

that will grab their attention. Employers are increasingly looking for 'soft skills' that you don't learn at school or in college. Things like creativity, problem-solving and the ability to manage people will make you stand out from the crowd. Be sure to mention the work and life experience that will make you the best person for the job and explain how and why it will, and list any 'transferable skills' (skills that you can take from one job and apply to another). As far as including images of yourself goes, as a rule it's better not to. You want to focus on your skills and achievements, not your looks. As a rule, a cover letter shouldn't be longer than 500 words."

### The Early Bird

The time you arrive for an interview says a lot about who you are to a recruiter. "You should always plan for traffic delays or getting lost, but you don't want to arrive too early either, five to 10 minutes is early enough," says Madanhire. "If for some reason you can't avoid being late, let the interviewer know as far in advance as possible. If you're going to be more than 10 minutes late it's best to reschedule. This will show them you have respect for their time."

### Got The Interview, Now What?

Not sure how to conduct yourself during a job interview? Don't overlook the importance of making a good first impression.

**Watch What You Eat:** Don't smoke or eat anything with overpowering smells such as garlic or onion the day before your interview. Keep breath mints with you if need be but do not chew gum.

**Be Prepared:** Have important required documents or portfolios with you at the interview.

**Dress Appropriately:** Follow the workplace attire guidelines. If it's a legal practice, formal attire will be expected. If it's a fashion design job, you can be more creative. Either way, keep it professional.

**Facial Expressions And Gestures:** Take a deep breath before you go in. Employers are human too and will understand that you may be nervous, but you can convey confidence through greeting appropriately, smiling, giving a firm handshake and maintaining eye contact and firm posture. A hiring manager can sum up in 30 seconds whether you will be an asset to their company from the way you act.

**Watch What And How You Say Things:** It's easy to get caught up in long-winded responses and to go off on a tangent, especially when you are nervous. Be attentive when the questions begin and try to understand what the hiring manager is asking. Don't swear, talk too much, too fast, too loudly and don't giggle or act funny. You don't want to appear desperate, overly confident, arrogant or lacking in sincerity.

**Be Interested And Ask Questions:** Your potential employer will want to see that you are interested in the company and that you are keen on growing and developing within the organisation. You need to assess whether there

will be possibilities for career progression for yourself as well.

### Earn Your Worth

Many job seekers make the mistake of accepting a position without giving appropriate consideration to the compensation package on offer. While the prospect of employment may seem too good to turn down, the ramifications of finding yourself undervalued in a job can be significant down the line. Pieter van Zyl, director at FinFive, advises you to 'aim high' before signing on the dotted line. "Understanding the value of your skills and experience is vital when entering into salary negotiations. You'll need to take into account the nature of your industry, as well as the size and location of the company in order to establish what constitutes a fair package. Leave days can form a critical part of your negotiation strategy, as having 25 days instead of the basic 15 days gives you a massive 67 percent more free time," says Van Zyl. "Take into consideration things like stock options, comprehensive medical cover, bonuses and an expedited promotion schedule. Take into account the urgency of your financial situation to decide how far you are going to take the negotiations. Ultimately the only way you're going to ensure that you end up in a job that meets both your salary and lifestyle requirements is by being willing to walk away from an offer if need be."

### Own Boss

Small businesses are the strongest engines of job creation in South Africa and chances are you may be considering this as the right path for you. If you are thinking about taking the leap and starting up your own venture, MWEB general manager, Carolyn Holgate, advises you to ask yourself the following:

#### Why Am I Doing This?

If your answer is to make truckloads of cash so that you can retire to an exotic island in five years, put your feet up and enjoy daily massages for the rest of your life, you might be in the wrong game. Not that money isn't an important factor, but businesses built on passion, interest and experience in a particular area, or those that offer something entirely unique, have a greater chance of success.

#### Do I Have A Head For Business?

Are you able to set aside your ego in order to make mistakes and more importantly, to learn from them? Do you have a resilient nature – and able to weather the ups and downs that will inevitably come with starting a new business? Are you

practical?

**What's The Plan?** Research has shown that writing a plan greatly increases your chances of follow through. And of course if you want to get funding, a business plan is a must-have. Keep your's short and to the point.

**Who Will My First Customers Be?** Your first customers also help to give your company credibility – gold dust to a start-up. Use your network of personal and professional contacts to start the ball rolling and attract them with discounts or a finder's fee for referrals. And if you're not on LinkedIn, join up now (this online professional network can help build your contact list).

**So, What Do You Do?** Always have an answer to this question at the ready. Whether it's at a dinner party or in a board meeting, you should be able to tell someone clearly and succinctly what your business can offer.

#### Do You Have A Company Website?

More people are using the Internet, so it makes sense to have an online presence that is easily accessible.

#### What Will You Do When The Going Gets Tough?

Persistence and perseverance are crucial. Help yourself to go the distance by surrounding yourself with a strong support network. Consider approaching someone with experience in your line of business to be your mentor - someone who can help to motivate and inspire you.

**What's Your Bottom Line?** Don't go into business expecting finance to magically appear. If you need a lot of money that you don't have to start your business, you're in the wrong business. Scale down and start small. Only work with what you do have, not with what you don't have.



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