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Top 5 autism tips for professionals: Recruitment and interviews (for employee)

Top Tip 1: Information to provide on an application form

I think it's really useful to read the job description and also the person specification really carefully – and then think about your past experience and skills that you've developed and how you would be able to demonstrate that you meet the requirements and the skills that the employer is looking for. So I think once you've done that, you can use that information to write a covering letter or to provide further information. So it's useful to think of, say, three or four projects or tasks that you've been involved in – these could be tasks in school or college or university - and to think about what your role in that task or project was - whether you worked with other people, how you completed that project or task, what was the outcome, and whether you had any difficulties. It's also really useful at this stage, I feel, to think about whether you're going to disclose to your employer and whether you're going to need any adjustments during the interview and application process.

Top Tip 2: Information to provide before the interview

It's useful to consider whether you're going to disclose and provide some information about your diagnosis – so not your diagnostic report or anything like that, but some useful fact sheets which you can find on our website; useful tips for employers so they can start thinking about making some standard reasonable adjustments at interview. So it's really useful as well to use a standard structure when you're answering questions on past projects you've worked on or tasks that you've completed, and to outline the task that you were given, your role in that task, how you completed that task and what the outcome was.

Top Tip 3: Reasonable adjustments that can be made to my interview

So you can ask your potential employer to make reasonable adjustments in the interview, and some of the standard adjustments that we would recommend are asking for questions to be rephrased or not asked in a hypothetical or abstract way – for example, employers like to ask where you see yourself in five years' time... you can ask that questions like that be rephrased into something more meaningful for you, for example, "Could you explain to us or describe what aspects of previous jobs or tasks or projects that you've worked on have you particularly enjoyed?"

Another standard adjustment that we'd recommend that you ask for is that your interview room is quiet and private, and not brightly lit, comfortably heated, with minimal opportunities for interruption or disruption. You can also ask for a quiet private area away from busy parts of the building to prepare for your interview and to wait in before your call.

Another adjustment that you can ask for is for the interviewers or the panels to repeat questions or slow down their pace of conversation - and also give you some extra time between asking a question, help you or prompt you to reference any notes that you've made before you give your reply. You can also ask for support in an interview through a specialist support worker or an advocate.

Top Tip 4: Information to provide to my employer if I'm offered the role

It's really important that you provide the information about basic reasonable adjustments that your employer can make for you, and if you know what your strengths are, if you have a disclosure template that you can provide, that's really useful. If not, we've got fact sheets and information on our website.

Another important thing to let your employer know about is services available to support both them and yourself in your new role, such as workplace assessments that can be carried out by the National Autistic Society.

Top Tip 5: Improvements employers are making to their recruitment process

You might find it difficult when you're job seeking and looking at various roles, to link your past experiences and any transferable skills that you've got if you don't meet some of the criteria that the employer is looking for. It might be difficult to tell the difference between desirable skills and the essential skills that you need for a job, depending on how that advert has been written. Also the application process itself you might find difficult, particularly if there are very open questions asked on an application form, or if the employer wants to do some telephone screening as the first phase of the application. Something else that you might find difficult is any group or face-to-face interviews as part of the recruitment process.

Author: Catherine Leggett, Employment Training Consultant
Organisation: The National Autistic Society
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