

# INSIGHT SELECT

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT SPECIALISTS



## INTERVIEW GUIDELINES



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The five basic steps to enable you to structure a professional and thorough interview.



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## 1. PREPERATION

Preparation paves the way for a professional performance.

You can prepare for an interview by following three basic steps:

### Research your company thoroughly by whatever means possible.

Nearly all organisations will have a website, and this will provide you with most of the information you need. You could also contact them and ask for their product literature and company background information. If there is a local branch, call in, speak to the people and ask for the information you feel would be necessary.

You must try to create as clear a picture as possible about the company that you are approaching, the products they sell, the markets they deal with and as much as you can about the particular job for which you are applying. Not only will this enable you to more fully participate in the interview with your prospective employer, but, if nothing else, it will help you to decide whether you are interested in the company and the job.

### Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask the prospective employer.

During the interview you are under pressure trying hard to please and to impress. Quite frequently this has a counter-productive result. What generally happens is that your mind goes blank and you remember all the questions that you want to ask as you are about to leave the interview or, indeed, after you have left.

Prepare yourself with examples of the life cycle of your work, the successes and the failures and how you have implemented improvements based on your real life experiences. Show that you are a proactive and self motivated individual who strives to be successful with long-term career goals and aspirations. During your interview it is imperative that you demonstrate a real desire and hunger for the job and the organisation in particular. It may be difficult to gauge the interviewer and you may not be able to tell if they like you or not. This is often a deliberate strategy of the interviewer to establish how you react under pressure and it is important that you do make the effort to build a rapport.

A list of suggested questions follows. The reason you need the questions is to ensure that by the time you have left the interview, you understand as much about the job and about the company as a prospective employer has found out about you. This should equip you to make an objective decision at the end of the interview session.

It also prevents those awful pregnant pauses when the interviewer says "and do you have any questions?" and you cannot answer. An interview should be a two-way process.



### Prepare a list of your selling benefits.

In order to do this, ask yourself one basic question - "Why should that employer offer me that job?", and then write down all the reasons.

It is important to display confidence but not arrogance - do sell yourself and give examples of where you have proved your ability or displayed your skill within your specialist area - you will be asked to do this anyway, but if they haven't look for opportunities to show where you have been successful. Also you will be asked how you plan and organise your time, so please prepare examples that are specifically related to the job specification and your CV.

- Where you have dealt with a difficult customer/situation
- Where you have demonstrated flexibility within your role
- Where you have shown excellent communication skills
- When you have had to work successfully to tight deadlines



If you have been thorough in your questioning of the prospective employer then you will have a good idea of what they are looking for. You can then match your own capabilities, experience and ambitions against their criteria.

### Examples:

"I have worked extensively with these development tools."

"I have the right qualifications."

"Although I do not have the full experience that you are looking for, I most certainly have ambition and the determination to succeed, together with a willingness to work hard in order to achieve this."

"Although I have not supported your application, I have supported similar products to exactly the same market."

When listing out your selling benefits also bear in mind if you have what we call in the trade a 'glory file', i.e. any written documentation or league tables or memos from your boss that say "what a wonderful person you are and how well you undertook your duties" - make sure that you take that with you. It saves a lot of unnecessary time in the question and answer session and proves you can do what you say. Written documentation actually proves this and enables you to move to a more constructive area in the interview.

Having completed these three basic steps of preparation, at least you are going to your interview with confidence, knowing that you are as fully equipped as you possibly can be to participate in the interview. Make no mistake - your prospective employer will be impressed that at least you have tried and, if you try half as hard with their customers then you will be creating the right professional image and impression that the company is trying to achieve.



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## 2. STRUCTURE

### First Impression

It is imperative that you create the right first impression. No matter how well trained or experienced the interviewer it has been proved that “subjectivity rules”.

People often form an opinion of you, and decide whether to offer the job to you, within the first four minutes of your interview.

Perhaps the following guidelines will help.

- **GOLDEN RULE - ARRIVE ON TIME** or preferably early
- In some cases you will have to complete an application form so leave yourself enough time to do this comfortably and still be able to commence your interview on time
- Always take a CV with you as it helps prevent having to sit there scratching your head trying to remember dates, etc.
- Appearance - clean, smart and unfussy. The days of loud suits and loud ties are gone. The professional image of blue suit and white shirt is usually preferred. If you look good, you will feel confident too
- When you meet your prospective employer try and introduce yourself first if at all possible; it slightly gives you the upper-hand. A firm handshake and good eye contact indicate good interpersonal skills and denote an air of authority
- Look the interviewer in the eyes as there is nothing worse than having a shifty expression - it destroys credibility!
- Please, no complaints about “traffic jams”, “the previous appointment that dragged on” or anything else. A fresh, strong, positive approach is best
- Do not smoke on interview, even if they do or offer





## 3. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This part of the interview is purely to enable your employer to find out exactly what he wants to know about you, i.e. are you the right candidate for the job?

It should also be used from your point of view to try and find out as much as you can about the job and the company.

Now you are in the hot seat and this is where the list of questions, you previously prepared, will prove to be invaluable.

### Think of the questions and answer process as a game

Every time the employer asks you a question and you give a good response, you get a plus point. Every time the employer gets a negative response, you get a minus point. The more plus points you get, the closer you are to getting the job.

Try to turn your negative points into positive. For example, if he says "Well you have never developed using these languages before" your response should be "No, I haven't but there is no reason why I can't. I couldn't use the tools I am using now until I joined my present company.

What you have done in that instance is change the negative point into a positive one i.e. no reason why the company shouldn't train you to use their technologies too.

If you don't understand the question, check it!

### Listen to the questions carefully

If possible try and work out why the interviewer is asking you the question. For example, "You've not been there very long and you weren't very long in your last job". Are they actually trying to find out whether you are the sort of person who keeps changing jobs very rapidly before having had a chance to prove yourself? Perhaps they want confirmation that, if they gave you the job, you would not leave in an equally short time.

A possible response is "No, I wasn't there very long but I did have good reasons for leaving. However, I don't like changing jobs frequently and that is why it is very important that the next decision I make is the right one. I want to stay with the next company I join and progress through their organisation without having to leave and join another company to gain a promotion".

Make sure you have refreshed your Technical ability and experience, again do your homework!

### Answer the questions specifically and without waffling

Once you have answered the question, if the interviewer wants more information, they will ask for it. When you are asked a question like "What exactly do in your current company?" They do not want to hear "Well, I was born at a very early age...." and half an hour later they have your whole life story, but not the answer to the question. Too much detail is boring!



### **Be honest**

If you can't do something, there is no point in telling them that you can.

Never answer with 'I don't know'.

If in doubt, ask to think about it and ask if you can get back to them via your Recruitment Consultant later.

### **Enthusiasm counts**

Although you are bound to read in most advertisements that 'experience would be desirable', ENTHUSIASM also counts for a lot in an interview.

If you are enthusiastic, willing to learn and, above all, willing to work hard, those messages must come across in your interview. This should satisfy the interviewer that you are the type of person they would like to have within the company.

### **Remember, not all employers are trained to interview**

It is as much your responsibility to make sure that the interviewer has enough correct information about you, as it is their responsibility to extract from you that information.

### **Never be negative about your current job**

Sell the positive points about the new one - exciting company - industry – product - career progression / development opportunities - different and exciting style.

### **Try to show some positive factors about your personality**

Smile, be friendly, professional.

### **Stress that the next position is important to you...**

Because you intend staying a long time.

### **Never give the impression you are on too many interviews**

Only a select few.

### **Tell them when you are next available for interview, or can start employment**

Ask if you can see where you would be working, meet other members of staff where possible

### **If on a long notice period**

Say you will see if you can negotiate it.

### **Take any good references you may have with you**

This saves time and leaves a good impression – you are prepared and serious and not just "Window Shopping".





## Questions

At the end of the interview, do ask some questions, even if they have covered everything, at least go over some points already discussed. Lastly, ask if there is anything that you think of after the interview, can you get back to them via your Consultant or call direct?

## Suggested questions to ask at interview

- What is your company turnover?
- How many employees are there in total in the company?
- Can you draw me an organisation chart and show me where would I fit in?
- What development environment do you use?
- What platforms are you likely to develop upon?
- Why do people enjoy working for your company?
- Who are your main competitors?
- What sort of markets do you sell to?
- Can I see some company literature or do you have a demo room where I can have a look at the equipment/product?
- How many calls per day do you expect?
- Give me an understanding of the skill necessary?
- What percentage of the market do you hold?
- How much technical support do you provide to your customers?
- What is your average service down-time response?
- What sort of the training facilities do you have. For your own staff? For customers?
- How long does training take and what does it involve?
- How realistic are the promotion prospects?
- Is there a planned career development path?
- What are the parameters of the product I will be supporting?
- Why has this vacancy arisen?
- To whom would I be reporting?
- What are your plans for product development in the future? New markets / industries / diversification?
- How much investment does your company make towards R&D to ensure a constant flow of new products?

You should be able to identify when enough information has been exchanged between you and the prospective employer. As soon as you feel this has been achieved, you are probably then ready to go into the next stage of the interview.





## 4. SUMMARY

Having extracted from your prospective employer exactly what he is looking for, i.e. the criteria that he is interviewing against, you then need to summarise your experience against that criteria.

**REMEMBER YOUR SELLING BENEFITS LIST!**

Use this to summarise your experience against the interviewers requirements.

In summary, I am very interested in the vacancy you have and i feel that i am adequately qualified to be able to do a very good job for you.





## 5. CLOSING

At the end of the interview, remember - a firm hand shake. If keen let them know you want the position, or would more than seriously consider it. Thank them for their time and explaining to you what they want.

If you follow these simple but basic rules, you should leave your interview feeling that you have done a good job. Also you should be armed with some sort of commitment, certainly knowing exactly what the next stage will be.

If you have done a really good job, you will be receiving an offer letter in your hand, have a smile on your face and be heading for the nearest pub to celebrate your new appointment!





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