

STANDARD INTERVIEW

Standard interviews are considered less formal, and more of a conversation to gather general information about the individual. Questions can be a little unpredictable, often starting with 'Please can you tell us about yourself?'. It is very common for people to interpret this question to be about their personal life, hobbies, family *etc*, which is isn't. This is the perfect time to summarise why you are good for the role and connect with the recruiter. Remember those 'light bulbs', keeping your answers concise and smart.

Strong answer example: ✓

"I am a qualified accountant, working as a Financial Controller, managing a team of four with overall responsibility for the finance function, using SAP and extensive use of Excel – which I fully utilise as an advanced user . I thrive on a challenge & making improvement. In March I undertook a cost saving exercise for the company I work for, involving close review & negotiation of current contracts including utilities for the group, saving them an annual sum of £42,000".

Weak answer example: ✗

"I have lived in Cumbria all my life, married with two children, I've worked for my current employer for the past 16 years and I'm being made redundant in September. I support my local football team and never miss a home match".

Standard questions often start with How, What, Why.....consider how you would answer the following:

- How did you hear about the role?
- What attracts you to the role?
- What can you bring to the department?
- What are your three key strengths for the role?
- How do you manage the pressure of deadlines?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why are you looking to leave your current employer?

It is important that you answer each question with relevant key piece/s of information which are likely to be extracts from your CV.

Example - "How would your Manager describe you?" "Driven, hardworking and technically strong". ✓

TIP: the answer to personal attribute questions is likely to feature in your CV's Personal Profile – so visualise your CV when answering

*Also consider timing of response – a quick and confident response is far more appealing than an uncomfortable silence! *

The risk with a standard interview is that sometimes the recruiters primary focus is to gain a quick, general overview of the individual, their fit into the business and first impressions. If they don't ask role related questions it can be difficult to 'sell yourself' and provide examples of your relevance for the role and showcase the research carried out. If you experience this, consider taking control and asking leading questions yourself, in order to maximise your opportunity.

Example - "What type of person are you looking to recruit?" "They must be a fully qualified Accountant, preferably with experience in the engineering sector who can provide us with sound financial information and be involved in the growth and strategy of our business".

Now you have something to work with, addressing each of the stated desirables, confirming your skills, qualifications and experience for the role.

TIP: Remember not all employers are well versed at interviewing. So, use your initiative, rather than accept the 'status quo' and potentially leave site feeling disappointed because you were only in for 20 minutes, having learnt very little about one another. Take control and ensure you come away content. You may decide the role isn't for you, but you will know what you went to find out about the company and role.