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Australian & New Zealand Edition

Successful Job Interviews

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Learn to:

- **Out-prepare the competition**
- **Make a great first impression**
- **Give the best answers to make-or-break questions**
- **Ask the right questions about the job and the employer**

Joyce Lain Kennedy



Australian & New Zealand Edition

Successful Job Interviews

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
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by Joyce Lain Kennedy

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Introduction

If you'd rather fight off an alien invasion than be grilled in an interview, take heart — you've come to the right book. With the help of dozens of interviewing authorities, I make your interviewing challenge easy, successful, and even fun.

I share with you lots of new things in this Australian and New Zealand edition of *Successful Job Interviews For Dummies*, ranging from the cosmic shift sparked by the rise of social media that changes what networking means, to increasingly popular video interviewing that changes how communication occurs.

What hasn't changed is the fundamental role in the employment process played by job interviews — those crucial meetings that seal the deal on who gets hired and who gets left on the outside looking in.

Remember that job interviews are a slice of performance art. They're staged theatrical sketches rather than in-depth investigations into life histories. That's why theatre and drama are comparisons used throughout this book, and I hope you have some enjoyable moments with the show-biz motif.

With the help of this book, you, too, can put in a Show Stopper performance — one that wins so much enthusiastic, prolonged applause that the show is temporarily interrupted until the audience quiets down.

Successful Job Interviews For Dummies, Australian and New Zealand edition, is packed with the essentials of performing Show Stopper interviews:

✓ Strategies and techniques

- ✓ Sample dialogue and research tips
- ✓ The best answers to make-or-break questions

About This Book

A book of contemporary interview arts, *Successful Job Interviews For Dummies* contains the distilled wisdom of hundreds of leading interview experts whose brains I've been privileged to pick for many years. By absorbing the guidance and tips I pass on in this book, you can interview your way into a job by outpreparing and outperforming the other candidates.

To assist your navigation, I've established the following conventions:

- ✓ I use *italic* for emphasis and to highlight either new words or terms I define.
- ✓ Web addresses appear in a special font to distinguish them from the regular type in the paragraph.
- ✓ Sidebars, which are shaded boxes of text, consist of information that's interesting but not necessarily critical to your understanding of the topic.

I use the following terminology to label specific roles and organisations:

- ✓ A *candidate* or *job seeker* is a person applying for a job. (*Applicant* means the same thing.)
- ✓ An *interviewer* is someone interviewing a candidate for a job. An *interviewee* is a candidate being interviewed for a job.
- ✓ A *human resources* (or *HR*) *specialist*, *HR manager* or *screeener* is an employer sentry who is conducting a screening (preliminary) interview.

- ✓ A *hiring manager, hiring authority, decision-maker, decision-making manager* or *department manager* is a management representative conducting a selection interview who has the authority to actually hire a person for a specific position.
- ✓ A *company, employer* or *organisation* is the entity you hope to work for, whether private and profit-making, or private and non-profit, or within the public sector.
- ✓ A *recruiter* (also called a *headhunter*) is an intermediary between the employer and you. *Internal recruiters* work inside the company, either as regular employees of the human resources department or as contract employees. *Third-party recruiters* or *independent recruiters* are external recruiters, some of whom are engaged on an ongoing basis so know the employer organisation very well while others are engaged just for a one-off hiring recruitment campaign and are paid only when a candidate they submit is hired.
- ✓ A *career coach* (also called a *career consultant*) helps job seekers gain workplace opportunities. (A *career counsellor* and a career coach represent two different professions, although their work sometimes overlaps.)
- ✓ A *hiring professional* is any of the aforementioned professionals who is engaged internally or externally in the employment process.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume you picked up this book for one or more of the following reasons:

- ✓ You've never been through a competitive interview and you're freaking out. You need a couple thousand

friendly pointers from someone who's interviewed many of the marquee minds in the job interview business and lived to write about it.

- ✓ You've been through a competitive interview and assume the company sank like Atlantis because you never heard a peep from those folks again. Or maybe you could have done better and actually heard back if you'd have known more about what you were doing in this interview thing.
- ✓ The most important interview of your career is coming up. You realise that now is the hour to dramatically improve your interviewing success. You need help, and you're willing to learn and work for success.
- ✓ You've been through a slew of job interviews over the course of your career and have a hunch that some important things have changed (you just don't know what exactly). You want to catch up with the help of a trusted resource.

I further assume that you're someone who likes reliable, comprehensive information that gets to the point without rocking you to sleep. And I assume even further that you like your expertise with a smile now and then.

Icons Used in This Book

For Dummies signature icons are the little pictures you see in the margins of the book. I use them to focus on key bits of information. Here's a list of the icons you find in this book:



A bad review for a poor performance. This icon signals situations in which you may find trouble if you don't make a good decision.



This icon flags news you can use that you won't want to forget.



Bravo! This icon heralds star-quality lines and moves that prompt job offers.



Advice and information that can put you on award-winning pathways in your interview follow this icon. It lets you in on interviewing best practices.



Stop! Watch out! Read these warnings carefully.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or ebook you're reading right now, *Successful Job Interviews For Dummies*, Australian and New Zealand edition, also comes with some access-anywhere resources on the internet. Check out the free Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/successfuljobinterviewsau for some quick, helpful tips. For free extra companion material for this book, visit www.dummies.com/extras/successfuljobinterviewsau.

Where to Go from Here

On the stress scale of life, job interviewing ranks with making a speech before 500 people when you can't remember your name or why you're standing in a spotlight at a podium. The spot where you start in this book depends on your present needs:

- ✓ If you have a job interview tomorrow, quickly read [Chapter 1](#) for an overview, followed by [Chapters 20](#) and [21](#) for an instant infusion of key know-how. Additionally, go to the company's website to glean as much basic information as you can. Don't forget to read the company's press releases.
- ✓ When you have a few days before you're scheduled for an interview, read [Chapter 1](#) and then flip through the Table of Contents to the chapters dealing with your most pressing concerns. Pay attention to [Chapter 11](#), which reveals how to stack the deck in your favour during the closing minutes of your interview.
- ✓ When you have plenty of time, read the book from cover to cover. Practice recommended strategies and techniques. After you master the information in these pages, you'll have a special kind of insurance policy that pays big dividends for as long as you want to work.

Part I

Getting Started with Job Interviews



Visit www.dummies.com for free access to great Dummies content online.

In this part...

- ✓ Understand why interviews are similar to acting and what this means to you as the interviewee.
- ✓ Become adept at screening interviews, whether by phone, in person or using automated systems, and breeze through to the next stage.
- ✓ Get ready for your in-person interview and get a handle on video interviewing, whether it's used for a screening or selection interview.
- ✓ Master interviews no matter what type you encounter — focusing on the objective, the type of interviewer or the technique used.

Chapter 1

Honing Your Job Interview Skills

In This Chapter

- ▶ Seeing how job interviewing is like acting
 - ▶ Spotting what's new in interviewing
 - ▶ Applying seven concepts to make you stand out
 - ▶ Putting into practice ideas that make a good impression
-

A resume or profile functions as bait to snag a job interview. The interview is the decisive event when a hiring authority decides whether you'll be offered the job.

Because the job interview is such an important part of getting a job — and you may not have interviewed in awhile — any number of unfortunate scenarios may be sneaking into your unconscious, including fears of these confidence-disturbers:

- ✔ Stumbling and mumbling your way through the ordeal
- ✔ Being glued to a hot seat as they sweat the answers out of you
- ✔ Forgetting your interviewer's name (or the last place you worked)

Exhale. You've come to the right book. Take the suggestions within these pages to heart and you'll head

into every interview feeling confident, calm and well prepared. What more can you ask?

Note: This first chapter serves as an overview for the entire book. The pages that follow are wide and deep, with details that can help you gain a lifetime of confidence in your ability to sail through the drama of interviews and secure the best job offers.

Being the Successful Candidate

When you're engaged in a selection interview, your entire future may rest on how successful you are in presenting yourself to a stranger across a desk in 15, 30 or 60 minutes. Making life-altering decisions during this micro slice of time isn't real life — it's a performance.

The most successful interviews for you require solid preparation to rehearse what you want to say, showing your future bosses that you're smart and quick on the uptake, as well as able to communicate and not likely to jump the tracks.

At each meeting, your goal is to deliver a flawless performance that rolls off your tongue and gets the employer applauding — and remembering — you. Perfect candidate, you!

But what about all the people who tell you, 'Just be yourself and you'll do fine in your interview'? That advice doesn't always work for you when it comes to job interviewing.

Why 'be yourself' can be poor advice

The bromide 'be yourself' is very difficult to articulate with consistency. Be yourself? Which self? Who is the

real you? Our roles change at various times.

Your role: Job seeker

Jerry is a father, an engineer, a marathon runner, a public speaker, a law student at night and a writer of professional papers. Jennifer is a loving daughter, the best salesperson in her company, a pilot, a tennis player, a rugby fan and a history buff.

But at this time in their lives, Jerry and Jennifer — like you — are job seekers. Similarly, the stranger across an interviewing desk is in the role of interviewer.

Getting real about the job seeker role

Playing the role most appropriate to you at a given time, and playing it effectively enough to get you the job you deserve, isn't turning your back on authenticity. To do less than play the role of a hard-charging job seeker courts unemployment — or underemployment.

Why 'be natural' can be poor advice

First-cousin advice urging you to 'be yourself' in a job interview is the 'be natural' admonition. On the whole, isn't natural better than artificial? Not always.

Is combed hair natural? Shaved legs? Trimmed beard? Polished shoes? How about covering a cough in public? Or not scratching where you itch?

Being natural in a job interview is fine as long as you don't use your desire to be natural and authentic as an excuse to display your warts or blurt out negative characteristics.



Never treat a job interview as a confessional in which you're obligated to disclose imperfections, indiscretions or personal beliefs that don't relate to your future job performance.

In job interviews, every minute counts in the getting-to-know-you game. And to really know someone in a brief encounter of 15, 30 or 60 minutes is simply impossible. Instead of real life, each participant in an interview sees what the other participant(s) wants seen. If you doubt that, think back: How long did you need to really get to know your flatmate, spouse or significant other?

If you insist on being natural, an employer may pass you over because of your unkempt beard or unshined shoes, or because you don't feel like smiling that day.

What exactly is a Show Stopper in job interviewing?

In the drama of job interviewing, a Show Stopper performance causes the interviewer to mentally shout, 'Bravo! More!' Your stunning impact quickly translates to a preliminary decision in your favour. If follow-up interviews, testing and reference checking support that reaction, a job offer is on its way to you. The employer may continue to see other candidates to round out the interview process but, in reality, no-one else stands a chance of landing the job after you figuratively stop the show.

The things you've done to date — your identification of your skills, your resume and profile, your cover letter, your networking, your social media efforts — are all wasted if you fail to deliver a job interview that produces a job offer.

Make the most of your critical brief encounters by learning the skills of storytelling, using body language,

establishing rapport and doing more of what's in this modern interview book.

New Faces, New Factors in Interviewing

Are you having trouble staking out your future because you can't close the sale during job interviews? This mangled proverb states the right idea: *If at first you don't succeed ... get new batteries.*

Recharge yourself with knowledge of the new technology and trends that are affecting job interviews. Here are highlights of the contemporary job interview space.

Interviewing in the digital age

Classic interviewing skills continue to be essential to job search success, but more technological firepower is needed in a world growing increasingly complex, interconnected and competitive.

The new tech trends revolutionise all components of the job search, including the all-important job interview. Here are examples of technological newcomers and how they change interviewing practices:

- ✓ **Video interviews:** Both live and recorded video job interviews are coming of age, requiring that you acquire additional skills and techniques to make the cut. [Chapter 3](#) is a primer on how you can outflank your competition by presenting like a pro in video interviews.
- ✓ **Phone interviews:** Automated and recorded phone screening services permit employers to ask up to a dozen canned screening questions and allow

candidates up to two minutes to answer each question. Informed interviewees anticipate the questions and must hit their marks the first time because you don't get the chance to go again with recorded answers. Read about this technology in [Chapter 2](#).

- ✓ **Credibility:** Credibility issues are surfacing for multitalented job seekers (or those with a chequered work background) who, by posting various resumes and profiles online, come across as different people with different skill sets. This development can be a knockout punch for you in a tight job market where employers have plenty of candidates on offer. Sidestep the emerging problem of identity contradictions in interviews by following the advice offered in [Chapter 14](#).
- ✓ **Web woes:** Employers can hire experts to scour the internet and social media (such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter) to check out your online history. Such a service rakes through closed databases in the deep web, leaving virtually no secrets unrevealed. If the deep web reveals negative information, you may get a chance to defend yourself in an interview — or you may never know why you struck out. See [Chapter 14](#) for more information on this digital sleuthing tool.

Expect new kinds of interviewers

If the last time you trod the boards of job interviewing you went one to one with a single interviewer, usually a white man or woman, get ready for a different set of questioners, like these possibilities:

- ✓ A veteran team of six managers — individually or collectively

- ✓ A hiring manager (especially in technical and retail fields) who is two decades younger than you
- ✓ Someone of a different background or heritage

Turn to [Chapter 4](#) for a broader picture of group interviews, and to [Chapter 13](#) for a good tip on interviews with younger bosses.



Showcase your ability to hit the ground running. Because the new norm is staying in a job only for a few years — or, in contract assignments, a few months — the hiring spotlight lasers in on the competencies and skills you can use from Day One. The question is, *What can you do for our company immediately?*



You can come across as ready to blast off if you do enough research on the company's goals (increase revenues, reduce costs, acquire new market share, land larger accounts, create a technical breakthrough), think about how you can help the company reach those goals, and remain ready to speak the insider jargon of the industry.

If the job you're applying for isn't at the professional or managerial level, research the nature of the company's business, assume that it wants to make or save money, and stock up on a few good buzzwords used in the industry.

Scope out more ways to show your launch speed in [Chapter 5](#).

Overcome the job-hopping objection

The current employer-driven job market makes it easy for companies to buy into the ‘job-hopper objection’ and, as a matter of policy, turn away unemployed candidates and people who’ve held three jobs in five years.

Unfortunately, many of these automatic rejects have been trapped in a cycle of frequent redundancy rounds, part-time work, temp assignments, seasonal employment, contract jobs, freelance gigs and company shutdowns.

Some companies refuse to hire so-called job hoppers, claiming that they’ll quit before employers can get a return on their training investment — or that, if the unemployed candidates were any good, they’d be on someone’s payroll.

What’s a sincere, hard-working person to do? Try this quartet of basic rebuttals:

- ✓ **Say varied experience beats repeated experience.** Explain how your dynamic work history makes you a far more vibrant and resourceful contributor than if you’d been stationary for four years.
- ✓ **Briefly explain departures.** Give a reasonable, short, even-toned account of why you left each job. (Convey that it wasn’t your fault without ever using that phrase.)
- ✓ **Review your accomplishments.** You can’t change the amount of time you were on certain jobs, but you can divert the focus to your accomplishments and contributions. Employers are impressed by candidates who are good at what they do, even if they were only in a role for a short period of time.
- ✓ **Confirm interest in stable employment.** Forget the ‘loyalty’ chatter, but make a point of your intense