

# TOP TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS



You have been told that you have an interview for your dream job. Congratulations, now don't start to worry. The interview is possibly the toughest part of getting a job and strikes fear in to most people. Getting through interviews and making them work effectively for you, however, is something that everyone can do. All that it requires is some practise and careful planning.

## RESEARCH

Before the interview, research the company. Find out as much as you can about them, so that you can demonstrate at interview you are genuinely interested in joining the firm. Ask your consultant if they have any company background or information. Look up the organisation's website, which can be an excellent source of up-to-date company information.

Find out all the details about the job, analyse the job description and try to match your skills and abilities to the type of person they are looking for.

Make sure you know where the company is located, plan a route and leave for your interview in plenty of time. Arriving early makes a good impression, and enables you to look around and relax. Plan your outfit in advance, as first impressions do count. Think carefully about your attire: the key is to feel comfortable while looking smart and professional.

Remember that an interview is also an opportunity for you to find out about the company, so give some thought to pertinent questions you can ask your interviewers. Examples of these can be found later in this section document.

## STANDARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Below is a list of frequently asked interview questions. We recommend that you write brief notes on your answers, so on the morning of the interview you can run through them and be happy with your responses. Do not hesitate to contact one of our consultants if you are unsure how to respond to any of the questions.

The list below is not exhaustive so please do not regard it as such.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why do you think you are suitable for this position?
- What can you bring to the job / company?
- What interests you in this company / position?
- Why are you looking to leave your current employer / why did you leave your last employer?
- What are your strengths / weaknesses?
- What experience do you have that you think is relevant to this vacancy?
- Where do you see yourself in the short term, medium term and long term (or where do you see yourself in five years)?
- Do you think you will have any difficulties in this position?
- Do you prefer working on your own or as part of a team?
- How would your colleagues / friends describe you?
- What do you find are the three most important things to you in a job?
- What motivates you?
- What do you consider to be the greatest challenge you have faced? And what did you learn from it?
- Do you have any plans to continue studying? If so, what are they?
- Do you have any holiday booked?
- If offered this position, when could you start?
- Are you considering any other positions?
- How does this role compare?

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## DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you are given the opportunity. There is no need to worry, because below are some suggestions for questions you can ask. Try to memorise a few of the possibles and use them if the opportunity arises.

- Who will I be working with?
- How many people are in the team?
- Who will I be reporting to?
- What training would be given?
- How has the position arisen?
- Are there any prospects for promotion?
- What do you enjoy about working here?
- What new services / products have been announced recently?
- Do you have any sports / social activities?
- Who are your competitors?
- Do you have any concerns about my ability to do this job?
- How many other people are you interviewing for this position?
- When will I hear if I have been successful?
- If you offer me the position, how soon after this would you like me to start?

Competency interviews are becoming a common occurrence in the UK job market, so it is worth spending some time discovering how you would cope with this interview technique.

This specific type of interviewing is based on the principle that past behaviour and performance is the best indicator for future behaviour and performance. This eliminates misunderstanding and reduces the ability of a candidate to 'fake' answers.

Competency questions will typically require you to give a past example of a job-related experience for each question. The interviewers will be looking for an answer that demonstrates a specific example of required behaviours. Below are examples of two common competency questions, and the competencies that the interviewers will be searching for in your answers:

"Tell me of a time in the last six months where you have made an important decision which turned out to be correct?"

- Competencies the interviewers are likely to be looking for from the question above are:
- Good understanding of the business.
- Managing the flow of information correctly.
- Providing credible, sound information to senior management.
- Taking responsibility for situations.

"Can you describe a situation when you had to deal with an upset customer / irate supplier?"

Competencies the interviewers are likely to be looking for from the question above are:

- Not afraid to confront difficult issues.
- Communicate clearly with external contacts.
- Taking responsibility for situations.
- Understanding problems or issues.

Remember that interviewers are looking for factual, relevant and specific evidence concerning your ability to meet their selection criteria.

In order to be successful in the interview, you must:

- Answer the question and only the question.
- Not waffle.
- Give a recent specific example and explain briefly what the situation was, who was involved, what you did and why you did it, and what the outcome was.
- The golden rule in your examples is to use the word 'I', not 'We' when explaining your actions.

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Body language plays an important part in making a good impression.

Below are some guidelines of what to do and what not to do.

Also included are some golden rules for interviewees.

- DO:**
- When meeting the interviewer, look directly at the person, smile and shake hands firmly.
  - Once seated, face the interviewer with your feet pointing forwards. It shows you are interested in what the interviewer is saying.
  - Make frequent eye contact and look at the interviewer when they are speaking or when you are speaking to them.
  - Sit up straight – a good posture is essential.
  - Listen carefully to everything the interviewer says.
  - Reply to questions clearly and concisely.
  - Ask for an explanation if you are not sure of the meaning of a question.
  - Be courteous to everyone you meet from the minute you enter the building.
  - Remain positive even if you think the interview is not going well.
  - Remember to thank the interviewer at the end of the interview and confirm that you want the job.

- DON'T:**
- Walk in with your hands in your pockets. This will create the wrong impression and can make you seem insolent or aggressive.
  - Take your jacket off if you are wearing a suit, unless the interviewer asks if you would like to take it off.
  - Over-gesticulate with your hands when speaking. Particularly do not point your finger at the interviewer, this can be seen as rude or aggressive.
  - Cross your arms or grip the arms of the chair, both give negative impressions.
  - Interrupt the interviewer.
  - Daydream – remain focused at all times even if the person interviewing you has a monotone voice. Remember that the interviewer may not actually be experienced at interviewing.
  - Just give yes or no answers, always expand.
  - Discredit your former employer or colleagues, no matter what the circumstances.
  - Be afraid of silences. Once you have finished answering a question, if a silence follows do not feel you must fill it. This is a technique used by interviewers to get candidates to tell them something they did not wish to disclose.
  - Be afraid to sell yourself.

## BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Above all, remember to believe in your skills, experience and abilities. You would not have been selected for interview unless you could be the right person for the job. If you are unsuccessful then don't be disheartened, as every interview is a learning

experience, and each one teaches you a little more. The better your interview technique becomes, the more likely you are to succeed next time. In order to help you with this, your consultant will get detailed feedback from the interviewer when appropriate.

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