

KNOW HOW

Impress at interview

YOU have just seconds to make the right impression – so you must be professional from the word go.

But remember an interview is just as much for you to assess whether you want to work at that company as it is for them to decide if they want you.

So use it to find out about the company and its culture.

Andrew Shellard, operations manager at employment specialists Manpower, says: "The good news is that if you've been invited for an interview with a company, it's likely that they believe you're a good match for the job. Do some research beforehand and show your enthusiasm."

Interview confidence comes with practice. Most recruitment consultants offer practice sessions, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Top tips for interview:

- **Do your research:** Look at the company's website and note down any business developments. Also research competitors to show that you are aware of industry developments.
- **Look the part:** Wear smart clothing and be



sure to give a firm and confident handshake.

● **Be on time:** If you are unsure of the interview location it may be worth doing a practice run. Lateness gives the impression of unreliability.

● **Practice your responses:** Be prepared for questions such as "How would you describe yourself?", "What motivates you?" and "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"

● **Sell your achievements:** Employers want to hear about successes – a confident response will impress.

● **Admit weaknesses:** Bosses understand that there may be areas where you lack experience/skills. Explain how you would like to improve.

● **Ask questions:** Have a few relevant questions ready. And if you're unsure of what any of their questions mean, ask for clarification.

● **Don't be disheartened:** If you're unsuccessful. Treat each interview as good experience, ask for feedback and learn from your mistakes.

□ For more interview help and tips, visit www.manpower.co.uk.

Trust proof..



◀ **ON A ROLL**
Mark Livsey persuaded firms such as Nightfreight to back his delivery idea

BY SHEILA PROPHET
mirrorworks@mirror.co.uk

AFTER becoming disabled with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, Mark Livsey began to despair of ever working again – until he turned to the Prince's Trust.

"I was out of work for 18 months," says dad-of-two Mark, 30. "I would apply for jobs and get as far as the interview stage, before they started asking questions about my disability. Then I wouldn't hear from them."

"In a way it was a good thing. It made me realise that not many employers would be prepared to fit around my disability. So I decided to set up my own business."

"I had worked in sales for a parcel delivery business in the past and I could see that the rise in customers shopping on the internet meant that deliveries are a growing industry."

Mark found that most of the big companies didn't do all their deliveries themselves, but often sub-contracted the work to smaller local companies. "That's where I thought I could fit in."

Mark, who lives in Manchester, drew up a business plan and

approached delivery specialists nightfreight, which agreed to give him a contract.

"So then I had to find the finance to get started," he says. "I tried lots of different avenues, the big banks, even those high interest loans you see advertised, but they all turned me down."



The Prince's Trust offered him a low-cost loan of £4,000, which allowed Mark to get started by hiring a van and recruiting a driver.

That was in 2007. Three years later, Mark's company Parcel Partners has a fleet of 20 vans and a string of well-known customers including FedEx and Citylink. The business grew through word of mouth and recommendations.

"I now have a great

workforce of 25 people who really care about working for Parcel Partners, including my two younger brothers, Jon and Stuart who are both part of the team."

Mark's success has proved so inspiring he is one of three finalists in the RBS Enterprise Award category of the Prince's Trust Celebrate Success Awards, which are being held in London on Monday, March 1.

"The Trust has helped in lots of ways," he says. "They gave me a free two-day business course

and the support of a mentor, Ray Hill, who has given me lots of good advice and is a great sounding board for my ideas."

Mark says he first experienced symptoms of his disability at the age of 19. "The first thing I noticed was that I couldn't stand on tiptoe on one leg," he says. "Up till then I had been good at sports, playing lots of cricket and football. But my muscles kept getting weaker, and it took three years before the doctors came up with a diagnosis

of muscular dystrophy. The form I have means that I will eventually end up in a wheelchair, but because it happened gradually I've come to terms with it, and am determined just to keep on going for as long as I can."

Fortunately, Mark's illness is not life-threatening. "And I am very lucky in lots of ways," he adds. "I have two lovely little girls, Elise, who is three and our baby Sophia and a wonderful wife Rowena, who is always a great support and helps me get to places when necessary."

ENJOY

"Running my own business means I can work from my home office, with my daughters coming in and out. I really enjoy my work, and being at home, which is adapted to my needs, allowing me to spend hours at my desk without being away from my family."

"When I won the North West Regional Final of the Celebrate Success Awards, my dad said 'You won it because you are disabled'."

"At first I was annoyed, but then I realised it is an acknowledgment of my achievement in rising above the pain and the difficulty I go through every day."

"If my example inspires other people with disabilities to build something from it and to go from adversity to prosperity, I will be very happy."

Get royal backing for your business

SINCE its launch in 1983, the Prince's Trust's Business Programme has helped around 75,000 young people turn their business ideas into reality.

As well as providing start-up funding of up to £4,000 for an individual or £5,000 for a partnership, the programme offers a huge range of help for

budding bosses, including one-on-one business training, ongoing support from a mentor and free and discounted services.

The Trust can also help other young people gain work experience, get a job or start a community project. For more information visit the website, www.princes-trust.org.uk.