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MAKING THE MOST OF INTERVIEWS

Being successful at an interview is not just about presentation and impressive answers, candidates need to ask the right questions to get the job.

Careers experts and human resources professionals say the way a candidate enquires about a position is a crucial factor in the decision of whether or not to hire them.

"It's not so much what you say as how you listen and the questions you ask," said Malcolm Vickers, Group Director of Human Resources at publishing group Johnston Press. "I tell more about a candidate from the questions they ask than the answers they give."

It is crucial to research the role you are going for and the company to ensure you know what you are talking about and are able to prepare relevant questions, according to careers experts. For example, if you are going for a job at a call centre you could phone the company direct, discuss the product and find out more about their approach to customers.

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answers they give."

"The more information they can get before they walk into the door the better. Write it down, put it on a pad and show that you have done the work. Obviously you don't launch into it straight away, but you need to be able to demonstrate that you have done a bit of preparation," added Vickers.

Corinne Mills, author, careers coach and Managing Director of Personal Career Management, advises jobseekers to research any new developments within the relevant industry or the company's own product line and ask interviewers about them:

"For example; 'I see you're launching a new product which looks very interesting. I wondered whether there were others due to be launched?'" said Mills.

However, candidates should shy away from asking about the financial aspects of a job during the interview stage: "Do not ask questions about salary and holiday allowances. These are questions to be asked once they have offered you the job," Mills added.

Rebecca Clake, Resourcing Adviser at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, said the best tactics for interviewers is to use a structured approach to questioning candidates, setting out the key competencies of the role, asking questions and using the same method to rate each interviewee.

"It's fine for employers to ask about gaps in candidates' careers,

they just need to ask questions like; can you tell me a bit more about what you have been doing in this time in terms of building on your skills and staying up to date?"

In response, jobseekers need to think about the best examples they can put forward to address these points: "I think it is best to focus on what's required for the job and when people are asking for your examples, you can talk about your most relevant and up-to-date experience," said Clake.

And, it is vital to have responses prepared which can demonstrate a constructive use of career gaps, especially if you have been out of work for long periods of time. "They want to see that even in career down time you are active, hard working and keeping yourself up to date," said Mills.

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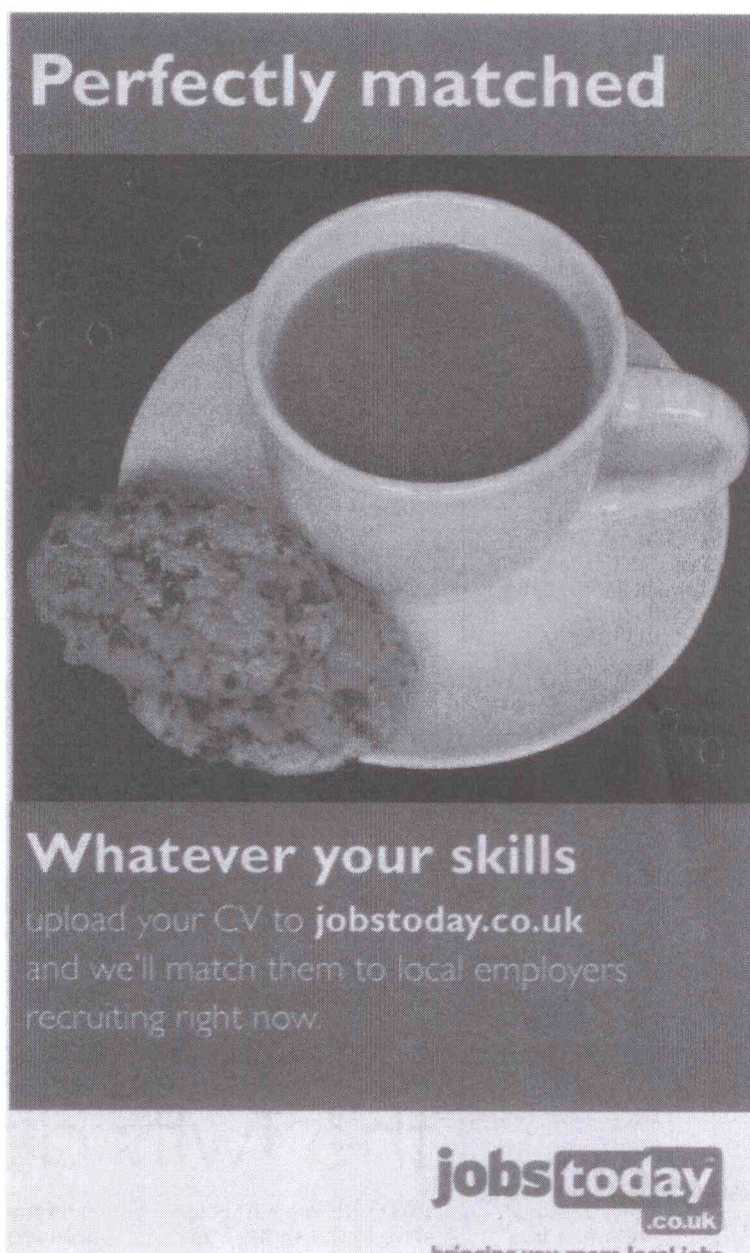


attentive”

Jobseekers need to give the impression that they want the role. Even during difficult times in the jobs market, candidates still manage to seem disinterested at interview stage, according to human resources directors.

“One other tip; you would be amazed at how many people don't look particularly interested - you have to look interested. It's about active listening, having good eye contact, asking questions and looking attentive,” said Vickers.

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