

INTERVIEW TIPS

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

These pre-interview essentials could make the difference between your next career step or a career full stop!

- Make sure you know the exact **address** and **time** of the interview. Find out if you need to go to a specific department.
- Know the interviewer's **name** and their **title**. Ask your Consultant about your interviewer's background and personality.
- Ask your Consultant for a **description of the position**. Discuss the position with your Consultant to get a better insight into the role for which you are applying.
- **Refresh** your thoughts on your own background, particularly on the positions you have held.
- Think about what's important to you in a role. Be clear about what your career **goals** are, what **environment** you would like to work in, what **motivates** you and what doesn't.
- Find out information about the **company** - such as its size and location, approximate staff numbers, branch outlets, products and services, recent growth and growth potential. Also do some homework on their product range, client base and market share. (The Internet has a wealth of information!)
- Always **dress** conservatively unless you are absolutely certain the image required is something different. Wear a business suit, preferably dark. Pay attention to all aspects of your grooming. Dressing in a professional and respectful manner is an effective way to show your potential employer that being appointed to this position is important to you.
- Prepare a list of questions you want to ask, such as:
 - Why is the position available?
 - How would you describe your company culture?
 - What challenges does this position have?
 - What training programmes or incentive schemes are available?
 - What are the promotional opportunities?
 - Ask about company growth plans - new products/services etc
 - What is the staff turnover like?

COMMITTED AND ENTHUSIASTIC?

You've completed all your research and preparation for the interview, but **still feel unsure about the job?** Then call your Consultant and talk about it. After all, they want to put the right person into the position and you should feel comfortable and excited about the prospect of working in the role you are being interviewed for. **Be honest** about your salary/package expectations up front, this will assist with a smooth process throughout.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT AT THE INTERVIEW

Each interviewer has their own style of questioning - some interviewers will be quite formal and structured in their approach and others will be quite casual. Ask your Consultant what to expect at your interview. The interviewer's objective is to see if you are suitable for the job, so they will be interested in your qualifications, skills, attitude, aptitude, stability, motivation, flexibility/adaptability, maturity and appearance.

A big part of the interview will be getting to know you, your personality and, most importantly, whether you fit in with their team. So it's important to be open and honest about who you are. Let's face it; you want to work with people who you enjoy being around too!

ON THE DAY - THE ETIQUETTE OF INTERVIEWS

- Always arrive a **few minutes early** for your interview.
- If you are running late, phone Focus so that we can notify the Client and apologise. Try to **remain calm** and unflustered, take a few deep breaths, **assess your appearance** and on arrival, **apologise** professionally to the interviewer.
- If you're given an application form, fill it out neatly and completely. Take your time and get it right.
- **Greet the interviewer by name** and shake hands firmly. Don't greet your potential employer with a limp fish, nor with a grip of iron.
- **Wait till the interviewer is seated** before sitting yourself or until you are asked.
- If you are nervous, **take three deep breaths**. Don't be afraid to tell the interviewer you are a bit nervous - we're all human and they will probably appreciate your honesty.
- **Listen carefully** to all questions and answer them clearly and honestly. **Give examples** of your previous experience that relate to the questions.
- Speak clearly, concisely and professionally.
- **Think before you speak** - it is better to have a few moments silence than to regret what you have said.
- Look the interviewer in the **eye** while you are talking to them and also while they are talking to you.
- Try not to answer questions with a simple **'yes' or 'no'** - elaborate but stick to the point. Don't 'over answer' questions or sideline the conversation into irrelevant topics. Again, **keep to the point**. Most importantly:
 - Make the interviewer realise you will be useful to their organisation.
 - Be truthful and frank. (Anything else may return to haunt you.)
 - Never make derogatory remarks about present or past employers
 - The interviewer may ask you about your salary expectations; this should already have been discussed with your Focus Consultant and an indication given to the Client. It is prudent to leave this negotiation to your Consultant - you can talk openly and honestly with them and they will represent you professionally through what is sometimes a delicate negotiation. Politely tell the interviewer that you would prefer to discuss this with your Consultant.

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWING

The philosophy behind Behavioural Interview questions is that past behaviour will predict future behaviour. Therefore by asking you to describe how you have handled past events the interviewer will gain an insight into how you will react to similar situations in the future.

You will be asked to describe a Situation or Task, outline the Action you took and the Result you achieved.

STAR

S Situation	Briefly outline the situation that provides the best example of what the interviewer has asked for.
T Task	Describe the task/s that you were required to carry out in this situation.
A Action	Tell the interviewer what you did to handle the situation, whilst there may have several people involved it is what YOU did that they want to hear about.
R Result	Conclude your answer with the result of your action in relation to the situation. Even if the situation wasn't solved you can discuss what steps you have taken to prevent or handle it differently in the future.

Each question will have a key skill that is being assessed (generally it will not be named) however your answer may well demonstrate more than one, e.g. an example of problem solving may also have required you to demonstrate initiative, solution focus, time management, persuasion and tenacity.

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- Review the Job Description (if you have one) or identify the qualities you think are required for the job and write down situations where you demonstrated these skills. Structure your answers according to STAR. When deciding on which examples to use, focus on the Result that demonstrates the skill most effectively. Remember to make sure to mention what YOU did.
- Try to think of several examples for the same skills. It is unlikely that you will be able to predict all the questions you will be asked so the more answers you have up your sleeve the better so that you don't have to use the same example over and over to demonstrate different skills.
- Be prepared for your interviewer to probe and ask for more detail, so pick examples where you are comfortable providing further background information.
- Practice answering behavioural questions – there are lots available on the internet via Google.
- If possible, ask a friend or family member to pick some randomly from a list so you get used to answering them ad hoc.
- For example, to assess leadership ability, an interviewer might ask a Candidate to “Describe a time when you had to persuade someone to do something that he/she did not want to do. What did you do and what was the result?”
- The interviewer then evaluates the answers to each question and may submit a quantitative rating for each of the targeted competencies to assist in their post interview assessment of shortlisted candidates.

GENERAL QUESTIONS LIKELY TO BE ASKED

- Why do you want to work for this company? What interests you about this position?
- Out of all the companies or environments you have been in which one have you enjoyed the most?
- Where do you see yourself in your career in 5 years time - 10 years time?
- Will your previous employers act as your referees? What would they say about you?
- What skills have you learnt from your previous employers?
- Out of all the managers you have had, which have you enjoyed working for and why? Which have you most disliked working for and why?
- What did you enjoy most about your previous/current position - what did you least like?
- What are your areas of weakness and/or areas for development?
- What do you do to overcome these weaknesses? (Remember, we all have weaknesses: it is what we are doing about them that "makes" you)
- What are your major strengths?
- How would you describe your management style?
- Do you prefer to work on your own or as part of a team? Why?
- What motivates you? How do you self-motivate?
- What achievements are you most proud of, and why?

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

If you are interested in the position, you should say so.

If you are offered the position and want it, accept it with thanks.

However, if you want to think about it, ask for a period of time to make your decision.

Don't be discouraged if no indication of their intent is made. The interviewer probably has to see other applicants before making any decision.

Don't be discouraged if an interview seems unnaturally brief. Sometimes employers arrange short initial interviews to short list potential applicants.

Thank the interviewer for his or her time and for their consideration of you.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Call your Consultant and tell them how it went and whether you are interested in the position. It is important that you give the Consultant some feedback and any queries that you may have before the employer calls so they can present your point of view.

Your Consultant will ring you with feedback from the Client. If you have been successful you are most likely to be asked to go for a second interview.

SECOND INTERVIEWS

Your second interview can be more of the same, usually with other people within the Client organisation. Do not think you have the job because you have been asked back for a second interview. This is not necessarily the case.

In some cases you will be asked to do:

- **Presentations**
 - You may be given a 15 minute time slot to present something you have initiated and completed that you are most proud of in your life or given a subject topic to present on.
- **Role Play**
 - You may be given a brochure or product information sheet several days before the second interview and be asked to sell the product to the Client as if they were your customer.
- **Go out on the Road for a Day**
 - You may be invited to go out on the road with one of the company representatives for a day or ½ day. Treat this like an interview!

REFERENCE CHECKING

Reference Checks can happen at any stage of the recruitment process. They may be attained prior to you being put forward to the position to ascertain your suitability for the role, before second interview stage so that the client can base their interview around your referee's comments, or prior to the Client's final hiring decision.

Select referees that have managed or taught you in the past. In some situations you may also be asked for a Customer, Colleague or Direct Report to act as a referee to complete the 360° view. Contact your referees in advance, tell them to expect a phone call from a Focus Consultant, ask what times are most convenient for them to call.

The comments that your referees make are covered under the Privacy Act and we seek specific permission from your referee to be able to pass this information on to your prospective employer. We also ask if they are happy for us to discuss their comments with you – feel free to ask your Consultant if you would like some feedback and where permission has been given we will outline what was said.

THE JOB OFFER

Your Consultant will have discussed the salary package with you when you were briefed on the job, so you should have a fair idea of what the Client may offer you. Your Consultant will present you with a verbal job offer covering your Salary, Incentive program, Company Benefits e.g. medical insurance, super, car, phone etc. If you choose to accept the offer, a contract (in line with the NZ Employment Relations Act 2000) from the Client will be sent to you. If you have any questions or concerns your Consultant is here to help you and represent you and your needs to the Client.

PSYCH TESTING

These are not Pass or Fail tests. They are a tool that our Clients use to give them further information about who you are, how you will learn, and what environment you would best work in and how they can maximise your strength and help you to overcome your weaknesses.

There are many types of testing that can take anything from 20mins on the internet through to 4 hours in an office.

Your Focus Consultant will give you details of what to expect.

The most important piece of advice we can give you is – get an early night and make sure you are well hydrated and have eaten well so your mind is able to function at its best. You may be able to take water in with you.

PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRES

Personality questionnaires consider how people like to work and their behavioural style. Such questionnaires focus on how an individual approaches a job rather than the ability to perform that job. The most common forms of response to a personality questionnaire is to select which is 'most' and 'least' like him or her from a list of statements. Typically, responses to such questionnaires result in a 'profile'. This includes areas such as problem solving, relationships with others, decision-making style etc. Personality questionnaires are used in both selection and development. Personality questionnaires can be administered online, on-screen via a PC or PDA or in pencil and paper format.

ABILITY ASSESSMENTS

These tests look at the extent to which the Candidate is able to carry out various aspects of a job or role. Ability tests look at a variety of skills from verbal and numerical reasoning through to checking or administrative skills and can cover varying levels of difficulty.

Often an employer is interested in a Candidate's potential and this can be measured by an ability test. Ability tests can be administered in the same ways as personality questionnaires.

THE FIRST FEW MONTHS ON THE JOB

Use your Consultant to talk through any of your problems – or share your successes! We care about your career. The first few months on the job can be overwhelming, our Consultants have years of experience and we are happy to listen and assist you in any way we can. We will be in touch with you and your manager during the first few months but don't hesitate to contact us as well.

Keep in Touch.