

INTERVIEW PREPARATION TIPS FOR CANDIDATES

The majority of interviews that our clients have with candidates are a mix of general, competency, behavioural and/or technical/specialist questions.

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE

- Re-read the advert and position description.
- Read the clients' website and do your own research.
- Prepare 2-3 questions about the role/company/culture that you can ask of the client.
- From the position description, identify the 3-5 core competencies, or key areas that the role is responsible for. e.g. if the role involves leading others, you will most likely be asked about your previous leadership experience.

PRACTICE GENERAL QUESTIONS

- *"Tell me about yourself"* - prepare your own short 'elevator pitch' of 2-3 sentences that describes your career, key skills and professional traits that relate to the role.
- *"Give me a brief overview of your relevant career history to date"* – keep it brief, don't ramble on, ensure you can cover this succinctly and relate it to the role you are advertising for.
- *"What has been your biggest achievement to date?"*
- *"What are your strengths and weaknesses?"* – prepare 2-3 strengths – things that you are good at, and things that you are working on or developing. Often you need to explain your weaknesses – why you think they are a weakness, and how you are working on improving them.
- *"Why do you want to leave / did you leave your role?"* – you need to be have a good reason for leaving when asked, so make sure you have reasons prepared for each role you have left, e.g. career progression, promotion, learn new skills. Try to keep it positive.

COMPETENCY / BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS

Competency and Behavioural-based interview questions are based on the assumption that *past behaviour* is the best predictor for *future behaviour*.

It is **not enough** for a candidate to just **say** what they can offer e.g. *"I'm amazing at customer service"*, or *"I have significant experience in leadership"*; they need to provide **evidence**.

"Describe a situation where you had to ..."

- *manage an underperforming team*
- *make a difficult decision*
- *come up with a solution to a problem for a customer*



Usually, candidates are expected to give an example of how they have demonstrated the particular behaviour or quality in the past.

USE THE STAR MODEL TO FRAME YOUR ANSWERS

Based on the research you have done on the position description that you have been provided, decide which key competencies, skills or qualities you think the client will ask you about.

You then need to develop your own story from your work/study experience about each competency/skill/quality.

Use the STAR Model to assist you:

Situation
Task
Action
Result

Think of a **specific situation** that happened, describe the **task** you were faced with, describe the **action** you took, and then the **result** or outcome.

TECHNICAL/SPECIALIST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The technical or specialist skills an employer is looking for will depend on the role you are interviewing for. The position description will give a good indication of the skills the client expects, so it's a good place to start when thinking about what you might be asked at interview.

The client will, of course, be assessing your technical/specialist ability and possibly your understanding of the industry to ensure you will be able to do the job.

LAST TIPS

Be well-prepared, this will help reduce your nerves and make you feel more comfortable.

First impressions matter - dress professionally – do not wear a cap or casual t-shirt.

Most answers during the interview should be about one to two minutes long. If you talk for more three minutes, the interviewer may lose interest, so don't ramble.

Prepare 2-3 questions in advance to ask the client about the role, the company or themselves. If you forget or are nervous, you could refer to your notes in the interview at this time e.g. *"Yes, I did prepare some questions yesterday, of what I would like to ask you today, I will just refer to my notes"*.