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**How to make a good first impression**

I was once told that first impressions can make or break a career. It may sound dramatic, but think about the jobs you didn’t get because something didn’t *feel* right in the interview. It’s human nature to be judgmental and once someone has passed initial judgment, it can be extremely difficult to change their mind. Of course you could argue that a professional recruiter would not pass judgment prematurely. It has, however, been contended that while our first impressions of someone may be based on fairly arbitrary criteria, they have potential to be quite accurate. As a candidate, that means that you should do everything in your power to ensure that you leave a lasting and positive first impression. The following are a few tips to adopt in order to give yourself the best chance of leaving a positive first impression:

1. Smile

This seems like a no brainer, but it’s surprising how many people forget to smile when they are focussed solely on getting through the interview. A smile has the dual effect of making you seem both enthusiastic and likable. You want to make it easy for the interviewer to like you, and it’s very hard not to like someone who seems both approachable and friendly.

1. Introduce yourself

It’s very easy to forget to introduce yourself when you know the person you are meeting knows more about you than your name. While that may be the case, extending a hand and smiling while you introduce yourself will make you seem both professional and polite. Failing to do so has potential to make you appear unfriendly.

1. Engage in small talk

Personally I am someone who hates engaging in small talk. I have always thought that it is a waste of energy and only good for creating meaningless relationships. Over the years I have learn that is definitely not true in a professional context. Engaging in small talk before an interview gives you the opportunity to get to know your recruiter on a more personal level. This will likely decrease your nerves, therefore making you more likely to perform better. More than that, organisations are becoming increasingly concerned with their work ‘culture’ and you want to show that you are someone who can hold good conversation.

1. Dress professionally

Dressing professionally is essential in creating a good first impression. You should wear whatever you would wear to the job you are interviewing for to the interview. If you’re unsure what to wear, remember that it is better to overdress. Under-dressing has potential to give the impression that you are lazy and indifferent about the job you are interviewing for. If a recruiter feels that you are indifferent about the job, chances are they will be indifferent about your application.

Please see PDF titled “dressing for success” on the Jackson Recruitment website for more details.