

INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

Securing an interview is a BIG step closer to clinching your next role. It is now time to get prepared, ensuring you leave a positive and lasting impression on the recruiter, and achieve the best possible outcome.

COMPANY RESEARCH

A solid understand of the company, who are the directors? what type of people do they employ? what is the culture? look at testimonials, business objectives/strategy and current news articles. This information is easily accessible via the company website and a range of social media platforms.

(Recommended: LinkedIn, Google, Twitter, local and trade articles).

Further focus:

- Overview of the company – A potted history, when was it established and by who? What product or service do they offer? What is their USP? Recent successes and achievements.
- Defined sector (Services, IT, Engineering), latest news and developments within that sector, key trends and forecast areas of growth, who are their main competitors and topical subjects such as changes in legislation which could affect their business.
- Structure and overall size (is it a 1 site SME, a subsidiary, multinational), Company turnover (download & study their accounts from the past 3 years), number of employees.

TIP: Allocate yourself 1 hour online to conduct this deeper level of research, you should know once that time is up if this is a company that excites you. Hopefully, you will want to read more and engage with the company ethos and sector you are studying. This preparation is not only to ensure you can confidently answer any questions asked on interview day but also to grab your interest and make you want to be a part of this organisation. It will also naturally generate several questions you wish to ask the recruiter and excite you about getting onto site and putting faces to names and solidify the information you have researched. **Preparation is the key to a positive, enjoyable, and successful interview process. If your well prepared that will be evident (regardless of any initial nerves – which will soon ebb away).**

STUDY THE JOB DESCRIPTION

- Remember, to receive an interview invitation means the recruiter already feels confident you have the skills, experience, and qualifications to do the role – as presented in your CV.
- Print off the job description provided and highlight or underline the key responsibilities, skills, personal attributes, IT software and any other key pieces of information stated of high importance to the role.
- Now reflect on your CV and highlight where you have listed this information. Hopefully you will use lots of highlighter, demonstrating recent and relevant experience, providing excellent focus areas to discuss. These specific areas are what the recruiter wants to hear about NOT irrelevant general experience from 5-10 years ago. Keep it concise and smart.

TIP: Think of each highlighted word as a buzz word and each time the recruiter hears you mention the buzz word/s (Examples: 'cashflow management', 'SAP', 'acquisitions and mergers') imagine a light bulb switching on in their head. You want to put as many light bulbs on as possible.

THE OBJECTIVE OF AN INTERVIEW

- A lot of time and energy goes into finding a new role; writing a high-quality CV, preparation for the interview/s and booking time out of work. Some find interviews daunting, whilst others enjoy the experience and approach the situation like a client meeting and fact-finding exercise. Regardless of mindset, you should remember that **the ultimate objective of this exercise is to be offered the job.**
- If you fully prepare and secure the job offer this is the perfect result, if you later decide it isn't the right role then you can always decline the offer, prior to resignation. However, if you don't fully prepare and mid-way through the

interview realise this is a company you would really like to be part of, then potentially it is too late. Be in the driver's seat and always strive to do your best, regardless of whether you decide afterwards that this is not the right role, they may have other opportunities more fitting in the future, so leave a good impression on every occasion.

TIP: Your objective is to be offered the role, gain excellent feedback and be in a strong and confident situation to accept.

INTERVIEW STYLES

Prepare for all possibilities, it isn't advised to second guess or predict what style will be adopted. The adopted style will vary company by company and can be defined into two main categories – **standard interview** and **competency-based interviews**.

SECOND INTERVIEW, PRESENTATION OR TESTING

Some companies conduct second and third interviews, this may be to meet with additional members of the team. If so, it is likely to be a similar format to your first interview, think about the style and questions which were asked previously. If asked to do a presentation you will be given sufficient notice and time to prepare. The topic will be related to the company, sector and/or job role you are applying to.

Inhouse IT tests, in particular Microsoft Excel are frequently used for roles requiring 'Advanced' knowledge, such as a Financial Analyst role involving extensive data manipulation using spreadsheets and formulas.

INTERVIEW DAY

DO'S

- First impressions do count, think carefully about what you should wear and have your outfit laid out the day prior.
- Check your interview confirmation, ensure you know exactly where your going and who you will be meeting – allow sufficient travel time.
- Remain focused throughout on providing strong and concise answers,
- Positive body language – it is important to remain calm, engage with the recruiter and have good eye contact and posture throughout the interview.
- It is seen positively to ask questions when asked towards the end of the interview. Enthusiastic and effective questioning will solidify your knowledge, skills and attributes back to the recruiter. **Example questions for the recruiter.**
- Always thank the interviewer for their time, maintain eye contact, smile and shake their hand before leaving. If you have enjoyed the meeting and are genuinely interested, then let them know you have enjoyed it and that you look forward to hearing from them.

DO NOT

- Do not arrive too early, ideally 5 minutes before your allocated time is ideal
- Do not ask about salary and annual leave entitlement at first interview stage. This can lead the interviewer to think your priority is money rather than the opportunity itself. If you are asked, then you can state 'Market Rate' rather than risking either undervaluing yourself or pricing yourself out by going too high. You could defer by replying "what range did you have in mind?" this will then provide a guide for you to work with before committing yourself.
- Do not give one-word answers or go off on a tangent whilst you struggle to find an answer.