

Introduction

Your performance at interview is all about selling yourself and your achievements in a way that will benefit your new employer. Our aim is to impress and to win that job offer. Just as there are an assortment of candidates out there, there are also interviewers of varying skill levels. The aim of this brochure is to provide you with the best possible chance of success despite the capability of your interviewer. Good luck with your interview, we wish you every success and hope these tips are of some value to you.

The Aim of the Interview

From your point of view, the job interview has one purpose, to result in a job offer or an invitation to a second interview. The job interview is aimed at predicting your likelihood of success for the role in question, and research would show, that the best predictor of future performance is your past performance. Consequently your ability to describe specific events, actions, behaviours and performance in relation to the key selection criteria for the role in question, will give you the best possible chance of success. So having gained an interview, your work has only just begun. It now requires further research, rehearsal and review of the advertisement or other material in your possession to prepare for this significant, possibly career changing, event.

Preparation

The Interview Plan

Make sure you have all of the details relating to your interview:

- The specific location;
- The time and date;
- The expected duration of the interview and who you will be meeting;
- Will there be any testing or other activities associated with the interview;
- Is there parking near by? (check if it is metered and how long you should allow);
- Access to public transport?; and
- Contact phone number should something untoward delay you.

Research

It is important in preparation for your interview, that you conduct research into the organisation and its products or services. To that end there are several sources of information and these include:

- The Internet – most organisations these days have some form of website that will often provide you with most of the information you require;
- Annual reports;
- Past or present employees who you may know; and
- Site visits to gain an understanding of the company's approach to its business.

The Interview Plan

As part of your preparation you should review the advertisement or the information provided in order to:

- Identify the key selection criteria in the way of qualifications, skills and experience that the employer will likely focus on;
- Identify the types of questions that might be asked;
- Remind yourself of what attracted you to the position; and
- Consider your answers to questions such as:
 1. What attracts you to this position and our company?
 2. What do you know about us?
 3. Why do you want to leave your present position?

Then be prepared for specific questions that focus in on the key selection criteria. These questions will often be phrased as follows:

- Can you give me an example that would demonstrate how you have handled a difficult customer in the past?
- In this role you will need to be able to develop new customers in a previously untapped market place, can you provide an example that would demonstrate how you have done this in the past?
- If you are successful in gaining this position you will need to implement considerable change in the structure and the processes to turn the company's results around. What is the best example you can give of how you have designed and implemented change in the past?

These are just a few examples of the types of targeted or behavioural description interviewing questions that you can expect. In each case you should prepare not only for those specifics but also for the follow on questions such as:

- What results did you achieve? What could you have done differently to improve that result? If you had that situation again tomorrow what would you do?
- Who can I talk to about your involvement in that particular situation? (In other words a referee).

Think STAR and be a STAR

In preparing for your interview you will perform much better if you can think in a structured way to answer questions with clear information. We recommend the STAR technique to structure your answers and this involves following this sequence:

Situation that you were in
Task you had to perform
Action you took
Result that you achieved

In some cases it may be advantageous to include an 'O' after Situation and Task, as you might want to describe the Obstacles that you faced. If you have these sorts of answers prepared it won't matter how skilled the interviewer is because you will ensure that you cover the information most pertinent to selection for the role.

Prepare your own Questions

Interviewing should be a two-way activity and you should ensure that you have prepared some sensible questions that demonstrate your interest in both the company and the role in question. These might include:

- What are the plans for the company's growth and development?
- Are there new products and services that are being developed to win greater market share?
- What are the career opportunities for someone who joins at this level?
- What is the organisations view toward personal development and professional training?

However there are questions you should not ask, particularly at first interview and these relate to remuneration, benefits, types of car, and other subjects that relate to you. Only talk about remuneration if the interviewer raises it.

Now for the Interview

Your interview will provide an opportunity for both you and the interviewer to assess each other. Remember that you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. So consider some of these points:

- Be sure you arrive in plenty of time, the last thing you need is to be flustered because you have been running late to your interview;
- Turn off your mobile phone and your electronic diary or leave them in a secure place;
- Ensure you are comfortable in what you wear and that you are well presented.