

Interview Guidelines

Pre-interview preparation

This guide has been prepared to assist you in making a good impression when you attend an interview arranged through Downtown Recruitment.

What to expect

Every company will have its own ideas and procedures for interviewing and assessment. We will tell you in advance if there are any special tests (e.g. psychometric tests, spelling, IT skills etc.) Unless otherwise informed first interviews will normally be around one hour and will be either one to one with your prospective line manager, with the human resources manager or possibly a panel interview where you meet several people. We will notify you of who you will be seeing and their position within the organisation. There are many different interview styles and each interviewer will have their own personal style. Some interviewers will fire questions at you whilst others will start off with an open question like "tell me about yourself" leaving you to do most of the talking. The majority of interviews will be somewhere between the two, but be prepared for any style of interview. Many companies will invite short listed candidates back for a second/final interview where you may meet other members of the team and view the working environment.

Preparation

Having established the likely format of the interview the next stage is to prepare yourself thoroughly. Your success at interview will depend on the quality of your preparation about the company, the role and the kind of issues that are likely to be discussed.

Of course, when your interview has been arranged through Downtown Recruitment, you will be fully briefed by your consultant. However, it is strongly recommended that you seek more information by looking at the company's website, viewing their brochures or going to the local library to research them in more depth.

Most interviewers will ask "What do you know about the company?" This will allow you to show that you have taken the trouble to find out about their company and that you're interested in the role.

NB - If you don't have internet access you can come and use our internet facility, or ask us to print out any relevant information and send to you.

Formulate questions

The next stage is to prepare some questions that you may ask at the interview. We have given some common examples below:-

- What will I be judged on in my first 3 to 6 months?
- What would you see as my first priority if I am appointed to this position?
- What training opportunities are there?
- Why has the job become available?
- What is the average length of stay within the company?
- Does the company have a high percentage of staff retention?
- How large is the team I'll be working in?
- What would be the typical career path internally from this position?

At first interview it is best to only ask questions regarding job content, departmental and company structure and reasons why the post exists. It is best not to ask about salary and benefits at the first interview and in almost all cases you will have been briefed by your consultant. We will be happy to discuss salary and benefits in further detail after your interview.

Anticipate some likely interview questions

Be prepared to answer competency based questions which will require you to give in depth information and examples to highlight your work experience to the client.

On the basis of your CV and the job description, you can probably anticipate many of the questions the interviewer is likely to ask. Once again, put yourself in the shoes of the interviewer. What will they be looking for? Typical questions may include:

- What do you know about our Company?
- Why are you interested in the position?
- How much do you know about the job you have applied for?
- What qualifications or experience do you have that would make you a success in this company/role?
- What jobs have you enjoyed most? The least? Why?
- In your last position can you give me an example of when you showed initiative?
- What do you like best/least about your current position?
- What do you consider to be your strengths/weaknesses?
- What skills could you bring to the job?
- Do you prefer to work in a team or alone? Why?
- Pressure - describe an instance when you have had to work under pressure.
- What was the most responsible duty you completed in your last job? How did this impact on the team/company?
- How many days' sick did you take last year?
- Can you give me an example of how you have handled difficult clients/customers?
- Why do you want to leave your present position?
- What salary/benefits are you currently on?
- What salary/benefits are you ideally looking for?
- What are your leisure interests?

Dress code and personal hygiene

First impressions count, so good presentation is essential. Dress is one of the most important ways of getting people to take you seriously. However, this must be taken into the context of the role that you are going to be interviewed for and the type of company. For example, the clothes that you wear for an interview at a building contractor's would be different from that of an advertising agency. The main thing is to dress smartly and remember it is better to be too smart than underdressed.

The following points should also be noted:-

- Choose the best quality clothes you can afford. One good suit in navy or black worn with a white or light blue shirt is a good start (although women can interpret this more freely than men.)
- Men should wear dark socks and well-polished shoes. Women wearing skirt suits should always wear tights and shoes with a closed toe and heel.
- Aim for clean lines with a minimum of decoration, restricting splashes of colour to your tie, scarf or blouse.
- If you wear jewellery, make sure that it is understated and discreet.
- Perfume and aftershave should be used in small amounts, if at all.
- Details matter. Hands, hairstyle and make-up should be simple and meticulous, and good personal hygiene - including clean nails and fresh breath - is vital.
- Remove any outer garments in the reception area.

What to take with you

A briefcase or folder containing:

- A copy of your certificates (qualifications etc.) and references.
- The company's telephone number, interviewer's name, company information and job specification.
- Prepared questions for the interviewer
- Directions / Map – Unless you're sure of the way.
- Hard copy of your CV.
- Passport
- Pen and paper to take any notes.

Making a good first impression

Ensure that you arrive at the offices of your interview around 10 mins before your scheduled start and then enter reception around 5 mins before. Don't rely too heavily on public transport or a traffic-free journey. By arriving early you will have time to relax, gather your thoughts and read any company literature that is available in reception. Remember to be nice to receptionists and other staff you meet, they will often be asked for their impressions. If you are running late call the agency and/or call the client.

The Interview

- According to research, an interviewer will decide within the first 5-10 minutes whether to consider you seriously for the job.
- If you are seated in reception, stand up and greet the interviewer.
- Greet the interviewer with a smile and a firm handshake and wait to be offered a seat before sitting down. Be aware of your body language - sit up straight, avoid fidgeting!
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer(s).
- Do not twiddle your thumbs.
- Do not cross your arms across your body.
- Do sit on the edge of the chair, slightly leaning forward to show enthusiasm and positive body language.

Show a real interest in the job and speak clearly and confidently making sure everything you say is factual and sincere. During the interview, bear the following guidelines in mind:

- Sell yourself. Tell the prospective employer the reasons why you think you're suited to the role, what experience and skills you possess that are relevant.
- Try not to monopolise the interview, let your interviewer talk.
- Show you have done some research.
- Concentrate and listen very carefully to the questions.
- Do not speak negatively of other people or companies, it makes you look unprofessional.
- Try to be positive at all times, even when discussing your weaknesses, e.g. training that could help.
- Stay calm. Maintain a positive attitude throughout the interview, speak with energy and enthusiasm, and feel free to pause when you are thinking of appropriate replies.
- Keep your answers relevant and to the point.

Towards the end of the interview you will usually be asked if you have any questions. Go over the questions that you have prepared and check which ones have already been covered. If they have all been covered then let the interviewer know that you had a list of questions but they have all been answered, otherwise ask your remaining questions.

It is a good idea to ask the interviewer what the next steps will be. Downtown Recruitment will contact you to tell you if you have been selected for a further interview, offered the role, or not been successful on this occasion.

Finally don't forget to thank the interviewer for their time and let them know that you're interested in the job and that you look forward to seeing him/her again and shake their hand firmly again.

Feedback

Call your consultant straight away with your feedback whether it's positive or negative. This is important as we can't liaise with the client until we have received your feedback.

Good luck!!