

Interview Techniques – Candidate Preparation for Career Interview

The career interview is an opportunity to present and sell your skills and abilities. As in all selling, the small competitive edge makes us successful. This has been prepared to give you a competitive edge in the interview.

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

What steps should you take to become the best prepared candidate?

Ensure you have all the relevant data.

- ▲ Know the exact place and time of the interview.
- ▲ Find out specific facts about the company – where its plants, offices or stores are located; what its products and services are; what its growth has been; and what its growth potential is for the future.
 - The Business Who's Who of Australia
 - Internet
 - Kompas Australia
 - Jobson's Year Book of Public Companies
 - UBD The Register of Companies
 - The Stock Exchange Research Handbook.
 - Company's Annual Report
- ▲ Refresh your memory on the facts and figures of your present/former employer. You will be expected to know the basics of your past companies, e.g. turnover.
- ▲ Ask the name(s) and position(s) within the company of the person(s) who will conduct the interview. This will provide a valuable clue to the style of questions you may be asked.
- ▲ Dress in a business suit. Look good and feel confident.

Prepare your answers

Remember you are selling yourself and your ability to handle the job successfully. Recognise the questions which offer you the opportunity to sell your strengths. Just as importantly, be ready for those questions which highlight your weaknesses. Answers to questions should convey a message:

- ▲ Enthusiasm and energy.
- ▲ Experience relevant to the position under discussion.
- ▲ Your knowledge of the company to whom you are applying

Preparing your questions

Draw up a list of questions you wish to ask the interviewer. Some will flow naturally from points which arise during the interview, but beware of overloading the interviewer with questions, particularly if the interview is largely exploratory.

- ▲ Is it a new position?
- ▲ To whom will you report?
- ▲ What support staff will you have?
- ▲ What is the management style?
- ▲ What are the company's prospects?
- ▲ Are there any training programmes available for those who demonstrate potential?

Questions often asked

- ▲ Why did you choose this position?
- ▲ Why would you like to work for our company?
- ▲ What do you know about us?
- ▲ Where do you see yourself three years from now and five years from now?
- ▲ What size was your last salary increase?
- ▲ How should you be managed for you to perform at optimum level?
- ▲ What major strengths did your previous employer value?
- ▲ When have you shown initiative?
- ▲ What are the strengths you feel earn people promotion.
- ▲ Tell me about your ability to accept responsibility.
- ▲ What is your ability to solve problems?
- ▲ What is your ability to analyse and organise information?
- ▲ What is your ability to organise and present material in a convincing manner?
- ▲ How do you set priorities?
- ▲ Are you able to work individually?
- ▲ Are you a team player?
- ▲ What entrepreneurial activities have you undertaken?
- ▲ How do you spend your leisure time?
- ▲ What type of book and which magazines and papers do you read?
- ▲ How many books do you read per year?
- ▲ Are you willing to relocate?
- ▲ Tell me about yourself.

Questions designed to highlight weaknesses

- ▲ Why do you want to leave your present job?
- ▲ Why did you spend so long with one company?
- ▲ You seem to have done a lot of job-hopping. Why?
- ▲ Aren't you rather young for this job?
- ▲ Aren't you too old for a job at this level?
- ▲ How would you feel about working for a younger man?
- ▲ Aren't you over qualified for this job?
- ▲ Why did you leave your last position?
- ▲ What do you consider to be your strengths?
- ▲ What is your weakness?

**Always give positive reasons.
Avoid negative reasons.**

THE INTERVIEW

Positive Factors

The interviewer will be looking for the candidate who most impresses him on three counts: -

- ▲ Contribution – will you be able to contribute to the efficient running, productivity and profitability of the organisation.
- ▲ Motivation – will you really want to work hard for this organisation.
- ▲ Attitude and Acceptability – will you fit the company structure and work happily with other members of the team.

As well as evaluating your skills, qualities and aptitudes, the interviewer will also be searching for your strengths and weaknesses. In preparing for the interview examine the list of DO's and DONT's.

Negative Factors

Prospective employers will be evaluating your negative factors as well as your positive attributes. Watch out for those which most often lead to rejection:

- ▲ Poor personal appearance.
- ▲ Limp, damp handshake.
- ▲ Not prepared for the interview – failure to get information about the company.
- ▲ Failure to ask questions about the position.
- ▲ Inability to communicate clearly.
- ▲ Lack of objectives or goals.
- ▲ Lack of confidence.
- ▲ Nervousness.
- ▲ Evasiveness.
- ▲ No interest or enthusiasm.
- ▲ Over-bearing, over-aggressive or conceited.
- ▲ Too much emphasis on salary and fringe benefits.
- ▲ Self-centred attitude.

ACTION CHECKLIST

Do's...

- ▲ Arrive on time. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable.
- ▲ If presented with an application form, fill it in neatly. Be sure you give your resume to the person who is actually doing the recruiting.
- ▲ Greet the interviewer using a courtesy title and surname.

- ▲ Shake hands firmly.
- ▲ Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting down.
- ▲ Be alert and look interested. Be a good listener as well as a good talker.
- ▲ Look directly at a prospective employer.
- ▲ Follow the interviewer's leads.
- ▲ Get them to describe the position and duties to you as soon as possible in the interview so you can relate your background and skills to the position.
- ▲ Sell yourself in a factual, sincere manner. Make them realise the need for you in their organisation.
- ▲ Be prepared to answer those "typical questions" outlined above.
- ▲ Conduct yourself in a manner that says you are determined to get the job.

DON'T...

- ▲ smoke, even if the interviewer smokes and offers you a cigarette.
- ▲ answer questions with a simple yes or no. Give an explanation.
- ▲ lie! Do answer as truthfully and as frankly as possible.
- ▲ make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers.
- ▲ talk too much. Answer briefly, but with enough detail to make the point.
- ▲ enquire about salary and benefits, etc. Do leave detailed questions until you are sure the employer is interested in recruiting you.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

- ▲ Find out where you stand, but do not push hard in case it becomes counter-productive. Remember the interviewer may not have seen all the candidates yet. If you have been interviewed by more than one person, they will want to consult with each other after the interview.
- ▲ Don't be discouraged by an aggressive interviewer or if you feel you have already been rejected. Occasionally you will come across an interviewer who will conduct stress interviews to test your reaction.
- ▲ Finally, thank the interviewer for their time and for considering you. Leave on a positive note.

If you follow all these steps, you can be certain you've done all you can.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Contact the Consultant who referred you to the position and explain what happened. Your feelings and perceptions of the client will help to progress your interest in the job.