



## INTERVIEW GUIDE

The three key aspects of the interview process are preparation, presentation and performance.

### Preparation

Research shows that over 80% of candidates do little or no preparation before an interview, which means that by preparing thoroughly you are already in the top 20% and the more that you can demonstrate your understanding of the company, its history, market, future plans, competitors and the role you will be doing, the better.

The best source of information is the company's own website which generally provides the most comprehensive information, followed by industry websites to get a feel for the wider picture. A search using the major internet search engines may also provide useful information presented from an outsider's point of view. You should also ask your recruitment consultant, who will have developed a relationship with the employer and understand what they look for, what your interviewer is like and will also understand their business.

Once you have the information, you need to be able to turn it into the basis of an effective interview. Think of some pertinent questions that will highlight your research and also show that you are aware of the key issues surrounding the company and its market.

You will need to be equally well prepared to talk about yourself. You must know your CV inside out and be ready to expand on any decisions you've made on previous career moves and be confident about talking about your key achievements. You must be able to provide examples to back up the skills and experience that are on your CV.

Take time to consider the sort of questions you might be asked and your responses to them. Your recruitment consultant will be able to advise you on the kind of questions you will be asked and whether they are designed to test your technical knowledge or your personality.

Make sure you know where the interview is taking place and allow yourself plenty of time to get there. If you're going to be late, call the company or your recruitment consultant and let them know. Make sure you know roughly how long the interview will last and allow enough time in your diary.

Arrive a little early for the interview. Ten minutes spent in the reception will give you time to collect your thoughts and a chance to read the firm's brochures and study recent press releases. Listening to the receptionists and watching the comings and goings can provide a valuable insight into the type of company you might be joining.

### Presentation

The old adage of "first impressions count" is never more applicable than in an interview situation and you never get a second chance to make a first impression.



Communication is said to be 93% non-verbal of which 55% is visual. Statistics abound concerning how long it takes for an interviewer to decide whether you are the right person for the role. Whatever the true amount of time, if you make a poor impression from the outset, you will struggle to reach the next round, but if you make a good first impression the interviewer will be trying to think of reasons why you should fit in.

What contributes to a good first impression?

- Dress smartly and professionally
- Be polite to everyone you meet, you never know who they might be
- Shake the interviewer's hand firmly
- Smile and thank them for meeting you - smiling is what most people forget to do due to nerves

Your initial conversation could start off with an icebreaker such as an inquiry about your journey there or the interviewer could apply pressure straight away. Be prepared for both and don't get caught off-guard.

Performance

Having made a good first impression you need to keep up the momentum. Look at your interviewer, not to his side or at your feet, listen carefully to what is said and make your answers considered and relevant, speak clearly at all times and let the interviewer set the pace of the interview.

The interviewer will want to answer three key questions

- Do you have the technical skills and experience to do the job?
- Do you have the right attitude and commitment?
- Will you fit in?

The fact that you've been asked for interview shows that your potential employer believes the answer to the first question is 'yes' and the majority of the interview will probably be spent confirming this. Avoid monosyllabic responses and volunteer supporting information whenever possible.

The interviewer will also want to test your character and some of the personality questions they could ask are

- Describe yourself
- What motivated the decisions you have made so far in your education/career history?
- What are your main weaknesses and describe a time that you overcame them?
- When have you shown tenacity in a business environment?
- What has been the most difficult decision you have made in your career?
- Why do you want to join us?
- If we hired you, what long-term benefits would we see?

These are all fairly standard questions that interviewers can ask. To prepare for them you must have done your research about the company and you must also understand what makes you tick. Try and identify what your key skills and

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strengths are and play up to them throughout the interview. If asked what your weaknesses are, try and limit them to one or maybe two but then show how you've tried to address them and the progress you have made.

One way of appearing enthusiastic and also redirecting the pressure from you to the interviewer is to ask probing and intelligent questions.

Typical areas that you can ask questions on include

- Your career path within the firm. Perhaps ask for an example of someone who has done the role before.
- The training that you would receive there.
- Recent news within the media - where do they see the organisation heading?
- The personal reasons for your interviewer joining the organisation.
- The support structure within the company - will they sponsor you for professional qualifications, etc?

Whatever the questions you ask, make sure that they are pertinent. There are, of course, some things that you do not discuss during the interview process. If you are using a recruitment consultant then they will negotiate your salary and benefits for you.

Company cultures differ greatly and there needs to be a good cultural fit. One person's dynamic and exciting environment may seem overly competitive to another. Your recruitment consultant will understand the company culture and a company's literature and your interviewer will provide clues on how to convey the impression that you'll fit in. However, you need to satisfy yourself before accepting a position that you really will fit in. If the firm's culture is very different from your own, it's unlikely that you will be happy or successful.

Whilst first impressions count, so do last ones. As you leave the interview room, ensure that you leave on an upbeat note. You should try to gauge whether you will be invited back by asking when you should expect a decision. Do not express any misgivings you may have about the role to the interviewer - talk them through later with your recruitment consultant. Above all, you must appear positive when you leave the interview.