

Are audition-style interviews the next big thing? (and how to prepare for one)

Days may be numbered for job seekers who have traditionally been able to bluff their way through interviews as new recruitment techniques start gaining popularity in Australia.

Audition-style interviews are designed to drill down on genuine skills and cut through unsubstantiated self-promotion.

While they may not favour well for the smooth-talkers out there, if you're someone who struggles to beat the interview nerves or boast about how wonderful you are, an audition-style interview could be your perfect stage to shine.

This style of interview helps potential employers get a better understanding of your capabilities as an employee rather than making snap judgments based on trivial non-verbal cues often only caused by nerves.

A US survey research found that two-thirds of employers say they are put off interviewees who do not make enough eye contact. Not smiling (38 per cent), bad posture, fidgeting (both 33 per cent) and a weak handshake (26 per cent) also had a big impact on success rates.

Dr Amantha Imber, founder of business management consultancy Inventium, says in an unstructured interview, first impressions often override how the whole interview will go. The solution, Imber says, is audition-style interviews.

So, what is an audition-style interview?

Similar to how actors audition by reading the lines they would perform in a role, office workers can audition by completing tasks they may tackle in a typical day.

Imber gives the example of an innovation consultant whose main task is to facilitate workshops. "They would be given a tool, background on that tool, and they present a workshop (to explain that tool)," she says. "It's a predictor of how they will actually do in the role."

Alternatively, a jobseeker interviewing for a sales role may be put in a scenario where the recruiter pretends to be a client and they have to make a sale.

How can I prepare for an audition style interview?

Preparing for these types of interviews requires a new approach and your first step should be to find out as much information on the task as you can from your potential employer to help you prepare.

In addition to that, audition-style interviews are really about: "honing the skills required to do the job as opposed to reflecting on different stories or even making up stories to answer the typical questions you are going to get," says Imber. "It comes down to being good at the job you are going for."

Hender Consulting executive consultant Bernie Dyer says audition-style interviews are useful for assessing both technical and soft skills.

“The assessment isn’t about right or wrong answers, but aims to explore how they’ve analysed the scenario, their problem-solving approach, critical thinking and presentation style,” she says.

“The assessment isn't about right or wrong answers, but aims to explore how they've analysed the scenario, their problem-solving approach, critical thinking and presentation style,” she says.

This article was first published by Melanie Burgess, Deputy Careers Editor at News Corp Australia.