

Talent Professionals



INTERVIEW PREPARATION RESOURCES

A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

How you perform in an interview will have a significant impact on your imminent career progression and long-term career aspirations. It's difficult to predict how an interview will go however there are numerous things that you can do to ensure that you're as fully prepared and confident ahead of the interview as possible.

For most, a job interview can be a daunting experience however with the right preparation and planning you can stand out from the crowd and secure that new role. The interview process gives you an opportunity to present yourself in the best possible light as well as your chance to see if this is the best role and organisation for you. Equally it's the interviewers opportunity to see if you're right for their team so first impressions are hugely important!

This guide covers the various areas you should look at before you go, what to do once you are in an interview and includes some example questions as well as information on competency based interviews.

PREPARATION

It's vitally important to prepare before your interview, completing the necessary research ahead to ensure you make the most of the opportunity and make sure the client knows you are serious about the role.

Preparation Checklist:

- **Research the company and the industry** – this is essential to complete prior to the interview. There is an enormous amount of information available to be found on your potential employer online and through other forms of media. Make sure you research the industry as well by reading trade publications or websites and have some relevant questions ready. You should also research any recent events that have affected the firm.
- **Read through the Job Description** – this might sound obvious but you would be surprised at how many times candidates don't read through the job description as part of their interview preparation process. Make sure you know it inside and out – after all this is the profile of the interviewers ideal candidate.

- **Know your CV** – read through your CV and know it inside out so you can answer in depth questions about your career history and be prepared to provide examples.
- **Prepare interview questions** – think about what questions potential employers may ask you and think about your answers in advance. An easy way of doing this is by going through the job description and thinking about times when you have demonstrated skills relevant to the role. When answering questions your responses should be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time specific. You should be prepared for questions that relate to the role you are trying to secure.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

While we can never predict the questions that an employer will ask, below are some questions to give you an idea of what you should be prepared to answer.

- What made you apply for this role?
- What are your short, medium and long-term career aspirations?
- What appeals to you about this company and role?
- What do you want to get from this role?
- What do you enjoy most about your current role? What do you enjoy the least?
- What do you see as your major strengths that you can offer our company?
- What is your main weakness?
- What were the main skills you took from your last role?
- What motivates you both personally and professionally?
- Do you work best in a team or as an individual?
- Why have you made certain steps in your career?
- What do you enjoy doing outside of work? (This question gives the employer an opportunity to get to know you.)

Other than the above questions you will be asked a standardised set of competency-based questions, examples of which are detailed further in this document.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

In addition to why you are suited to the role, interviewers will also be assessing why you are not suited to the role. Below are some elements that may be evaluated and could impact negatively on the interview:

- Lack of confidence or nervousness
- Not being polite
- Making critical or negative remarks about former / current employers
- Asking about remuneration and benefits during the initial interview; Unless the interviewer asks you these topics should be avoided
- Arrogance
- Poor communication and inability show influence
- Inability to demonstrate commerciality
- Lack of interest in the role / company
- Lack of knowledge of the company / industry
- Being defensive in answers to questions
- Lack of relevant questions

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW

Competency-based questions are designed to test one or more specific skills and evaluate a candidate's competence. They differ from conventional job questions that focus on a candidate's previous experience.

Typically you will be assessed and scored on a predetermined scale based on your answers and all candidates will be asked the same questions.

Competency based questions can cover a wide range of skills depending on the sector, industry and level of the role you are applying for. Usually they will ask you to give situational examples of times in the past when you have performed particular tasks or achieved particular outcomes using certain skills.

Some examples of the types of questions that may be asked are below;

- Tell us about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you cope with it?
- Describe a situation where you had to explain something complex to a colleague or a client. Which problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them?
- Demonstrate how you vary your communication approach according to the audience that you are addressing
- Tell us about a time when you were asked to summarise complex points
- How do you feel writing a report differs from preparing an oral presentation?
- How do you plan the writing of a report?
- Tell us about a project or situation where you felt that the conventional approach would not be suitable. How did you derive and manage a new approach? Which challenges did you face and how did you address them?
- How did you reach the decision that you wanted to change jobs?
- Give us an example of a situation where you had to make a decision without the input of key players, but knowing that these key players would judge you on that decision (e.g. superior unavailable at the time)
- Describe a situation where you started off thinking that your approach was the best, but needed to alter your course during the implementation
- Describe a situation where one of your projects suffered a setback due to an unexpected change in circumstances
- Describe a situation where you were asked to do something that you had never attempted previously
- Describe a project where you needed to involve input from other departments. How did you identify that need and how did you ensure buy-in from the appropriate leaders and managers?

- Give us an example of a situation where you knew that a project or task would place you under great pressure. How did you plan your approach and remain motivated?
- Under what conditions do you work best and worst?
- What is the biggest challenge that you have faced in your career? How did you overcome it?
- Which course or topics have you found most difficult? How did you address the challenge?
- Tell us about a situation where you played an important role in a project as a member of the team (not as a leader)
- Give an example of a time when you had to deal with a conflict within your team? What did you do to help resolve the situation?
- How do you build relationships with other members of your team?

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

It's hugely important to end the interview on a positive note. Always thank the interviewer for their time and let them know that you have enjoyed meeting them. It is also your opportunity to let them know if you're still interested in the role.

Even if you feel the interview has not gone well you should still remain positive. The interviewer may have an interview style you are not used to or they may be testing you. In addition you may meet them later on in your career and want them to have a positive image of you in their mind.