

Interview Survival Guide

Quite often the first few minutes of an interview can decide whether the employer believes you could be a potential candidate. “You don’t get a second chance to create a good first impression”.

Your performance at the interview stage remains the most important step in attaining your goal – this new position.

PREPARATION

It is surprising that applicants often arrive at interviews without giving the first thought to what they are going to say. Preparation is the key step towards a successful interview.

- Be certain as to the date, time and address of the interview. The confusion arising from a misunderstanding will not benefit your application.
- Find out the exact name, correct pronunciation and title of the interviewer.
- Choose your clothes carefully to create a positive first impression. Be certain all aspects of your grooming are checked.
- Interviewers look for interested, pro-active candidates. Therefore, investigate specific facts about the company; the type of products or services they offer; location of offices and plants; company history and future prospects.

Your Recruitment Agent will provide you with company details. However, a number of publications and services are helpful in supplying pertinent information:

- ▣ Internet
- ▣ Annual Reports
- ▣ The Business Who’s who of Australia
- ▣ Various industry/trade magazines
- ▣ Store or site visits
- ▣ Past employees
- Be prepared to be fully questioned as to your present/past positions. You will be expected to discuss all aspects of these clearly and dispassionately and describe your achievements.
- Remember the interviewer expects you to ask questions as well. The quality or aptness of your inquiry will demonstrate your qualifications for the position and potential to grow within the company.

Possible questions are:

1. Why has the position become available?
2. What training program is available?
3. Is there a job description?

4. What are the company's future plans?
 5. Will the company foster further studies?
 6. What is your potential for progression in the company?
- Make sure your resume is presented in a professional manner, listing your complete work history. It is usually desirable to start with your current position and work back and be sure to describe your achievements accurately.

LIKELY INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS

- What interests you most about working for our company?
- Where do you see yourself in your career five years from now?
- In order to progress would you be willing to relocate?
- What are your major achievements/strengths?
- What management style suits you best?
- What do you most enjoy from your work?
- When was your last salary increase and how much?
- Do you prefer to work alone, in small groups or as a team member?

Most importantly, you must be prepared for targeted questions.

You will have experienced some of these in your interviews with recruitment consultants. They address specific situations, behaviours and competencies that are important to the successful performance of the position.

Examples are:

1. Can you give an example of
2. Can you describe how you/.....

These questions are derived from the key selection criteria for the position and seek specific examples from your past that illustrate your approach, behaviour or competency to perform the role. Prepare for these questions, "let me give you an example" is a strong answer.

NEGATIVES

You will also be judged on both your positive attributes as well as the negatives factors which come into play.

Here are some of the most common negatives which arise during interviews.

- Not maintaining solid eye contact.
- Weak handshake.
- Not having any questions related to the position.
- Lack of preparation:

- poor personal presentation;
- no purpose or goal directed ambition and
- lack of confidence.
- Apparent lack of enthusiasm/interest in the position.
- Poor presentation:
 - inability to express thoughts clearly;
 - evasiveness regarding past performance;
 - lack of manners.
- A conceited “you can’t tell me anything I don’t already know” attitude.
- Over-emphasis on remuneration and a persistent attitude of “what can I get out of your company?”
- Over-confidence.

THE INTERVIEW

These are some basic points when being interviewed;

- DON'T be late. No matter what the excuse, it will count against you.
- Check the correct pronunciation of the interviewer's surname prior to the interview and address him/her in a clear voice.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Present an enthusiastic interested image. Smile at the interviewer especially when he/she smiles at you.
- Maintain eye contact at all times. It is disconcerting to try and catch a person's eye when talking to them. If you are with two or more interviewers, then ensure you have regular eye contact with each.
- Body language – let your manner demonstrate your interest in the discussion. Don't relax.
- Listen to the interviewer's questions and answer the actual questions, drawing on relevant experiences. Be truthful.
- DON'T comment negatively on your past employers. It will beg the question as to what you will say about this company.
- Keep your answers to the point. Over-elaboration can lead you into straying off the point.
- Maintain a positive approach to the position at all times, show yourself to be interested and alert.
- DON'T discuss remuneration at the initial interview.
- You can “sell” yourself by tackling the areas of need in the organisation and addressing those needs to your abilities.
- Be truthful and don't exaggerate. Reference checking will uncover the truth and candidates caught out rarely regain a positive position with a prospective employer.

- Listen to the interviewer – you will pick up valuable cues to direct the conversation towards your areas of strengths.
- Where appropriate, you can make a comment that indicates you have taken the trouble to conduct some research – do this in a subtle manner.

FINALISING THE INTERVIEW

- DON'T be hesitant, if you are interested in the position – make this known in a positive sense. Inquire as to the next step – a second interview. If you are offered the position and have decided it is for you – accept it immediately.
- Sometimes you may feel it necessary to think it over. If so, politely ask for a time with a definite date to reply.
- During the initial stage, DON'T be discouraged if an offer is not made. Most probably other applicants have to be interviewed and only at the end of the process can a shortlist be made.
- Sometimes, interviewers use a negative approach with candidates, which may be discouraging. DON'T let your feelings show. The interviewer is most likely testing your reaction. Always appear positive.
- Be sure to thank the interviewer for the time he/she has spent with you and re-state your interest in the role.

POST – INTERVIEW

- Contact your LRS consultant immediately after the interview and provide feedback. We understand that interview outcomes can be difficult to assess but we are interested in your general feelings and any specific comments.
- Under no circumstances contact the company or interviewer direct – this is invariably counter productive.
- You may need to be patient. There are many different reasons why the client may not make an immediate decision. We will keep you informed.
- If you are placed under any time pressure eg: another job offer, then let us know so we can try to expedite a decision on your behalf.
- If your application is unsuccessful, then do not take it personally. Start focusing your energy on your next application.
- Remember, you are one of many who applied for the position and one of a few who reached the interview stage.