



Interview Guide

Performance Tips

Overview

Your job interview is the most important event in your job search. A lot of work has gone in to getting you to this point and it is time to make a great impression and show your prospective new company and manager that you are the right person for them to hire. As with all things worth doing, preparation is the key to success whether you are preparing for your first interview in a while or you are a seasoned campaigner. They say that if you fail to prepare, then you prepare to fail – so follow our interview guide to help you succeed, keep any interview nerves under wraps and get that all important offer of engagement.

Preparation

- **Job Profile** – Read the job description or advertisement and make sure that you not only are aware of the key deliverables (Essentials & Desirables), but that you understand exactly how your experience applies and have suitable examples prepared to illustrate where you have applied such knowledge in the past and what the outcome was. Whilst Informed will give you as much information as possible and prepare you thoroughly, it is still worth researching the role yourself for anything that may help and resonate with you. It is worth thinking about how this role will help the company achieve their own targets, and if you don't know either the company's aspirations or how you will be expected to help, then store these questions in your armoury for the interview.
- **Company & Interviewer** - Research the business and your interviewer as best you can beforehand. Use the internet to find out about their current structure, executive team, history, recent announcements and future direction, financials, competitors, employee numbers and office locations. Have a look at their website and pick out key information (Have you looked at our website is an oft-asked interview question), their Social Media output, reviews on Google or Facebook to assess culture, and see if you can find the interviewer on LinkedIn. You never know, you might have something in common such as previous businesses, mutual contacts or shared interests that might help you build a rapport. Consider some of the more often used interview questions and make sure you have some answers prepared; you know the ones... Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What drives you? Why do you want this job? What attracts you to the company? (This is where reading the website will help.) Tell me about yourself...
- **You** – One thing that makes an interview more difficult is stress, so let's make sure we have prepared thoroughly and not neglected the basics.
 - ✓ **Questions** – This interview is as much about you as it is about the interviewer, make sure that you have prepared questions to ask them in order to satisfy your requirements at the end of the interview. It will also show the interviewer that you are interested, prepared and organised.
 - ✓ **Practice** – Practice some of your prepared answers with a family member or friend. This will help prepare you for the interview, get some ideas flowing and be confident. It will make sure you can iron out some unwanted habits as well, whilst refining your interview style and tone.
 - ✓ **Documentation** – Make sure you have a notepad, two pens (in case one runs out) and have printed any documentation that you wish to take with you the day before. This could be the

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directions, job description/advert, interview confirmation, your recruiter's details, certifications, examples of your work, testimonials, references, your CV or anything else that you think might help. This interview guide would be worth a second read too!

- ✓ **Journey** – It seems obvious, but let's face it, when you get you start your journey anything can happen. Congestions, roadworks, accidents, train cancellations or delays. But let's not worry about the things that we cannot control - people are very understanding if it is not something you can control. If something like this happens, just call us here at Informed Recruitment on 0115 853 2900 and we will communicate with the company for you and take that stress away. However, whilst unforeseen circumstances are usually forgiven, being late for no reason will not be. There are things that you can do to make things easier and try and make sure that no hiccups occur – plan your route on Google maps or an equivalent, build in contingency time to arrive early, have the route programme in to your satnav ahead of time (you may even want arrive in very good time to refresh on your notes whilst having drink close by to the office,) book any tickets in advance, do a dummy of the journey ahead of time so you know where you are going – after all it could be your journey to work!
- ✓ **Attire** – Most people wonder about the right way to dress for an interview not because they are worried about wearing the right thing, but because they are worried about wearing the wrong thing. Keep it simple and just dress professionally and in the correct business attire for the role and make sure you feel confident. If you need any pointers, then just ask us. We're here to help, not judge, and we've all been to interviews in the past as well. We've also been recruiting for a long time and 'wrong' business attire to us probably means something much worse than what you are thinking! Lay out your interview clothes the night before to avoid rushing in the morning, and make sure they are cleaned, ironed and presentable.
- ✓ **Rest** – Make sure you are relaxed but focussed. A good night's sleep will help. It is also a good idea not to drink alcohol, spicy food or garlic the night before! Try not to smoke before your interview, we have had experienced great candidates not be offered jobs because they stank of cigarette smoke in their interview.
- ✓ **Visualise** – Take a deep breath and think positively – remember all the examples that you have prepared, consider your achievements to date in your career and imagine answering the interview questions as you have practiced, striking a rapport with the interviewers and being offered the job. Ultimately, this is your goal after all. It is also very important to remember that this interview is just as much about you as it is the company. You both need to sell yourselves to the other, so take confidence from the fact that it is not just you under the microscope.
- ✓ **Support** – We are here to help, so make sure you have our contact details to hand. We are happy to help with anything, guide you into the office if you get lost or just go over last-minute preparation if it helps. You can reach us on 0115 853 2900.

Interview Overview

- **The Magic Wand.** We have a magic wand to help you get a 40% better chance of an interview offer. Not literally, of course. This is a programme of soft skill measures for you to apply during your interview that will increase your chances of getting a job offer over someone who does not understand and deploy them.
 1. **The First Impression** – The handshake. Make it firm (nobody likes a limp handshake) but not oppressive (breaking a hand would not be good start!), make eye contact and which should be broken with the handshake and smile. You should greet your interviewer in the same way that they greet you, for example formally on a Mr Surname or Mrs Surname basis, or on first name terms – whatever they choose, you follow.
 2. **The First Conversation** – This will not be in your interview, rather when you are collected from reception. We need to avoid any uncomfortable silence when the interviewer comes to collect

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you and transfers you to the interview room. Show them that you have good people skills by making some small talk. It might be something going on in the wider world that everyone is aware of, the busy reception, you could ask how busy the business is or rely on the good old British staple – the weather.

3. **The Drink** - If you are offered a drink, take it – it could be your best friend. Take something simple like water, don't put them out by asking for a skinny mocha with a peppermint shot. So why is this important? Aside from quenching your thirst when you are talking a lot, it will give you the opportunity to buy yourself some thinking time. If you are asked a difficult question, take a considered sip and allow yourself some thinking time, it could just be the difference between a considered answer and one that is rushed and doesn't hit the mark.
4. **The Notepad** – We discussed it earlier in preparation but take your notepad and pens (two!) with you. During the interview, make sure you make a point of writing at least two things down to illustrate your interest in the business and what the interviewer is saying. The notepad will also contain your pre-determined questions for the interviewer...
5. **The Questions** – Generally at the end of an interview, you will be asked if you have any questions. If you have brought with you around five questions that you are interested in then you should be good to go, even if some of the answers have already been covered in the meeting. You may even have topped up the questions with thoughts that came to mind during the interview. Ask away and write down the answers.
6. **The Interviewer** – The one subject that everybody knows the most about is themselves. Ask the interviewer how they enjoy working in the business or how their career brought them there. Aside from the answers being pertinent and of interest, it will give you a break from speaking and reinforce the premise that the interview is about both you rather than you as the candidate – and build your rapport as a result. Finally ask about where the hiring process moves from here.
7. **The Interest** – When you leave thank the interviewer, shake their hand as before (a last impression can be as important as the first) and, importantly, state a firm interest in the position. If the interviewer is confident that you will accept a job offer then it will reflect positively, nobody wants to offer a job to somebody who will reject it.
8. **The Feedback** – Call Informed Recruitment the minute you walk out of the building on 0115 853 2900. The information is fresh in your mind and you can debrief us more effectively at this point than any other. It also allows us to go to work on your behalf. If we know that you have left the interview then we know the interviewer is free to take a call from us for feedback and we may be able to positively interest the decision by reiterating your commitment and asking any further questions on your behalf. Generally, people's minds start reflecting on their interview performance the moment they step out of an interview, so if you relay to us any unanswered questions then we can get some swift answers for you.

Interview Strategy

- **Be positive** at all times and make the impression that you want to make. Make sure you relay your achievements as something that you are proud of but not arrogant about.
- **Stay neutral**, don't be controversial. Avoid the main divisive topics of politics, religion, maybe even sports allegiances. Do not slight former employers, your new employer would not want to envisage being on the receiving end of this.
- **Listen & respond** - let the interviewer structure the interview. Listen, respond and try to avoid situations where you talk over them.
- **STARs** – We have talked about providing examples from your own experience when you are answering questions. The STAR technique provides you with a structure to help discipline your answers in this way. An example of this is provided below, based on being asked about how you handle change and pressured situations.

- › **S. Situation** – I was leading a project to integrate an internal business system with a customer, and they needed to bring the deadline forward by two weeks.
- › **T. Task** – Make sure that we could resource the necessary hours internally to deliver, whilst taking time to understand the significant impact on our own third-party suppliers - some could deliver to the new deadline, but others could not.
- › **A. Achievement** – I had built a strong relationship with the customer and utilised this. I took the time to understand what was driving the change in deadline and once this was understood, I realised that I could deliver the project to the client in phases - thus satisfying their needs, reducing our need for concentrated resource and keeping our suppliers happy. I developed a phased delivery plan and proposed this to the client.
- › **R. Result** - The client was happy with the new solution, accepted the phased schedule and we delivered the project on time to the new deliverables. The client was very satisfied, our working relationship continued, and we were engaged on a follow up project later in the year worth £1.5 million to the business.
- **Strengths & Weaknesses** - Whilst honesty is always the best policy, there is no need to volunteer any of your perceived weaknesses unless directly ask about them. When you are, do not pretend you do not have them as it will not go down well because we all have them. Instead, try to turn your weaknesses into strengths by explaining how you have done just that in the past. If you had a problem with a particular skill, you could reference how you undertook a training course to overcome it, if your time management was lacking, you could tell them you now have a regimented way of planning the next day before you leave for the night, something along those lines.
- **Remuneration** – Refer questions on remuneration to Informed Recruitment, who will have a much wider perspective on what is happening elsewhere with the vacancy. It also affords you the opportunity to remain neutral and not come across too mercenary or, indeed, accidentally undercut yourself. If you are pressed, do your best to avoid being tied down to a specific figure this early in the process. Let the interviewer know that you are very interested in the post, what you currently earn and tell them that you hope they would make you the best offer possible.
- **Take the opportunity** – Do not wait until later to wish you had done more. It all starts with your preparation, make sure that you do it and you will be in a great position to secure the role. Even if you end up getting multiple job offers at decision time, at least you have an educated choice to make which is better than only one option.

Post- Interview

Write a thank you email and ask Informed Recruitment to send it on to the client. Why?

- It is courteous and professional. Illustrating this positive behaviour to demonstrate your appreciation for all the effort if the interviewer so far will display you in a positive light and affords them another reason to hire you.
- In sight, in mind. Hiring managers are busy people, this will keep you relevant and keep your name firmly in mind whilst differentiating you from the others in the process.
- It reiterates your interest and provides evidence of working behaviours. Any hiring manager would love an employee that shows proactivity, independent thought and that follows up on matters to ensure success rather than waiting for things to happen.

The Offer

Well done! If you have reached this stage, then you have done a lot of things very well. A prospective employer will have assessed you against key criteria such as experience in relation to the job description,

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attitude, culture fit, image, communication skills and education – and you have convinced them that you are a match. Our goal has been achieved; however, our work is not done here.

- Handling the Money – The easiest way is to keep Informed. It is part of our expertise to manage sensitive negotiations and ensure that you receive the best offer possible. We have years of experience and can suggest other ways of achieving a solution if necessary and can act as a detached link in the chain to keep negotiations objective. Ultimately, we will already know what you are looking for and our aim is to achieve your instruction.
- Consider the whole picture – Appreciate that this process is about the balance of Client weighing market rates and competition with internal pressures on best value and salary structures or budgets; with you own requirements, needs and pressures. A balanced view is likely to result in a win-win for everyone.
- What else? What other factors other than base remuneration are going to affect your decision? The benefits package, proximity to home, deliverables, upskilling opportunities, prestige, market, environment, training or certification opportunities will all add weight to any offer.
- Accepting – Accepting an offer verbally is the first step in the acceptance process. make sure you get the offer in writing before handing in your notice.

Notice Periods & Counter Offers

Having handed in your notice and started planning for the future, your current company may turn around and say they will make it worth your while to stay – this could be in the form of salary, benefits, training, certification, projects, promotion or otherwise. They may have made this offer for a number of reasons, the most positive of which could be that you are good at your job, are a good culture fit and are liked and valued. However, it may also be because they don't have the time to recruit or train a replacement in order to meet current deliverables, convenience, pride or concern about how it reflects on them.

As flattering as a counter-offer may be, various reports suggest that anyone accepting a counter-offer will not likely be with that employer for much longer. So why is this? Ultimately, if you have decided to move on then the reason for that decision are unlikely to have changed. You wanted a new challenge and have searched out, applied for, interviewed for, accepted an offer and committed to another job that meets your criteria. As time moves on employers considered loyalty and employees wonder why, if they were so valued, steps weren't made to reward them before they decided to leave. If you believe that any commitment made to address the issues that led you to enter the job market in the first place would not come to pass, then in the interest of your career advancement it might be best to thank them for the offer, and move on.

Communication is key, as with most things. Keep us Informed at all stages of your notice period, eventful or otherwise and we can help make sure references are taken efficiently and you everything you need to receive a smooth landing with your new company on the first day.

Your New Job

Congratulations, here you are! Keep in touch with us all at Informed, we will be delighted to hear how you are getting on. Whilst we're sure everything will be great, if any issues do need ironing out then we can help you iron them out before they begin to grow into something more. We are here to help.

Appendices – Helpful Preparation Resources

Your Preparation Questions – Let's get your preparation started and start thinking about what you bring to the table.

What are your major achievements?

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What are your strengths?

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What are your weaknesses?

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How can address your weaknesses and turn them into strengths?

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What interview questions do you find the most difficult?

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How can you address them properly?

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What questions do you want to ask your interviewer?

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Remind yourself why you decided to start job searching.

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Sample Interview Questions – Many modern interview questions are designed to elicit examples from your own experience. Some of these Competency or Behavioural type questions are illustrated below and they are designed to assess your transferable skills and how you have displayed them in the past – more often addressing how you handled negative situations in a positive way.

How have you coped with changing processes or circumstances at work?

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Have you made a decision that was unpopular but delivered results?

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-

Tell me about a time your communication skills improved a situation

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Have you ever had to encourage your team to adopt new procedures and processes at work?

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What interview questions do you find the most difficult?

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Describe a time that you have been highly decisive at work?

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Describe a situation where you showed leadership

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When have you taken key decisions independently without consulting your manager?

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