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CANDIDATE INTERVIEW TIPS

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Do your research

- Before the interview, it is a good idea to gather information about the company that has the position vacant and try to relate your experience to the job spec.
- They are likely to ask you questions about their business, their aims and the job role.
- Their website is an obvious starting point and can help you find the following:
 - Company values, culture and atmosphere
 - Social media pages
 - Past projects or case studies
 - Publications, press releases and marketing
- The more information you have, the more you can engage with your interviewer. Questions about previous projects and how they performed reflect excellently on you, so look out for press releases in particular as these will highlight their recent successes.
- Check their social media including their corporate LinkedIn page. Additionally check whether they are part of a wider organisation or group of companies. Look up the interviewer on LinkedIn and know their career.

Market Yourself

- What the interviewer thinks of you before they have met you is important. Your LinkedIn profile, Facebook page along with other social media are all accessible to an extent regardless of your security settings.
- At an interview it is extremely important to look, act and dress professionally as you won't have a second chance. If you are unsure about what is or isn't appropriate please give me a call for advice.
- Research has shown that an interviewer forms their impression within the first eight seconds of meeting a candidate. The remainder of the interview is either spent confirming this opinion, or turning it around.
- Your attitude when you walk in the door will give the interviewer an instant impression of you. Be polite and smile. Try to avoid negative body language like crossing your arms. Stay away from negative language. If you have to discuss something negative, try not to dwell on it or criticise others.

**Focus on how your own qualities
and skills make you suited to
that specific role and company**

**Don't underestimate first impressions, your
appearance and demeanour can reveal a lot
about your professionalism and work ethic**



- As well as knowing about the company and the type of person they are looking for there are also other aspects of the day you should be prepared for such as how to get there and what you should take with you.
- Check the route and how long it should take to get there. Also check what the building looks like on Google maps so that you will recognise it when you arrive.
- Allow an extra 30 minutes to travel so that you can arrive early and be ready for the interview. This will give you time to read over your notes for the interview and gain your composure. Additionally, you will give the initial impression that you are an organised and proactive candidate before the interview has even begun.
- This extra 30 minutes will also allow for time if in any case you were lost or delayed. In case of this situation you should also write down the name of the interviewer, the address of the building and also my name and number.
- In terms of things to have with you for the interview, a pen and notepad are important as this not only shows your attention to detail but you'll be able to write down key points during the interview and questions you might want to ask.
- Take a copy of your updated CV. This demonstrates your organisation and may help you make sure you don't forget to mention any relevant work history or experience.
- Take a list of questions that you have prepared in advance to ask at the end of the interview. This will show that you enthusiastic, organised and proactive.

**Make sure you
ask questions to
show your
enthusiasm and
intelligence**

Competency based questions

What are they?

- This interview technique allows the employer to assess what you will do, say and think in a variety of situations.
- This is a chance for the interviewer to get an idea of your personality and whether you'd be a match for the job. This is in turn an opportunity for you to sell yourself and perhaps get the role over someone with more relevant work experience.
- These will be scenario based questions and you must use past experience in your answers



Preparing

- Use the job description to assess what skills are required and therefore what kind of questions they will ask you.
- Keep your answer clear and concise in order to keep the interviewer engaged.
- You can use the STAR technique to help form your answers:
 - **S**ituation
 - **T**ask
 - **A**ction
 - **R**esult
- It is a universally recognised communication technique designed to enable you to provide a meaningful and complete answer to questions asking for examples. At the same time, it has the advantage of being simple enough to be applied easily.
- Many interviewers will have been trained in using the STAR structure. Even if they have not, they will recognise its value when they see it. The information will be given to them in a structured manner and, as a result, they will become more receptive to the messages you are trying to communicate.

Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished. With the STAR approach you need to set the context. Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story. For example, if the question is asking you to describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult person, explain how you came to meet that person and why they were being difficult. If the question is asking for an example of teamwork, explain the task that you had to undertake as a team.

Action

This is the most important section of the STAR approach as it is where you will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain what you did. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

- Be personal, i.e. talk about you, not the rest of the team.
- Go into some detail. Do not assume that they will guess what you mean.
- Steer clear of technical information, unless it is crucial to your story.
- Explain what you did, how you did it, and why you did it.

What you did and how you did it?

The interviewers will want to know how you reacted to the situation. This is where you can start selling some important skills. For example, you may want to describe how you used the team to achieve a particular objective and how you used your communication skills to keep everyone updated on progress etc.



Why you did it?

For example; when discussing a situation where you had to deal with conflict, many candidates would simply say: "I told my colleague to calm down and explained to him what the problem was". However, it would not provide a good idea of what drove you to act in this manner. How did you ask him to calm down? How did you explain the nature of the problem? By highlighting the reasons behind your action, you would make a greater impact. For example:

"I could sense that my colleague was irritated and I asked him gently to tell me what he felt the problem was. By allowing him to vent his feelings and his anger, I gave him the opportunity to calm down. I then explained to him my own point of view on the matter, emphasising how important it was that we found a solution that suited us both."

This revised answer helps the interviewers understand what drove your actions and reinforces the feeling that you are calculating the consequences of your actions, thus retaining full control of the situation. It provides much more information about you as an individual and is another reason why the STAR approach is so useful.

Result

Explain what happened eventually – how it all ended. Also, use the opportunity to describe what you accomplished and what you learnt in that situation. This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills.

This is probably the most crucial part of your answer. Interviewers want to know that you are using a variety of generic skills in order to achieve your objectives. Therefore you must be able to demonstrate in your answer that you are taking specific actions because you are trying to achieve a specific objective and not simply by chance.

**Practice your answers with
someone, with this will come
both confidence and fluency**

**Research shows past experience
is the best predictor of future
performance**



Questions you might be asked:

Please make sure you prepare answers in advance in your head as these are common interview questions

What have you achieved in your personal life or your career?

What is your greatest achievement?

What did you most enjoy about your previous jobs?

What did you dislike most about your previous jobs?

If asked, what do you think your current employer would say about you?

How would your friends describe you?

How would your work colleagues describe you?

What are your ambitions in life?

What do you want to achieve, personally and professionally, in the next 5 years?

How do you like to be managed?

What examples are there where you've been uncomfortable with a manager's style?

What pressure have you worked under?

What makes you think you can do this job?

What fresh attributes could you bring to the company?

If you were in our shoes, what doubts do you think we should have about you?

Given a blank piece of paper, what ideal job would you create for yourself?

What jobs interest you at the moment and what other applications have you made?

What do you know about us?

What is your opinion of our company?

What do you see this job involving?

Why do you want this job?

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

How would you gain the respect of the staff already at the company?

What's the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you?



What is your availability, holidays booked, etc?

What questions do you have?

How much do you know about the vacancy / company?

How do you visualise a typical day?

What interests you about the position?

What do you see as the satisfactions of the job?

What do you anticipate the frustrations to be?

What skills or experience do you have that make you right for the position?

What qualities do you have that make you right for this position?

What has been your biggest achievement in your career to date?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Give an example of when you coped well under pressure?

When have you had an opportunity to show initiative?

What motivates you?

How do you motivate yourself?

What de-motivates you?

How do you analyse your own performance?

How do you think that you could improve your own performance?

What are your long-term goals?

Why do you wish to leave your current job / last job?

If you could change one aspect of your current or previous position what would that be and why?

What are you looking for in your next position?

Choose 5 words to describe yourself?

What 5 words would your previous manager use to describe you?

Describe a time when you received negative feedback about your performance?

Are you considering other vacancies?

Give an example of a time when you had to make a quick decision.

Give an example of an important goal you set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.

Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed.

Tell me about a time when you faced a problem at work, and tell me how you solved it.

Questions you might want to ask:

Why is the position available?

What are the future plans for the company / position?

Why has the vacancy arisen?

How long has the company been in business?

Who are your main competitors?

What makes you better than them, i.e. the key differentiators?

What will be my key performance indicators?

What training will I be given?

What percentage of time will be spent on a particular activity?

What is the company culture / ethos?

How many employees do they have, how many other offices do they have, UK and overseas?

What can you tell me about the people / team I would be working with?

After, let me know how it went

Ideally I need your feedback as soon as possible to pass on to the client. We can discuss the feedback, cover anything you wish you'd said or answered incorrectly and stress how keen you are on the role.

