



Interview Guide

Introduction

Changing jobs is considered to be amongst the top 5 most stressful occurrences in life and one, which most people only go through on average every 4 years. Because of this, most of us have very little practice in how to prepare for and conduct ourselves at interviews.

This guide will give you a good grounding on how to prepare yourself and a few hints on how to make the best of yourself and make the most of any interview situation.

This guide is a distillation of the observations, experience and knowledge of consultants who amongst them have a wealth of experience in recruitment. Therefore, taking that team into interview with you should give you the competitive edge you need.

So do take time to prepare as you never know your first interview maybe the ideal job for you, and without the right preparation, you could certainly lose it.

web: www.fs-recruitment.co.uk
email: info@fs-recruitment.co.uk



Preparation

“If you fail to prepare...be prepared to fail”

Did you know that 90% of people who attend an interview do not prepare properly?

WHY NOT BE ONE OF THE 10% AND GIVE YOURSELF A BIG ADVANTAGE OVER THE OTHER 90%

When anyone attends an interview they are being judged not only on their qualifications and experience, but how they present themselves and the impact made on the interviewer.

IT IS A FACT THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE LESS EXPERIENCED BUT ARE BETTER PREPARED WILL HAVE A FAR HIGHER CHANCE OF GETTING THE JOB

You only have one chance to sell yourself properly and spending one or two hours on thorough preparation could be the difference between success and failure.

This also enables you to learn about the company and job at interview, as preparation will mean you are less on the ‘backfoot’ when handling questions than you otherwise would be.

These are the sort of areas you need to prepare:

1. Study the enclosed ‘popular questions’ and questions types. Prepare appropriate answers that are relevant to the job role and situation.
2. Take an objective look at yourself and think ‘If I was selling this person to someone, what are the good bits I would be emphasising?’
3. Choose the ‘features’ of yourself that would be relevant to the job that you are going for and convert them in to benefits to the employer.
4. Look for any ‘booby traps’ in your CV or your career history – don’t be tripped up! – Ensure you have prepared good positive explanations for these.
5. Learn as much as you can about the company and the role you are going for. ALWAYS visit the company website.
6. Prepare a list of questions about the job/company etc (see later)
7. Prepare a ‘brag file’ (see later)
8. If you are in a sales driven role KNOW YOUR RATIOS. Be prepared to explain to a potential employer how much of what you have to do to achieve your target to date.

Brag File

A brag file is a product brochure on you. This is where you compile copies of any qualifications, whether they are academic or professional, as well as any assessment, any annual appraisal, in fact any written media that shows you in a good light. If you are in a sales role this will include league tables, bonus statements, etc.

This may also include previous P60 and also if you have one, a copy of your own CV. Once prepared these documents should be put together in a professional looking folder (preferably bound). Furthermore you should attend any interview with a photocopy of all documents in order that you will be able to leave a copy behind you with the interviewer. This shows that you have prepared and take your career seriously and also it means that you leave something tangible about yourself behind after the interview.

Common Questions Asked at Interviews

Give details of your past achievements, such as;

- **Qualifications**
 - **Convention Qualification**
 - **Exceptional production months**
 - **Best position in branch/area/region/nationally**
-
- ◆ What are your greatest achievements in life and why?
 - ◆ What are your 3 main strengths and why?
 - ◆ What are your 3 main weaknesses? (Turn them into positives!)
 - ◆ What do you enjoy most about your job?
 - ◆ What motivates you?
 - ◆ What part of your job do you find most demanding?
 - ◆ What frustrates you about your job?
 - ◆ What has been your biggest career disappointment?
 - ◆ Give an example of a situation when you did not succeed
 - ◆ How did you cope with it?
 - ◆ What would be a typical day?

Turn negative into positives.... for example we all have weaknesses about which we should not be ashamed of, however, what are YOU doing about YOURS.

Likewise we have all had disappointments in our lives and careers the key issue are how did YOU handle it?

Keep your answers relevant to the role and environment you find yourself in, put yourself in the shoes of the interviewer.

Skills Questions

Please find below a sample of the type of questions used to assess skills and characteristics. This is often known as competency based interview and is in fact with good preparation possibly the easiest form of interview. We recommend that you use examples from your current and past job situations in preparing your answers in such a way that you can show examples of where you have demonstrated the skills you are being asked about. Better to meet the interviewer with your answers prepared than to struggle for an answer at the interview.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

(Dealing with internal and external customer requirements; ensuring that others are customer Focused.)

- How do you make sure that you are aware of the customer requirements?
- How did you make sure that you kept your focus on customers?



COMMUNICATION

(Applying appropriate social skills in formal and informal interactions and across a variety of situations to build effective relationships.)

- Describe a recent discussion with one of your colleagues who was having or causing problems.
- How do you promote understanding between yourself and clients/colleagues? Give me an example?

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY

(Tolerance for and the ability to cope with, the detailed tasks and paperwork associated with the job. Right first time approach, maintains a consistent standard.)

- How do you maintain a consistent standard of quality work?
- What has been the biggest quality issue that you have had to handle and what was the outcome?

INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATING

(Use of appropriate methods and styles to influence others to accept an idea, plan or course of action. Compromises to reach agreement where appropriate.)

- What has been the best idea that you have sold up the line recently? Why was the idea brought?
- What has been your best idea that you have sold to another department? What was the outcome?

TENACITY AND RESILIENCE

(Staying with a position or plan of action until the desired objective is no longer reasonably achievable.)

Give me an example of a particularly difficult situation you have had to deal with? What did you do to try and overcome it?

- What are the main pressures in your job? How do you cope with them?

PLANNING

(Establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal. Planning assignments and appropriate allocation of resources.)

- Tell me about a time when you had to respond to an unforeseen expectation or demand?
- What was the outcome?
- What do you do to prepare for your weekly activity? Give me an example/

MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

(Handling interpersonal situations involving conflict, pressure or controversy in a way that leads to a constructive solution.)

- When did you last lose your temper? What were the reasons? What was the outcome?
- What customer problem have you had to handle recently? What was the outcome?

COMPUTER SKILLS

(What levels of skills have been developed and how up to date is the knowledge) What operating systems are you accustomed to using?

- Describe your range of computer skills.

Questions to Ask at Interview

Having already suggested that you take time to prepare and obtain as much information as possible about the company and the role you are applying for. It is then important to prepare a number of well thought out questions in advance of the interview. These may include: -

- Questions about the products, locations and marketplace of the company.
- Questions about expectations of an employee.
- A detailed description of the position.
- The reason the position is available.
- Anticipated induction and training time.
- Advanced training programmes available for those who show outstanding ability.
- Career progression.
- Next step in the recruitment process.

Relate at least 1 question to what you may have read about the company on the company website so you make the point that you have done some research.

Not only will this give you not only a much better insight to the company and the job, but also give a good indication to your commitment and as discussed earlier your overall attitude.

8 Main Reasons for Rejection at First Interview

- Candidates do not show enough enthusiasm about themselves, or the job.
- Candidates cannot convince the Employer that they are achievers in life.
- Candidates cannot demonstrate that they can overcome adversity.
- Candidates are overtly critical of current or previous employers, coming across as negative or bitter.
- Candidates are ill prepared for the interview and don't fully 'SELL' their abilities.
- Candidates are unlikely to fit into the culture of the organisation.
- There is no chemistry or personality.
- Poor appearance or manner.

At the Interview

If you are well prepared, the interview will be so much easier and the following suggestions will help you to make the meeting productive and successful.

- Allow more time to get to the meeting than expected.
- The objective of the first interview is to progress to a second interview.
- Think about the answers rather than making off the cuff responses. Ensure that the answers you give to questions are precise and concise. If necessary repeat questions back to the interviewer to ensure that you have fully understood the question. You will be judged on the quality of the questions you ask and these should have been well thought out in advance of the interview.
- Remember that the interviewer has an agenda and possibly a tight time scale.
- Be yourself and concentrate on your strengths. If you try to change your personality a good interviewer will spot it.
- Be enthusiastic and smile a lot. Enjoy the meeting!
- Be honest, but do not highlight any weaknesses. It is up to the interviewer to find them.
- Maintain good, confident body language.
- Leave on a positive note and secure a commitment for another meeting if you want to proceed.
- At a second interview ask for the job!

After the Interview

As soon as possible after the meeting take some time to review what happened.

You should ask yourself the following questions.

- Did you feel comfortable with the interviewer and could you work with him/her?
- Did you like the perceived culture of the company?
- How did you feel about any of the other staff you may have met?
- What were the positive points of the meeting?
- What are your areas of concern (if any)?
- Were there any questions you did not ask and require further information or clarification?



Self Analysis

STRENGTHS

(Turn your strengths into features – features to benefits)

Features	Benefits

WEAKNESSES

(Turn weaknesses into features – features into strengths)

Features	Benefits

PERSONAL GOALS

Short Term

Business	Personal

Medium Term

Business	Personal

Long Term

Business	Personal

Question Preparation

Give details of your past achievements

What are your greatest achievements in life and why?

What do you perceive as your three main strengths?

What are your 3 main weaknesses?

What motivates you?

What part of your job do you find most demanding?

What has been your biggest career disappointment?

What do you enjoy most about your job?

A final thought....

Will you be offered the job if you come across as a scruffy, negative, pessimistic, incoherent, indecisive, vague, ill-prepared and someone who has NO ambition, goals or achievements and has NOT bothered to find out anything about the company that they have applied to work for?

Your Financial Services Recruitment Consultant will be happy to assist you in any way possible, above and beyond this guide, should you require further help in preparing for interview.

GOOD LUCK

