

# INTERVIEWS —MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION

TEXT: JOYCE THORNTON

There are lots of websites and video clips now freely available, offering excellent information about how to handle an interview and nail that all important job. ARTS THREAD lists some useful links and offers a few interview tips of our own.

## PRE-INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Once you have landed an interview, you need to do some really thorough research into the company and the position itself. Find out as much as you can. If it is a big organisation, request information such as a company profile from the marketing department or a press pack. Obviously, have a good look at the website, noting any key messages and important policies that they have.

Prepare to be asked questions relating to the company/brand's current products, their position in the marketplace, their competitors, their history/heritage and very importantly, be prepared to be asked how you would contribute to their success. This

research is hugely important and will give you the confidence to answer lots of varied questions that may be posed. Neglect this essential element at your peril!

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Most interviews for a position in the design industry won't be scarily starchy affairs and will appear fairly relaxed. But don't be fooled—how you come across to a prospective employer on the day is all-important and nowhere is this more relevant than if your job is in the image-obsessed design industry. In any interview however, image and body language are said to count for a whopping 70% of an employer's impression of a candidate—made in the first five minutes of an interview.

Don't forget really important but simple things such as eye contact, smiling and a confident handshake. Always aim to arrive early: you should allow plenty of time to get to the interview, allowing for all eventualities of weather, public transport failures etc.

## TEAMWORK

Most jobs in the design industry are almost always about being able to work within a team and employers will be looking keenly for someone who can fit well into their existing set-up. This can take some adjusting to—as the focus of students at university or college is invariably on working as an individual. Of course employers are interested in your individual qualities—but be prepared to talk about your excellent communication skills and cite examples of how you have previously worked well in a team.

## SHOWING YOUR DESIGN PORTFOLIO

This can take up a large chunk of the interview, but aside from showing your talent, you must be prepared to talk enthusiastically about your work. Consider what you are going to say, and practice showing your portfolio to a friend or family member prior to the actual interview. Remember that there will be other candidates who also have good portfolios—so make sure that you stand apart from the crowd through your memorable presence at the interview. Be very careful however, not to drone on with a long story relating to every page or project, otherwise you will be memorable for all the wrong reasons! Keep it snappy and relevant and remember interviewers have limited time to spare.

## LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE INTERVIEWER'S QUESTIONS

When showing your portfolio, listen to the questions and wait for them to finish before answering. However, if they don't ask anything—talk them through what you enjoyed and felt you learned from

particular projects. On no account just stay silent as the pages are turned! It's worth remembering that research has shown that the way you say something, including the tone of your voice, is generally reckoned to be even more important than what you actually say. Try to portray a lively personality without going over the top: aim to come across as open, honest and confident.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

There will definitely be time allocated for this, usually at the end of the interview, so make sure you have something ready. Prepare some relevant and intelligent questions, but these do not have to be too involved or complicated - you could start just with asking about the team you may be working with, and what the day to day duties will be. Obviously you will want to know when a decision will be made about the position, and how a successful candidate will be notified.

Remember, research and preparation are the keys to success. Good luck!

For further information:  
[bbc.co.uk/interview-techniques](http://bbc.co.uk/interview-techniques)  
[guardiancareers](http://guardiancareers)  
[University of Westminster](http://University of Westminster)  
[Graduate Recruitment Bureau](http://Graduate Recruitment Bureau)  
[Target Jobs](http://Target Jobs)