

How to Cope With Panel Interviews

All interviews are daunting whether you are being interviewed by one or more people. Most interviews are conducted by more than one person to ensure fair-play and equality. You should prepare for a panel interview in exactly the same way as you would prepare for any other interview.

If possible you should try to establish how many people are on the panel prior to interview and their role in the organisation. You should be able to obtain this information from the Human Resource department and it is often included on the paperwork you receive inviting you to interview. Having knowledge of who panel members are and their role enables you to prepare your questions so that during the interview you can address your question to the relevant person by name.

Try to stay focussed and calm when you enter the room as it can be quite daunting to see a number of people sat behind a desk waiting to interview you! Try to make a good first impression and although it is difficult, try to remember their names. Make eye contact with each panel member, shake hands firmly and greet them using their name. It is always tempting to rush through this part of the interview, but this first impression can be crucial. Taking your time will also help to calm your nerves.

Usually one person leads the interview and explains what the process will be. This often involves panel members making notes throughout the interview. Do not be put off by this. It is perfectly normal and should not be seen as a negative sign. You can, of course, take notes yourself throughout the interview, but this can often be distracting.

Answering questions in a panel interview is no different to answering questions in any other type of interview. This is what you have prepared for. This is your opportunity to highlight your skills and abilities in relation to the role and your opportunity to demonstrate your excellent communication skills. Remember to answer the question! Take your time and address your answer to the panel member who has asked the question, remembering to make eye contact with them predominantly but also other panel members too. Try to use the name of the panel member who has asked the question at the start and finish of your answer.

As with any interview, use relevant examples to demonstrate what it is you can bring to the position applied for. If possible, try to consider your answer from the panelist's point of view. For example, if the panelist asking the question is from Human Resources, try to incorporate an aspect of Human Resources in your answer. If you can cross-reference your answers, even better! For example, "To develop further on my answer to Joanne, I have also worked in..." This demonstrates that you have been listening and that you have the ability to link themes.

As part of your preparation for interview, you will have put together a number of questions that can be addressed to different panel members relating to their role in the company or organisation. For example, you could address a question about the priorities and expectations of the role to the line manager.

Once the panelists have asked all their questions, you could close by asking them if they require any further information from you whilst making eye contact with each one individually. Once the interview is concluded, make sure you shake hands with each individual panel member and thank them using their name.

Some people like to send thank you letters to interviewees following interview. If you wish to do this, then it is wise to personalise your comments to each panel member relating them to their particular role in the organisation.

As with any interview – it's all in the preparation! Good Luck!

For [face to face, telephone or Skype Interview preparation](#), contact Words Worth Reading Ltd whose recruitments specialists can give you the edge of the other candidates.