

The recruitment marathon

■ Chris Thurmott

AN integral part of any recruitment process, interviewing is a key metric against which most employers base hiring decisions.

For recruitment specialist and head-hunter Kara Atkinson, the practice is so invaluable for both employers and potential employees that its scope has widened for many organisations, becoming more of a marathon than a sprint.

“I get worried when I hear companies are looking to hire off the first interview,” she said. “Even if you spend the full allotted time in the first interview, I get concerned it is not enough time to make a career decision on either side of the equation.”

HR expert Karen Gately said there was so much focus on getting an interview and getting through it that people were often unprepared for a second round.

“Rather than trying to focus on getting past the first or even the second interview, you should view the recruitment process as only being finished at the end of your probationary period,” she said. “Every step along the way to that point you are simply reaffirming and confirming perceptions the employer has about you and your character.”

Ms Gately said the second interview was a chance for the employer to look into the attitudes candidates might bring to the workplace.

“It’s one thing to have skills and to have done things in the past, but to what extent do you actually understand the context or the circumstances in which this job needs to be done,” she said.

“Preparing for the second interview is about reflecting on the first interview and working out, based on the questions they asked, what else they might logically want to test.”



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Ms Atkinson said preparation should be a staple in every candidate’s arsenal, but it was something many didn’t give enough time to.

“It’s such an obvious gap when you see the people who have prepared for it and the people who have not,” she said. “When people do their homework it highlights they are really invested in their career, rather than just wanting a job.”

Building on this, Ms Atkinson said taking a notepad with clear and concise questions, not just relating to the job but the wider industry, demonstrated preparation and genuine interest in the role.

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Ms Gately said it was important for candidates to maintain a professional mindset in successive interviews.

“You’ve got to maintain a clear mindset,” she said. “It’s why I suggest people think of the recruitment process ending at the end of probation.”

“People can get a little bit too cocky or familiar at the second stage. There was a situation recently where a person came in for a second interview without a tie, where they had worn one in the first interview, and it immediately put the recruiter off them. I’m not saying everyone has to wear a tie for interviews, but you have to read the culture of the organisation and its expectations.”

If you search the internet for interview tips, almost every site or article will suggest you send a thank you note or follow-up email following the completion of an interview. Ms Atkinson said in reality around five per cent of people actually followed through with this, making it an easy way to get a leg up on the competition.

Ms Gately agreed, but warned against overstepping the mark.

“You can send something along the lines of ‘thank you for the opportunity, I hope I’m successful, but regardless of the outcome, all the best’, but beyond that you need to let it go,” she said. “There was a candidate recently who was sending essays about his business plans and ideas and it got to the point where the recruiter was put off by them being over the top.”

“Interviews are all about building trust and earning respect, so just don’t do anything to lose that.”