

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

This guide is mainly common sense but you would be amazed at the amount of these tips that are ignored and therefore result in an unsuccessful interview.

### **Fail to prepare – prepare to fail!**

#### **Preparation - Research**

- Find out as much about the company as you can. Get hold of annual reports, go through every page of their website, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter etc and press coverage
  - Look at the nature of their business – what do they offer and who do they target
  - Number of employs, revenue of company, revenue forecast, number/location of offices
  - Who are their competitors – where do they rank, how are they different
  - Trends in their industry
  - What is their reputation for employee development and staff retention – look them up on Glassdoor
  - From what you have read, what conclusions have you come to? Are you impressed or concerned? Have you got any ideas?
- Study the job spec you have been given – go through every line of it and identify your areas of relevance
  - Understand how this role fits into the business
  - Identify all of the key competencies and have examples ready to convince the interviewer that you have those competencies
  - Your examples need to be comprehensive – if you say you are good at problem solving, justify it to the point of leaving them with no doubt
  - Prepare some questions for them about the role
  - If you ask 'what the will the first 3/6 months look like', be prepared to have that question thrown back at you!
- Allow plenty of time to travel to the interview location - plan to arrive 15 minutes early. Take into account traffic delays and finding a parking space. Being late is unacceptable and will put you on the back foot straight away. Be aware of how long your interview will take (a single interview usually lasts up to 1 1/2 hours). Make sure you have allowed enough time – if its going great and you have to ask to leave to get back to work or to another interview its not going to look great!
- Know what to wear! Always wear smart business attire (even if the company allows casual dress.) Make sure your shoes are polished, top button fastened and wear your best suit and tie! 1<sup>st</sup> impressions count!
- Make sure you are clear on who is interviewing you and what the interview process is. How many interviews will you have? What are the interviewers' names/job titles? (Research them on LinkedIn or other social sites – they are likely to look at you!) Make sure your presence on all social media is professional – don't let a heavy Friday night ruin your career! Connecting with them may be premature and certainly don't stalk them! How will these people contribute to the decision making process? Will there be any tests?
- Bring along a spare copy of your CV and some identification.
- **Questions** – if you were conducting the interview what would you ask? Come up with an answer for all of them. Here are some common questions:
  - Why do you want to work for us?
  - Why do you want to leave your current employer?
  - What is the most difficult thing that you have done in your current position?
  - What attributes make someone a good .....?

- What are your most significant accomplishments?
- As a manager (if applicable) what do you look for when you recruit people?
- How would your team/colleagues describe you?
- Describe your current manager?
- Describe your personality
- What are your goals?
- What are your main strengths/weaknesses/development areas?
- Where do you see yourself in 1/ 3/ 5 years?
- Give us examples of a time when you .....(relevant to job competencies)
  - worked to targets
  - dealt with pressure, conflict or emotion
  - showed your initiative
  - brought the team together

## The Interview

- Upon arrival, if you have brought a coat/umbrella try to find somewhere to put them before you meet the interviewer. Sit down, look relaxed (even if you are not!), think twice about accepting a drink (what do you do with the cup when the interviewer arrives?) If you are thirsty, a glass of water is fine.
- Upon first meeting your interviewer make sure you shake his/her hand firmly (don't crush it) - make eye contact, smile. Be prepared to make polite conversation - 'Did you find us ok?' - always try to answer these questions with more than just a Yes/No. Perhaps you might want to comment on the attractiveness of the office environment or the ease by which you got there. You may get shown to the interview office by someone else – be sure to build rapport with everyone you meet.
- In the interview room, play safe with your etiquette. Sit down after or at the same time as the interviewer. If given a choice where to sit, don't go directly opposite or next to – try and sit at 45 degrees to them. Don't let the table become a barrier.
- Pay close attention to your physical communication throughout the interview. This means good eye contact (ie looking at the interviewer for over 70% of the time - if you have more than one interviewer always try to address all of them with your answers). Do not cross your arms (it looks very 'defensive'), do not slump in the seat, smile. Sit forward. If the interviewer says "come on lets go for a walk around the office" you want to be on your feet instantly – you do not want to have to peel yourself up from the chair because you are so relaxed!
- Be yourself and be honest at all times. The right answer to every question is the honest answer – if you do not know – do not try and 'wing' it.
- Leave your mobile in the car or flick it to airplane mode. Nobody wants to hear it ring or vibrate. Do not take it from your pocket and place it on the desk – it suggests you are waiting for a call that is more important than the interview. Men, leave your keys in your pocket too.

## During and after an Interview

- Be clear about what your major selling points are. If at the end of the interview these have not been covered, make a point of talking explicitly about these.
- Be to the point. Make sure that you answer the interviewer's question (it sounds obvious but nervousness and a keenness to communicate your selling points can often lead you away from the point.) If you are asked to talk about a specific project, a good way of approaching this might be to talk about the overall business aim of the project, then talk about your role in the overall project and then cover the scope/size of your role.

- Never say something in an interview, which cannot be backed up by examples. If you say you are a 'good team player', 'creative' or 'enthusiastic' you will inevitably be asked for proof.
- Be positive. Do not overly criticise your current or last employer. Generally, every time you talk about a problem or issue you should always be looking to say what your involvement was in overcoming this issue.
- Sell yourself. Try to avoid giving clichéd answers to interview questions (it is very likely your interviewer has heard these responses more than you care to imagine). Use examples from your own experience; give your opinion.
- If you do not know the answer to the question, do not try and answer it. Instead say how you would approach the problem/answering the question.

## **Questions you may want to ask**

*Do not* begin with "How much will I be paid and how much holiday do I get?" get that information from the recruiter or at the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage.

- Why has the position become vacant?
- How will the position evolve in X years time?
- What opportunities are there for training/career development?
- What is your appraisal system?
- What could I expect to do in the first 3-6 months?
- Ask the interviewer to describe the corporate culture.
- What are the main challenges facing your growth?
- Based on the research I did, I notice that xxxx is happening, how are you managing that?
- Where do you see yourself in the market?

## **At the end of the interview and after**

- Ask how you did.
- Re-affirm your interest in the role.
- Ask what the next stage is and when you can expect to hear.
- Ask how many other candidates are being interviewed for the role.

## **NEGATIVE FACTORS TO WATCH FOR**

During the course of an interview, the interviewer will be evaluating your negative factors as well as your positive attributes. Listed below are negative factors frequently evaluated during the course of an interview and those that more often lead to a rejection.

- \* Poor personal appearance.
- \* Overbearing, aggressive, conceited 'superiority complex', 'know-it-all' attitude.
- \* Inability to express thoughts clearly, poor diction or grammar.
- \* Lack of planning for career – no purpose or goals.
- \* Lack of interest and enthusiasm – passive and indifferent.
- \* Lack of confidence – nervousness.
- \* Over-emphasis on money – interested only in remuneration.
- \* Evasive – makes excuses for unfavourable factors in record.
- \* Lack of tact/maturity/courtesy.
- \* Condemnation of past employers.

- \* Failure to look the interviewer in the eye.
- \* Limp handshake and wandering eyes.
- \* Failure to ask good questions about the job and company.

**GOOD LUCK!**