

Finding Your Next Job: Interview Tips

Your CV shows that you have the skills and experience to do the job. Now you have the opportunity to **persuade your potential future employer** in person.

Preparation

Ensure you have made a note of the time and place of the interview, along with the name of your interviewer(s).

We will provide you with as much information we can, but you are well advised to **seek out anything you can about the company**. Go to your nearest reference library, look on the Internet, read the trade press or contact people you know in the industry.

Make a list of **possible questions** you may be asked and prepare your answers.

- Strengths and weaknesses.
- Breakdown of specific duties in your current role.
- Notable achievements - personal and work related.
- Reasons for leaving your current position.
- Aspects of the job that appeal to you most.
- Where you see yourself in five years time.

Be prepared to **ask questions** at the interview. The company will want to know that you are interested in the opportunity they are offering.

- What goals do the company have?
- Where do they expect to be in five years time?
- How will this role develop?
- Who are the company's direct competitors?

Try to be original - discuss points raised in their brochure or in editorial you may have read about them.

Presentation

First impressions do count, especially if your position involves a degree of face-to-face communication with management. Take time to get your best suit dry cleaned and make sure your shoes are clean and your hair is tidy. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

The Interview

- Under no circumstances should you arrive late. Plan your journey in advance and give yourself plenty of time to overcome the hazards of train delays and traffic jams. If for any reason you do get delayed, telephone your consultant with your estimated time of arrival.
- Creating a good rapport is important. Greet your interviewer(s) by name, with a smile and a firm handshake.

- Throughout the interview maintain eye contact with your interviewer(s) and watch your posture.
- Don't waffle or avoid difficult questions. When you are asked questions, remember that this is an opportunity to sell yourself. Try not to give too many 'yes' or 'no' replies.
- If you feel the interview is not going well, do not be put off. Some companies use this technique to test your reactions.
- Be positive and never talk negatively about your current or previous employer.
- Remember to ask the questions you prepared before the interview. (It is acceptable to bring notes into the interview with you.)
- Do not ask about salary, holidays or benefits at the first interview stage.
- If you are interested in the job, make sure you let the interviewer(s) know before you leave by saying why you like the role.
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time.

After the interview

Telephone your consultant with your interview feedback. We cannot contact the client until we know your views. Don't despair if you do not get the job. Treat every interview as experience. **Practice makes perfect!**

Finding Your Next Job: Sample Questions and Answers

Detailed below are a number of possible interview question-and-answer scenarios to help you prepare for your interview:

Never lie...

Q. Why did you leave your last job?

A. You felt your career prospects and progression could go no further and you need a challenge where your potential can be exploited.

Never criticise your manager...

Q. Do you get on with your current manager?

A. I have a good relationship with my boss; he/she is not the reason I'm looking to move.

Never criticise an employer...

Q. Do you think your boss is a good manager?

A. I have never had any problems with the management expertise of my boss and as already mentioned he/she is not the reason I'm looking for another job.

Never criticise your company...

Q. What do you think of your current job? /Why do you want to leave?

A. As a company they are fine but I do not think they can match my ambitions with the possible opportunities offered and now is a right time for me to move on.

Be positive...

Q. How long would you stay with us?

A. I see this as a long-term career move.

Prepare your own five-year plan...

Q. Where do you see yourself in five years time?

A. At the moment in five years time I can see myself progressing along my chosen path and currently I would like to progress into a managerial role. But, if in two to three year's time a better, more suitable opportunity shows itself, then I would give it my consideration. Actually I would like to have won the lottery and be sitting on a boat drinking wine in the Med. (Humour can sometimes help.)

Prepare your strengths...

Q. What are your greatest strengths?

*A. My greatest strengths are threefold: -
To be able to recognise my weaknesses
I have the ability to pick up procedures quickly
An excellent temperament which means I don't get rattled easily*

Prepare your weaknesses...

Q. What are your greatest weaknesses?

A. Some people have said my natural enthusiasm is a weakness, but I found my administration skills were weak. However I have recognised this and come to terms with it Consequently it is no longer a major problem.

Why you're the best person for the job...

Q. Why should we offer you the position?

A. I've listened very carefully to what you've told me about the position and on that basis I'm confident that I could do the job as well as, if not better than, the others you have seen.

Why you want the job...

(listen carefully during the interview & note interesting pointers)

Q. What interests you most about the position on offer?

A. The career prospects, job content work environment, day-to-day duties, etc

Other Likely Questions

Below are some other questions that you may be asked at interview. The responses depend entirely on your personal experiences. It is worth bearing these in mind when preparing to meet a prospective employer: -

- What kind of people do you find most difficult to work with? Why?
- What do you feel you have done particularly well in your last job? In what areas have you achieved the greatest success? Why do you think this is?
- In your last job, did you find anything particularly difficult?
- What would you consider to be your greatest achievement in your career to date?

Finding Your Next Job:

What is a Competency Based Interview?

Competency based (or behavioural) interviews are based on the premise that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. Interviewers seek to obtain information about candidates past behaviour in certain situations.

Competency based interviews are structured, with questions that relate directly to the essential criteria/ competencies required for the post. Research into recruitment and selection methodology suggests that this type of interview can be one of the most reliable and accurate forms of assessment. Competency based interview questions have been used for selection, but have not always been labelled as such. This style of interviewing is usually only one part of the interview process, and often a more informal interview is held separately to discuss the CV in a chronological interview.

A good recruitment and selection interview should assess candidates against each essential criteria or competency, asking questions about:

- **Past behaviours and performance**
- **Learning from past behaviours**
- **Future adaptability to new post**
- **Knowledge and understanding of issues in relation to the post**

What does the interview focus on?

Most interviews will focus on six key areas. These will mostly be competencies, but may also include other knowledge-based essential criteria, for example: leadership, teamwork, conflict, motivation, creativity and technical skills related to the job specification. They will be focused on those competencies that are most important for the particular job. You may also be required to meet other, specific essential criteria. This could be an in-depth knowledge of a particular area or experience of working in a similar role previously.

What should I expect in the interview?

Competency based interview questions are slightly different to the style you may be used to. They will tend to focus on past situations and your behaviour in those situations. Questions are likely to start with:

"Please give me an example of when. . .", or "Please describe an occasion" etc.

Example Questions include:

Leadership

- Why are you a good leader?
- What type of leadership style do you adopt?
- How would those you have lead describe you?

Delegating

- Explain a mistake you have made in delegating- what were the consequences?
- In what instance would you delegate a task?
- What are the advantages of delegating?

Conflict & Pressure

- Give an example of an instance when you have had an argument with someone at work?
- How do you react if your boss asks you to do something which conflicts with your own deadlines?

Team Work

- Do you prefer to work alone or in a group?
- When you joined your last company how did you get on with your co-workers?

Staff Motivation and Development

- What makes a good manager?

- How you motivate staff?

Personal Motivation

- What are the three most important events in your career to date?
- What are your standards of success in your job?

Decision Making

- What is the toughest decision you have had to make while at your present company? Tell me about it. What alternatives did you consider?
- Tell me about a decision you have made, what effect it had on your colleagues and its wider impact.
- Give me an example of an unpopular decision you have made. How did it affect others?

The interviewers will be looking for specific examples about exactly what you did in such situations, not what the team's role as a whole was, or what you would do in a hypothetical situation.

You can choose to use relevant examples from your current job, a previous role, or a situation outside of work altogether. You will be asked to discuss the example in some detail. It is likely that the interviewers will then follow with some probing questions, possibly clarifying a particular area. They will be interested in the outcome of the situation, whether there was anything you learned from the experience, etc. The interviewers may also want to ask you questions about the information you have provided in your application form.