You didn't do your preparation before you arrived.

Rob: Too often, I see candidates – they come to be very banal questions that they've never really thought of before the interview and they just throw away questions. Sometimes when we ask people whether they have any questions, they even say, "No," which is a definite no-no.

WRITE DOWN 10 GREAT QUESTIONS THAT WILL IMPRESS

PART 6 – TRICKY SITUATIONS

Liz: It's much easier to hire someone than fire them so we have to be doubly cautious when we're taking people on because if there is an issue, it's going to be three times as much effort to remove that person from the company.

Mark: Dealing with some of the difficult questions in an interview is obviously incredibly important and how you handle those questions will probably make the difference between getting the job or not.

Liz: If it's a bad hire, that will reflect very badly on me.

Jonathan: What are your strengths and weaknesses, how would you describe yourself, are going to appear in your interview. However, contrived it may seem, you need to think of your answers.

Simon: If you can demonstrate respect of an employer that you are actually aware of your weaknesses and then, demonstrate effort that you're putting in to overcome them or effort you're prepared to put in to overcome those weaknesses then that's something they're interested in seeing.

Jonathan: It's important to recognise everybody in life has had failures and it's a very tough interviewer and a tough process that wouldn't acknowledge those. Once again, keep them in proportion. We don't want our failures to be bigger than our successes and where if we have got a failure, talk about what we learned from it and once again, going forward, what it is you've improved as a result of that failure.

Mark: The key is to turn what is a potentially negative type answer into a positive answer.

Alison: If somebody says to me that they're not that great on the phone but they found this fantastic course, on the internet, they've been doing it for three months and they're just so much better, that just gives me confidence though that if we come across challenges during the time they're employed, they're prepared to do what it takes to make that situation better.

Jonathan: The answer itself isn't actually that important. It's how you answer it rather than what you say.

Mark: So, if somebody says to you, "What have you been criticised for in the past?" for example then you might turn around to them and say, "I am really impatient. I do get criticised for being really impatient and sometimes, I get criticised for trying to do things too quickly and that's really because my enthusiasm sometimes just gets the better of me, and I'm really focused on results and however we get there – it doesn't really matter too much as long as we do get there.

Celia: Maybe, think of several more than you think they will ask you for because some companies will try and catch you out in recognising that you have planned for the first one or two and they will keep asking.

Mark: Some people accuse me of being very picky because I do like to cross every T and dot every I but that's because I think it's really important. Attention to detail is important these days so I don't apologise for that. It's just I think it's

a very professional way of working. But, I have been criticised for that in the past by some people who don't think it's so important.

Tim: If the interviewer is just rabbiting on and just talking on and on and on, and you're thinking, time's running out, I need to speak – good, you've got to speak. Don't be nice. Don't let them rabbit on and just nod your head because at the end of the day, they'll carry on talking feeling great about themselves and suddenly, it's time to go and they thought, you didn't say much. It's not their fault. It's your fault for not asking the questions, okay? So for example, let's say they're rabbiting on about something and you're thinking, Gee, I need to know something. You can say something like, "Absolutely great!" Just interrupt. Be energetic – "I really got that point! I really resonate with that!" and this is an experience I had. Suddenly, you're back in the game.

Liz: If someone has a gap in their CV and they haven't filled it in, so to speak, I'll always ask the question, "Where were you? What happened then?" and I think honesty is the best policy. You'll quite often find in lots of industries that everybody knows everybody else so if you've been fired from somewhere, I'll find out because I'll have friends who will know you. So, I think, come clean and say, "Now, I've been made redundant." It's one of those things. It's part of working life.

Simon: You can be honest and say, "I thought I'd walk into something like (X)...but it didn't work out that way and at the end of the day, I was wrong." As you can see, it's very handsome when you admit you were wrong. People will have more respect for you than if you try and lie your way through it. So, the key to it is to be honest.

Liz: In terms of qualifications, I'm pretty open-minded but if you haven't got a university degree, there are plenty of other ways of improving your qualifications such as membership of professional bodies, part-time study – things like that. So if someone sends me a CV – they've come straight out of school into work and then a few years later, they've gone back and done some studying after hours, etc, etc, I think that's great.

Tim: So, what an interviewer might do – he will ask you a question and you will then respond to that question then suddenly, there's a silence. How you respond to that silence is really critical, moving forward. Now, my advice to you would be something like either stay silent and smile but more seriously, I would suggest what you do is say something like, "Does that answer your question? Is what I've said clear?" Put it back on them. Put the question back. It's respectful. It breaks the silence and it gets you back in control. Don't ever try and handle silence by carrying on talking because it will turn into a wuffle.

Jonathan: One of the trickiest areas of the interview is where people get stuck in talking about negatives and those negatives normally come up from the question – why have you left your last job, why are you looking for a move now?

Mark: Make sure that you paint your current employer in a positive light and if it's the case of they can't offer you prospects anymore then there's nothing wrong with saying that in interview if that's what you want out of life. If the company can't offer you what you want, there's nothing wrong with moving on but for you to sit there and slag them on would not look very good at all.

David: People look to how you talk about others as to how potentially you're going to talk about them.

Jonathan: So when people ask you why you left – “What was wrong with your previous job?” try and look at it on a positive side and prepare your answer to talk positively about not why you’re leaving a company but actually, what opportunity you’re looking for next or what else presented itself after that job and why you made that change. It’s a minefield and if you want to spend an hour in a meeting talking about your old boss and getting yourself into deeper and deeper trouble, go ahead but you won’t get the job.

Celia: Another thing you need to be very careful about is if the interviewer starts swearing. Now, please don’t think you can mirror that. The amount of times I have my clients saying to me that they couldn’t believe how many times the person swore in the interview. When I talked to my candidate about it, they say, “All I was doing was mirroring them.”

David: An interviewer may make some comments or make some suggestions which you may find either inappropriate or that you think that they’ve overstepped the mark. In those instances, you should make sure that you get across politely that you think that, that’s incorrect or they’ve overstepped the mark. Be constructive as you can about it but make sure that you stand your ground, and that you are true to what you’re thinking and what you believe.

Tim: If you’re not clear on the question, go back to them and say, “Excuse me, I didn’t quite understand what you were saying. Could you just repeat that?” or “Could you just clarify? Do I understand what you mean by this is (da-da)…” It’s okay to do that and it’s even okay in situations where someone asks you a really smart question. It’s absolutely okay to say, “I don’t know. Sorry, I can’t answer that question. I haven’t got a clue!” or whatever it is. Don’t make things up. Don’t try and blag your way through an interview. You’ll get caught out.

WRITE DOWN 10 GREAT ANSWERS TO TRICKY QUESTIONS

PART 7 - PRESENTING

Stephen: Okay. So, you've been aware of your body language, you've asked some great questions and you've dealt with some tricky situations. I understand that there's a lot to think about but for the right job, it's worth it.

So, you're nearly there. Now, let's look at the final stage of the interview process.

Jonathan: Part of the interview process may involve a presentation and it's really important if you want to nail that job that we get this bit right. What type of presentation and when you should present, to a certain extent, is in the hands of the interviewer and the employer. They may ask you at the end of the first interview to prepare something for the next meeting.

Mark: If you are being asked to do a presentation which a lot of companies do now then be absolutely clear what they are expecting from you and if you're not sure, phone up again before the second interview and ask some questions to be clear that you're going to present the information that they're actually asking you to present.

David: My own personal opinion on this is you should only do one if you're requested and there's a danger by standing up and doing a presentation when you haven't been asked to do one that you can make yourself look bad, almost and if you're volunteering to do one when it hasn't been requested then you've got to make sure it's absolutely spot-on because they'll be drilling you critically.

Mark: The most important way of presenting that information is the way that you feel very comfortable and confident with. So if you're a wizard on PowerPoint and you love it, use it. If you're great with white flip charts and you can just do it on the huff then do it that way.

Jonathan: If you're not comfortable with using any of the technology that's been mentioned then give them a handout. Print it out on paper and hand it to people. That's fine. Don't go into an interview unprepared and not know the technology.

Alison: A presentation shouldn't take any longer than five or ten minutes, they should be very direct, very succinct, have a beginning, a middle and an end, and hopefully put some content in there that the person you're presenting to is not expecting new content. If they ask you to do a presentation on their company, don't just copy their website and give it back to them. Maybe, do a SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

Alison: The key elements of a good presentation are firstly, summarise what you're going to say. That's very important. Make sure that you don't rush and also, please don't waffle.

Celia: Make sure that it's all about the benefits that you're going to deliver to that business.

Rob: I'd also like that intertwine with a knowledge of the market. I'd like them to demonstrate they know about our market and the market dynamics.

Mark: People's attention span is very, very short so what you've got to do is keep it concise. Keep it all about benefits.

Jonathan: Time yourself before you do it. Have a dummy run and practice it. If there is no time constraint, stick to a maximum of 10 minutes.

Rob: I actually want to see during the PowerPoint somewhere, what impact you think you're going to have on my business. That's one of the key things of course, I'm looking for.

Jonathan: So in other words, demonstrate what you will do for that organisation when you get there.

WRITE DOWN HOW YOU WOULD PREFER TO PRESENT

PART 8 – CLOSING WITH STYLE

Mark: Closing the interview – probably the most important couple of minutes you’re going to have in the whole of that meeting.

There’re a couple of key steps you need to go through when you close the meeting. First of all, summarise the meeting. Summarise what you love about the company, what you see is the great opportunity with that particular role. Summarise any next actions that you may have agreed to do for that individual and also, ask that person, what are their thoughts on you as a candidate for that role, okay? Don’t be shy. This is not the time to be shy. Once you’re out of that door, you might never get back through it so draw out any concerns that they might have about you doing that job.

Jonathan: Flush out why you’ve got the chance with the interviewers – anything, any barriers that stop you going forward or any barriers that would stop them offering you a job. It may be something small that you can clear up. It may be something in the interview that you haven’t explained very well. I think this is a great time at the end of the interview just to make sure that’s right.

Mark: If they say, “No, I’ve got no real concerns at all. I think, you could do the job,” then say, “Great, thank you very much. I really want this job. How do I move this forward? What do I need to do? What is the interview process? Who else do I need to meet? How do I demonstrate to you that I want this job, can do this job and you’re going to offer me this job?”

Rob: One guy recently came to see me and at the end of the interview, he demonstrated his enthusiasm but actually told me, he really wanted the job, and his keenness and enthusiasm was a sincere one, and that sold it to me. He made a demonstrative impression and that guy got the job in the end.

Jonathan: What you need to get right – you need to have a conclusion that thanks them for their time, you need a conclusion that will say to them that you’re interested and you need a conclusion that asks what the next step is. If at the very least you do those three things, you’ve gone some way to closing the interview. If you want to take it further, that’s fine, too and taking it further would then be moving into classic closing techniques. Those closing techniques would be asking for when the second interviews are. When would you like to see me again? If I was available, when would you prefer to see me, next week or the week after on Monday or Tuesday? So for many people, that would seem abhorrent to even come close to asking people those types of questions but once again, executive, management and sales positions – people will be expecting you to lay down on the line and say, you’re interested in the job. If you come and feel uncomfortable with doing any of those, just make sure as you walk out, you tell the interviewer that you’re very keen to pursue it and if you are asked back, you’d say, “Yes.”

Simon: My own personal experience of closing an interview was when I met the MD of the last recruitment company I worked for and built a financial recruitment division for. At the end of the first interview, I asked him – did he have any reservations about my ability to fill the role that he was looking to fill and he said, as far as he could see, I was a young man with a bright future in recruitment ahead of me and I then asked him if that bright future involved working for his company and he just

sort of laughed and said, “You’re trying to close me,” and said, “Let’s see at the second interview.”

Alison: At the end of the interview, sometimes it can go a bit dead but what I like to see is someone who is still lively, gets up, shakes my hand and tells me, they’ve really enjoyed meeting me and they’re really looking forward to hearing from me.

Simon: After the second interview, I closed them again and I said to him, “Did I have the job?” and he said that he’d seen a number of people and was looking to formulate packages or structured packages for individuals to which I asked, “Will I be the first person you’re looking to structure a package for?” and he said, he’d phone me later at which he did offer me the job.

Jonathan: When the interview’s finished and you’ve left, take the chance to just feedback to whoever it was that introduced you to the interviewer or set up the meeting. Maybe, it was the personnel department. Maybe, it was HR. Maybe, it was another line manager.

Alison: What I would recommend is you write a letter just to reiterate your enthusiasm about wanting to work for the company, saying how nice it was to meet me and that would just remind me of you, whereas if you leave it and someone else writes me the letter, I’m going to think about them.

Celia: Play it to win. Go through the interview. Make sure you get the offer. You want as many offers as possible. You want to be in a position of choice. However much during the interview you feel that it’s not for you, don’t let that influence how you come over. You could change your mind down the line.

WRITE DOWN 10 WAYS YOU CAN CLOSE WITH STYLE

PART 9 – THE JOB OFFER

Mark: The final stage will be references. They will take up references, obviously – normally, the references that you’ve given them. So, this is often where people have made mistakes in the past where they pull out references out of thin air and they haven’t checked with the referees that they can actually use this information.

So as part of this process, get the references all sorted out before you go even to your first interview. Line them up, phone them up and say, “(Da-da-da)...I’m going for an interview. Is it okay if I use you as a reference?” etc, etc. So, check your references and make sure that they are going to say what you want them to say.

Alison: One thing that might impress the interviewer is by you asking to meet people in those current roles in that company, you know, because you can obviously then demonstrate to them that you want to find out more so that you would put yourself in a position if offered the job that you have got strong factual basis to make a decision on and it’s not a woolly decision. You’ve done as much preparation, looked into it as much as you can, found out as much as you can.

David: You’re going to be spending a lot of time at this place. Where are you going to work? You’ve had an interview in an office. You’ve got no idea what the rest of the offices are like. So, I would recommend that you maybe ask if you can spend half a day. Get them to show you around where you’re going to work. Meet some of the people you’re going to be working with. I think that shows a lot of commitment and enthusiasm, and if that was me and someone asked me if they could do that, I’d be very impressed.

David: Look and see how the other employees are. Do they look happy? Do they look like they’re sort of a satisfied, enthusiastic bunch? Do you feel you’re going to be able to get along with the ethos and the culture of the company?

Mark: An interviewer might say to you, “What are your salary expectations for this role?” Now, do not fall into this trap. Do not tell them. Turn that around and ask them – what do they think this job is worth to their company, what is the value, what are they expecting to pay? Now in a lot of cases, you’ll have an idea because it would have been put in the advert or someone would have told you during the course of the process. Most of the time, conversations about money come up in the second or final meeting, they don’t generally come up in the first unless the interviewer is concerned that your expectations are a long way out from what they are prepared to pay and at the first interview if that’s a real concern for either you or them then get it out into the open in meeting because you don’t want to waste time with companies that can’t afford you and you don’t want to waste time talking to companies that have got no intention of paying you what you think you’re worth or what you’re currently earning.

David: I think, it’s quite okay to say, “Obviously, I’m not earning that now but that’s what I’m looking for in my new job.” It’s without giving away because you don’t want to give away too much but you do want to aspire to do things. So my advice would be tell them what you’re looking for – “Obviously, it’s not what I’m being paid now but it’s what I’m looking for in my next job, and I think, I’m worth it and that’s what I’m going for.”

Jonathan: Let's not forget, this is a very sensitive part of the process. If you highball which means going in with a figure that's unrealistic, they're likely to reject you from the overall process and go for somebody cheaper. Equally if you go in with a figure that's too low – a lowball figure then you may end up making a move for a job that's paying you less than you're currently on or the same as what you're earning in which case, your chances of staying there diminish with your satisfaction levels. So, it's important, both parties understand that it's a figure right for you and for them.

Alison: You need to make sure you know what companies like mine are paying for that level of job.

Celia: You need to remember that whatever you ask for, the company may look to negotiate you down as well so be very sure.

Alison: I would never go in with my top offer. I would recommend that you actually find out what the current rates are in your marketplace so that you can negotiate.

Mark: What are they prepared to pay? What is the banding for this salary? If there's a bonus element, what is the bonus element? Is it open-ended? What is it based on? What would they expect me to earn in the first year if I was a salesperson? What is their top salesperson earning this year? What is their worst salesperson earning this year? Get some evidence from them as well and turn it into a discussion rather than just a pure question and answer situation.

David: If you're in the fortunate position of being near that job offer or actually having had the job offer and it's down to salary negotiation if you use a recruitment agency, my suggestion is, use them to negotiate your salary. Take yourself away from that. It gets very emotive and very emotional. At the same time, get the professionals in. They might be able to secure a better deal on your behalf.

Alison: Once you've actually got your job offer and you're looking at the salary – just the figure or the salary and it's not quite what you're looking for but everything else is nice about the job, why don't you maybe just ask for a review, perhaps, in three months – a salary review in three months.

David: Print off all of your benefits package and lay them out side by side. Sometimes, there are benefits which the companies are giving you which are valued higher than you expected when you look at them a second time. Similarly, you may find that you're going to it from a company that had a great healthcare policy to a company with a healthcare policy but has a £500 excess on it. So, you want to make sure that you understand the full benefits package and you do a real like for like comparison.

Alison: You might have parking. You might be working in a city where it's a nightmare to park and it's going to cost you a fortune to park there. You might be offered flexitime.

Mark: If you've got any concerns, voice them, okay? Voice them and get those concerns out. People will respect you more for it and I've heard many times when I've tried to talk myself out of a job and said, "Look, honestly, I don't think I'm the best person for this job," and then, the role is flipped completely and the individual starts persuading you that you are the best person for this role.

Tim: Make sure you do absolute due diligence on the company that you can speak to anybody that you know or find out people that can work there. They can give you an insight into the company. Even make a second phone call if you've got any questions or a third phone call back to human resources or to your potential new boss. You want to make absolutely sure that, that company's right for you. You don't want to be going in to somewhere and then two months later, figuring out that you've made a terrible mistake.

Mark: Also look at what experience you're going to gain. Where is this job going to lead you? It's going to lead you to the next stage so it's not just about the salary. It's about the organisation, the benefits, the working environment and what you're going to learn so make sure you don't just look at the bottom-line.

David: Now as a by-product of a successful, moving, growing company, you'll get the benefits so that's what you should be talking about. Throw it back at them. It makes you much more confident, much more credible and thinking, wow, I'm interested in this guy. He's not only interested in the compensation but he's interested in how he can grow, how he can move and how he can challenge and be challenged in a thriving, working, on forward-moving environment.

Jonathan: You're in a really vulnerable time once you've handed your notice in before you start with any company. Try and work to the start they offer you or if you can, actually get in there a bit earlier to show your willingness. It's really important when you're changing jobs to keep the momentum moving. So if the company wants you to start the following Monday and you can do it, do it, okay? It's important you get in the job. You'll get your holiday time if that's owed to you and needs to be paid. Fine, but don't delay it.

Alison: Because if I interview someone else who is just as nice as you and they can start quicker than you are more than likely, to offer them the job.

Jonathan: Alright. Putting that together, the most important thing to remember is this – the interviewer is looking to recruit someone for the job. They have a position. They want it filled. The interviewing is a sifting process. Maybe, one, two or three interviews – who knows? People see it as a negative process. They see it as an opportunity to be rejected and to be knocked out. Every time a candidate walks through that door, the interviewer's hoping it's going to be the right one. All they're looking for is enough excuses to give you the job. If you attack every interview with that mental approach, you're going to be more positive, more enthusiastic and you'll get more successes. They want you. They actually want you. They want you to be right. Just give them the opportunity to recruit you.

WRITE DOWN 10 WAYS YOU CAN NEGOTIATE THE JOB OFFER

PART 10 - AND FINALLY...

Stephen: Congratulations! You've made it. You've heard lots of opinions and lots of advice. Now, it's time to start thinking about you.

One of the most important things to remember is to create your own style and approach using the techniques that apply to you.

We can't guarantee your success but the experiences of our experts have shown that by applying these skills, they'll improve your chances significantly.