

Guide to the Interview

The following is a comprehensive guide to preparing, attending and being successful in your interviewing endeavours. At all times we are here to help and we hope that this document will provide the foundation to ensuring you succeed with every interview you attend.

Preparing for the Interview

Working with us.... towards working with them.

No matter which agent you work with the key to a successful interview is thorough preparation - that really cannot be emphasised enough.

Finding out as much as you can about the post, the company and the industry will place you in a strong position and give you the necessary confidence to handle most situations. Similarly, a careful analysis of your own career history will allow you to highlight the most positive aspects of your application and prepare you for any in-depth questioning on any weaker points.

Once you know that an interview has been arranged, you should work closely with us to ensure that you have all the following relevant details:

- ✓ The correct name of the interviewer/s and their position/s within the company
- ✓ Interview confirmation of Time/Date/Location
- ✓ A map or directions or how to get there
- ✓ Brief company profile
- ✓ Full Job description
- ✓ Advice on the number of applicants
- ✓ Details of any aptitude or technical tests
- ✓ An approximate duration of the interview and any formal preparation that is needed to allow you to deliver, for example a presentation or written examples of work etc.

Knowing the facts...and doing something about it.

The first thing to say about interviewing is that it affects all sorts of people, in all sorts of ways. From Senior executives to the lowest paid the word Interview conjures up all kinds of horrors to many people. This fear of being interviewed may be because the most common example of interviewing we see in everyday life in on the TV is that of the police interview! Or maybe its much simpler...

The best explanation is probably that it is actually the fault of the recruitment industry, or to be more precise the kind of agencies who are the first recruiters most people come in to contact with as they embark on their working lives.

Young people rarely get enough help preparing for their first interviews and sadly many of the resulting meetings turn out badly as a result. These negative feelings tend to stick with us until something much more positive happens.

At Logic we understand the dynamics of this critical process and have developed a series of steps that remove fear, promote the right mindset and help people become more successful.

Working with the right agency - attention to detail and full support

Logic's approach is very much a three stage system:

1. Understand what the client (employer) really needs before we start recruiting.

That sounds obvious but many recruiters rush in to recruiting before they really know what's needed. This results in poor understanding, bad candidate matches and is often an indication of the relationship between the recruitment consultant and the potential employer. And guess what - it makes your job twice as hard and the possibility of having a good interviewing experience less likely.

2. Only introduce people, who in our professional opinion really offer a good potential fit (right skills, right background and experience with the right financial and other needs for the job).

Recruitment is a partnership and as we build relationships with our clients they trust our judgements, by spending time to assess your suitability we save everyone's time and maximise the outcome of any interview.

3. Make sure the candidate is armed with enough information about the process that they are ready for the interview.

We believe that if we can help you fully prepare we will help remove the uncertainty and ensure that there are no nasty surprises. By encouraging you to think like an interviewer your chances are improved immensely.

Getting the right mindset

The first thing to set straight is that in real terms it's not just you who is being interviewed.....its the company/organisation as well...like football, this really is a game of two half's !

Most people who attend some form of business meeting rarely get nervous or worry beforehand (or during), simply because they know what to expect and understand what part they play. The interview should be approached just like any other well planned business meeting you have ever attended. Its time to find out if both you and the potential employer are a good fit - and this can only happen if there is a frank and open exchange of information that has been planned in advance.

The definition of a successful interview is not just an offer, or the arranging of a second (or third) interviews, it also included times when you decide that the job is

not for you - the fact that you were able to talk through the opportunity and make a decision means that your preparation and conduct were right.

An unsuccessful interview can range from the obvious - not getting an offer that you really wanted - to leaving it not knowing what happens next, or indeed not having any indication of how you have done. At the very worst end of a bad interview is accepting a role that you are not suitable for and finding that out just after you start.

Just because a particular role was not right may not prevent you exploring further opportunities with the same company in the future. Great interviews build bridges that you may decide to walk across again.

Doing the right research

Armed with the information provided by your account manager (before you attend the meeting) you should find out as much as you can about the company, it's activities and competitors. In addition to a brief marketing profile, we may be able to provide additional information you should always be ready to carry out your own independent search.

The internet has become an efficient and free source of information about many companies activities, but one should look at trade publications as well - even one hour spent searching can arm you with considerable background information that may be invaluable during the interview.

If you know anyone that already works with for the company you may be able to gain valuable insight regarding the position on offer and the environment in which you would be working. By learning more about a potential employer you will be able to assess whether to company and the role meet your career objectives.

Having absolute knowledge about the most important element - you

Although it may appear self-evident, you should be familiar with every detail on your CV (see our separate guide to writing an effective CV).

A vague recollection of its contents is not good enough - you are stacking the odds in favour of failure and will learn the meaning of wasting you time and that of the recruiter and potential employers. You **must** be sure of the facts. (It maybe useful to refer to a copy of your CV during the interview and we would always recommend that you take at least two copies with you to all first and subsequent meetings)

Aim to develop unique selling points that will distinguish you from the other candidates. Highlight any special skills, which you have, training courses that you have attended, any useful information that may set you apart. In other words, relate your own experience to the demands of the post.

Build a list of three to five things you have achieved in any of your past roles - these can be used as examples of why they should hire you. Often overcoming adversity

and helping a company recover from serious problems will be seen in the same light as achieving other profile results.

Examine any areas of weakness, which the interviewer may wish to explore, and spend time anticipating your response. (For instance, you may not have experience of a particular technical aspect but you can demonstrate that you have learnt and absorbed information quickly in the past, perhaps by using examples).

If you were interviewing you for your current (or last) role what would you ask you !

Be prepared to explain gaps in your CV and describe the positive gains that you have made from a career break, overseas travel or voluntary work. By emphasizing the skills and experience that you do have, you can prove that these will provide added value.

You may even find it useful to compose a short career statement that describes who you are, what you achieved and what you can offer the employer. This will provide a valuable anchor when responding to open ended questions that invite you to *'describe yourself'*.

In addition, you should prepare a list of five to ten questions that you would like to ask regarding the post, the company and the prospects for future career development .

Finally try to keep up to date with development in your specific industry and the business environment in general by reading industry journals as well as the daily press. By being alert you can learn about developments in the industry which may have a direct impact upon the company, which may prove to be invaluable during the course of your interview.

Industry specific information may also allow you to put forward questions that demonstrate a real interest in the business and underline your career driven approach.

Managing the Interview

You are being interviewed because the employer needs to hire someone and needs to find out if you are the right person for the role and their company. They are not inviting you in to grill you or make the meeting a social visit - as the Godfather said...."its not personal....its business".....and in this case....It's simply a business opportunity.

Throughout the interaction which takes place during the interview, the employer will be evaluating your strengths and weaknesses, your qualifications, skills and intellectual qualities, As well as assessing your technical expertise, your interviewer will probably delve deeply to determine your attitudes, aptitudes, stability, motivation and maturity.

It is worth noticing that, in certain situations, you may have more experience of the interview process than your interviewer. This is especially true of seasoned

candidates. If this becomes evident during your interview, it is vital that you maintain a courteous and respectful attitude throughout.

Similarly, although the position on offer may be a short-term contract, you should approach the interview with the same professionalism as you would to a permanent position. It is unwise to be complacent as competition for a post is often stiff and the interviewer may have future long-term projects in mind when selecting candidates.

The interview should centre around: -

- ❖ You
- ❖ Your previous roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Your achievements to date
- ❖ How you achieved that success
- ❖ Why you are successful
- ❖ The benefits that you can bring to the company
- ❖ Your future hopes and aspirations

It is important that you are in complete control of the information that you present. You can respond to the interviewer's questions in a number of ways and release as much or as little information as you feel appropriate.

The interviewer is also under pressure to find the right candidate and he or she wants to be re-assured that you can do the job. Therefore you need to inspire confidence and prove that you are motivated, reliable and committed.

Key successful attributes of a good candidate (in the eyes of an interviewer):

- ✓ Good balance of interpersonal and technically relevant skills - maintains eye contact, speaks clearly and with a good command of English (or the required language/s).
- ✓ Shows that he/she is interested in the company/organisation and understands that good people are the key to a businesses success and long term growth.
- ✓ Has valid considered opinions when asked questions (avoiding the pitfalls of focusing on strong political or religious beliefs).
- ✓ Is motivated to improve him/herself
- ✓ Has something more than the required core skills to bring to the role.
- ✓ Has an appropriate level of ambition associated with any give role.
- ✓ Has a personality and sense of humour
- ✓ Demonstrates honesty and integrity

- ✓ Cares about personal presentation and hygiene.

Understanding what everyone wants and needs

Essentially **both** the interviewer **and** Candidate need to cover three basic areas.

By bearing these in mind, you will be able to focus on the main objectives of the interview.

1. Are you capable of doing the role? - can you actually do what is needed?

Do you have the technical skills, experience and desire to succeed in this job?

2. Are you right for this company - will you fit in?

Do your values and personality suit the culture of the organisation?

Are you motivated, hard working, able to handle stress?

3. Do you want the job ?

Is it the right next step or contact position, is it the right location - are you comfortable with the role, its skills requirements and the description of the working environment and people? Can you get here (or travel to the site/sites required) in a reliable way. Does it work well with your personal circumstances (if asked to live away from home for example).

Interview Dos and Don'ts

Every interview situation is different, but some core guidelines listed below should help you get the best from the time available and help you avoid common mistakes:

Do plan to arrive at least fifteen minutes early. This will give you the time to take stock of the surroundings, study any company literature on display and focus your thoughts. It also allows you to observe the kinds of people who already work there.

Do let us know if you are unavoidably delayed and expect to be late. (We prefer to pass the message on to the employer). If you have a reasonable explanation your courtesy can help counteract any negative impression. This should only happen in extreme circumstances as late arrival for a job interview is rarely, if ever excusable.

Do complete any application form you are presented with in full and neatly. Don't relax and rely on your application or CV to do your selling for you. Most employers will want you to speak for yourself.

Do bring extra copies of your CV to the interview as you may be invited to discuss your application with other key members of staff.

Do offer a warm, firm handshake. Give the appearance of energy as you walk. Smile. Create a positive first impression.....you only have a few seconds.

Do greet the employer by his or her surname if you are sure of the pronunciation. If you are not sure of the name, check at reception or, as a last resort, ask him or her to repeat it.

Do wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit well back in the chair and lean forward slightly. Look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good talker.

Don't make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

Don't smoke for at least 20 minutes before the interview as the smell of cigarette smoke to a non smoking interviewer will almost certainly be seen as a negative, also it is a good idea to avoid alcoholic drinks or spicy food on the day of the interview for the same reasons.

Don't chew gum and don't be tempted to eat the biscuits offered with a tea or coffee - there is zero chance of expressing yourself effectively whilst trying to eat !

Don't answer questions with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Explain wherever possible. Tell those things about yourself which relate to the situation.

Don't be tempted to over-answer a question even if a long pause develops. Be succinct and have the confidence to conclude at the right moment. If you are unsure whether you have covered the question in enough detail it is better to stop and then ask "Would you like me to elaborate on that point?" rather than ramble on and risk boring the interviewer.

Don't get involved in conversations about politics, economics or religion. Since this is a potentially delicate situation it is best to say no more than is necessary.

Don't let your discouragement show if you get the impression that the interview is not going well. Occasionally, an employer who is genuinely interested in your possibilities may appear to discourage you in order to test your reaction.

Don't argue with your interviewer. There is often a reason for posing a deliberately provocative question. Respond calmly and tactfully and show that you are able to cope well in stressful situations.

Don't enquire about salary, holidays and other pay-related issues at the initial interview, unless you are positive the employer is interested. If the interviewer asks what salary expectations you have, indicate what you are currently earning and explain that you are more interested in opportunity than in a specific salary amount at present. Allow your account Manager to manage any salary offers after the interview - you need the entire picture before you can make a decision. Salary is potentially only one part of the offer and it is unwise to commit to a figure during the meeting that you may regret later if other aspects do not, for example stack up to current/last packages.

Do express interest and enthusiasm in the post and use positive body language to convey this.

Do look a prospective employer in the eye while you talk to him/her.

Do follow the employer's leads, but try to get the employer to describe the position and duties to you early in the interview so that you can relate your background, skills and accomplishments appropriately.

Do make sure that your good points come across to the interviewer in a factual, logical and sincere manner. Stress your achievements and use concrete examples of previous situations and actions you have taken, processes you have developed, and savings or improvements that you have achieved.

Do answer questions truthfully, frankly and as much 'to the point' as possible, NEVER lie or bluff.

Do reflect carefully, but quickly, when asked a potentially difficult question. Try to understand the interviewer's motive and avoid giving a reflex response. Repeating the essential points of the questions may provide the necessary 'breathing space'. This technique also helps when you are responding to multiple queries within the same question. If you encounter a poor interviewer who throws multiple questions at you in one sentence, break each question down and answer it individually.

Do always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in a position where you can choose from a number of positions, rather than just one.

50 Common Interview questions

Below you will find some of the common questions posed at interviews and you should be prepared to answer these with confidence. The list is far from exhaustive and you should anticipate questions relating specifically to your own career history and technical skills.

- ❖ What do you know about the company?
- ❖ Why do you think you might like to work for our company?
- ❖ Why did you choose to work in this industry?
- ❖ Tell me about yourself?
- ❖ Why do you wish to leave your current job?
- ❖ What are your particular areas of expertise?
- ❖ What do you think determines a person's progress in a successful company?
- ❖ What job in our company do you want to work towards?
- ❖ Which jobs have you enjoyed the most? Why?

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- ❖ Which jobs have you enjoyed the least? Why?
- ❖ Describe a difficult situation and how you handled it?
- ❖ For what reasons did you leave your previous jobs?
- ❖ Why you were not working between... and?
- ❖ What did you do during the time you were out of work?
- ❖ How would you describe yourself?
- ❖ Give examples of your major achievements to date.
- ❖ Have you experienced failure?
- ❖ How do you get the best out of people?
- ❖ Do you have management experience?
- ❖ What is your style of management?
- ❖ What types of people rub you up the wrong way?
- ❖ How do you manager your time?
- ❖ How do you approach a new project?
- ❖ What do you enjoy most about your work?
- ❖ What do you enjoy least about your work?
- ❖ How do you react to stress?
- ❖ Do you like regular hours?
- ❖ What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
- ❖ Do you prefer working alone or as part of a team?
- ❖ What kind of person do you like to work for? Describe your ideal boss.
- ❖ Where do you see yourself in five year's time?
- ❖ Will your previous employers be happy to provide references?
- ❖ If we asked for a reference from your current employer what would it say?
- ❖ What contributions have you made in your previous jobs to justify your salary there?

- ❖ Can you take instructions without feeling upset?
- ❖ What are your strengths?
- ❖ What are your weaknesses?
- ❖ Do you enjoy making decisions?
- ❖ How do you adapt to change?
- ❖ Describe the training courses you have attended.
- ❖ Are you willing to relocate?
- ❖ If you were successful today, how long would you plan to stay with this company?
- ❖ What level of salary are you expecting?
- ❖ How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- ❖ What types of books do you read? What was the last book you read?
- ❖ How do you manage your personal finances? Do you have any debt?
- ❖ How do you keep your knowledge of the industry up-to-date?
- ❖ Which trade publications or websites do you read?
- ❖ Are you applying for jobs in other companies?
- ❖ Do you have any questions for us?

Closing the interview

Just as it is important to create a favourable impression at the beginning of your interview, it is equally important to leave the interview on a positive note.

The employer will usually ask if there is anything further you would like to know and this gives you the opportunity to pose any relevant questions, which have not been answered in the course of the interview. Restate briefly why you think you can make an exceptionally strong contribution to the job.

Do not leave the interview without knowing what happens next.

Ask if there is any further information that the interviewer would like from you. If you want the job (or at least want to find out more) underline your enthusiasm and find out what potentially happens next.

Find out when you can expect to know the outcome of your discussions. Will short-listed candidates be asked to attend a further interview or sit an aptitude test?

Don't be discouraged if a definite offer isn't made or specific salary discussed (even at 2nd or 3rd interview). The employer may want to confer with colleagues or interview more candidates before arriving at a decision. Be alert for signals and do not prolong the interview unnecessarily.

As the meeting comes to a close, thank the employer for his or her time and for having considered your application. If you have answered the three questions uppermost in the employer's mind (Are you capable of doing the role?, Are you right for this company?, Do you want the job ?) then you have done all you can.

In Summary

Confidence at interview comes from being in control

Find out about

The job and the responsibilities
The company and its competitors
What the company expects from you

Demonstrate

Relate the demands of the job to your own experience
Show what contributions you can make

Uncover any concerns

Find out if the employer has any reservations about you or your ability to do the job

Dispel these concerns

Overcome these reservations
Concentrate on the benefits you can offer

Finish the meeting on a high.

Express your enthusiasm and convey confidence in your ability to do the job
Go over reservations again if necessary and overcome them
Confirm your interest and leave the employer with a positive impression

And finally.....what to do next

Call your Account Manager as soon as possible after the interview to discuss your thoughts and feelings. He or she will want to talk with you directly before the employer gets in touch! If you are interested in the position, your Account Manager is there to help you get it!

Take time to review your interview and make a brief written summary. These notes could provide useful reference material should you win the position. They could also

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provide groundwork material for a second or perhaps even a third interview. Interview notes could also help you prepare for interviews with other companies.

It is advisable to approach second and third interviews with the same professionalism as the first. On these occasions, you will be generally invited to meet other key members of staff, often from different departments within the company.

You should aim to build on the information gathered in the first interview and be able to demonstrate the results of further research carried out on the position and company since your last meeting.

Contrary to any other advice - the second interview is twice as important as the first, and in many ways more difficult.

The person who conducted the first interview simply made a recommendation that (in many cases) a more senior (or more important) person should meet and assess you for themselves. No matter how things seem at the end of the first interview there is no such thing as an easy 2nd interview. A great example is when the candidate fails on the second meeting because they believed that meeting a lower ranked co-worker was not as important as impressing the manager. In today's culture good companies listen to lots of opinions before signing new people up. Take the view that the receptionist may well be the one person sitting between you and your dream job.

Whatever the outcome, it is wise to regard each interview as a learning experience that provides an opportunity for personal development and future success.

We wish you every success and are here to support you at every stage.

The Logic Team