

essential interview preparation for the Middle East market

Time spent preparing prior to the interview will really pay off on the day. Find out all you can about the organisation. Being fully prepared and informed about the company, plus asking lots of intelligent and relevant questions at an interview always impresses an interviewer.

first impressions

Your CV has paved the way, and will hopefully inspire the interviewer to meet you in person. It would be damaging if the impressive CV were not matched by your own high standard of personal presentation. You will never get a second chance to make a first impression! Dress neatly and conservatively. Men should wear jackets and ties. Women should wear dresses or suits, trousers are acceptable but avoid strappy or low cut tops

In the Middle East it is customary to present a business card, originals and copies of qualifications and certificates, passport photos, passport, written references, application forms (where appropriate) and marriage certificate at the initial job interview. An extra CV can be handy too

Leave plenty of time to get to your interview. In the Middle East it is widely accepted to be late, but this is not acceptable for an interview. Bear in mind that traffic can slow you down considerably in certain areas

If no one is available to introduce you, shake each person's hand and introduce yourself

Maintain brief eye contact while talking with someone. Use professional titles, or Mr, Mrs, Miss with the last name when addressing someone. It is considered impolite to start any conversation or request without at least saying "good morning" or "good afternoon" Some employers do check back with reception staff about your arrival conduct. Make sure you know the exact name and title of whom you are meeting

Smile! Particularly on meeting the interviewer, this is the best, and most human icebreaker

When listening to a local person talking in English, it is very important to nod showing that you are listening and understand the speaker

Don't smoke before the interview – certain smells linger. During the interview, avoid smoking, even if you are invited

Shake hands firmly but not vigorously, the culture in the Middle East is non-aggressive so an extremely firm handshake may not be seen as a good sign

Do not be offended if your handshake is refused - Muslim men may defer a handshake from a woman or a non-Muslim man, this is not meant personally but simply a religious prohibition

Never use your left hand for contact with others, as the right hand is considered more favourable

Accept tea or coffee if you would like some – this is a good way of relaxing the atmosphere

If you are asked to complete an application form don't appear irritated. Avoid striking through areas that you feel are covered on your CV – list a brief outline instead

Don't use one-word answers when asked questions in an interview – always expand

Consider questions you are likely to be asked, and have practical examples of where you have been successful and achieved results to demonstrate your capabilities

Know your CV well and be able to answer any questions asked about its content

Prepare your answers to standard questions such as strengths and weaknesses, greatest achievements and why you would be suitable for the job

Be prepared to answer non-business related questions with regards to family or personal circumstances

the next stage

Never let your guard down in a second interview

If asked to prepare a presentation, or take part in an assessment test always appear enthusiastic

Put aside time to prepare and thoroughly check any information that will be presented to the client

Follow up the interview with a thank you letter. Employers regard this as an indication of your interest in the position

success after failure

If your interview has not resulted in a job offer, the most positive thing you can do is attempt to identify why. There may be a simple reason, or you may have to rely on your own perceptions of what went wrong. Either way, your consultant should be able to provide useful feedback for you