

Guide to Interviews

Interviewing at any stage of your career can be quite a daunting experience and with no two interviews being the same, it can appear to be more of an art than a science. The following guide will provide a general framework to focus your preparation and maximise your performance at that all-important meeting.

Interview Preparation

Once your interview has been arranged you will receive a confirmation email. This will outline who you will be meeting and where and when the meeting will take place. Consider the following; Plan your journey in advance and if possible, make the journey before the interview date. All interviews require suitable business dress; your personal presentation will help make a good first impression. Giving adequate time to thoroughly prepare for your interview will dramatically increase your ability to perform.

Interview Tools

There are three main tools that will enable thorough preparation for the content of the interview;

Curriculum Vitae

Your CV has sold your skills so far; however, you must be able to talk through it in detail and answer some challenging questions about it at interview. To ensure you perform well at interview, ask yourself the following questions and make notes on your CV; Can you talk through your CV from your earliest employment to the most recent, highlighting the reasons for joining the companies you have worked for, what did you do and why did you leave?

- If there are chronological gaps on your CV can you discuss the reasons for these breaks and answer further questions regarding this, such as length of time and what you were doing in the interim period?
- Are you confident in discussing your achievements, particularly those relevant to the role and those that apply to core competencies such as communication skills, organisational skills, and team working?

- If currently studying can you discuss with confidence the level to which you have studied and what is required to complete your studies?
- Are you able to refer to all parts of your educational history, no matter how far back?

Job Specification

The job specification provided should cover all the main aspects of the role that you are interviewing for. Ensure that you have read the specification thoroughly and that you understand all the tasks required of you. It is likely that there will be certain tasks that are new to you; research these and if these tasks appear to be company specific ask your Consultant to elaborate further.

Company Information

In the age of the Internet it is easier than ever to gather information about a given company. Therefore, simply looking at their 'About Us' page on their website may be sufficient; although it is unlikely to make you stand out. Access all areas of their site and if relevant, that of any holding or subsidiary company. Look at what do they do, where they operate, their mission statement and take note of any achievements listed. Other sources of information can include industry specific websites, governing or regulatory bodies and the websites of their main competitors.

The Interview

There are three stages of the interview to consider, the introduction, question and answer and the close.

The Introduction

Making a good first impression and building rapport are key to getting the interview off to a good start. Think about something relevant to start conversation, this could be regarding the modern nature of the office, something up to date in the news about the company or simply thanking them for taking the time to see you.

Question and Answer

There are four types of questions that are asked at interview. Using your CV, the job specification and the company information you have researched, plan potential responses to the following questions.

What have you done?

Rehearse discussing your CV from earliest to most recent outlining why you joined the company, what you learned whilst you were there and the reason for leaving.

What do you want to do next?

- Why do you want to work for this company?
- Why do you want this job?
- Where do you see yourself in the next 3-5 years? Avoid talking about salary/job titles – talk about the experience you want to gain, skills you want to develop e.g. become qualified, manage a team.

What kind of a person are you?

- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your friends/family describe you?
- What are your strengths? Look at skills and achievements relevant to this job
- What are your weaknesses? Look at areas of development specific to this job

What do you know about the company?

Outline your understanding of what the company do, where they operate, what their key principles are and who their main competitors are. Note: There is an interview structure known as Competency Based Interviewing and you can find a guide to this process in our Interview Preparation page on our site.

Normally towards the end of the interview you will be given the opportunity to ask any questions that you have. There are two types of question to consider, company specific and interviewer specific.

Company Specific Questions

- Where is the business placed in the market?
- How are they trying to gain a competitive advantage?
- What are the company's key strengths?
- What are the company's main threats?
- What are the long-term business goals?
- Interviewer Specific Questions
- Why did they join the company?
- How have they progressed within the company?

- What is the company environment like?
- Where do they see themselves developing within the company?
- What was their background prior to working here and how did they adapt?

Closing the Interview

It is important to close the interview on a positive note. Thank the client for their time, and reaffirm your interest in the role. Let them know that you are keen to gain feedback and that you look forward to hearing back from your Consultant from THE ONE GROUP. Try to avoid discussing salary expectations at this time. This is something that your Consultant will manage as part of our service.

The Second Interview

Second interviews can tend to be slightly repetitive as there is normally a new member of the business present, this could be a member of Human Resources, a member of Finance or another member of the Management team. Your preparation should mirror that for the first interview, but in addition try the following to enhance your approach; Record what was discussed in the first interview, including your detailed answers. Use the feedback given to you following the interview to highlight your strengths and weaknesses.

Think about how you might consolidate and enhance your strengths and overcome issues raised regarding perceived weaknesses. Look back at your achievements and experience for examples. If questions are repeated for the benefit of any new parties involved, use your previous experience to frame your answers. On this occasion think of any further information you may require and prepare questions to ask.

Concentrate on being yourself; you know they like you. Be confident and enthusiastic!

Feedback

This is an important part of the process, whatever the outcome. It is difficult to view interview feedback from an objective perspective as the information is about how you are perceived by others. However, this information will be imperative in preparing yourself for your new role and the challenges this will bring, or in improving your interview performance moving forwards.

Good Luck!