

## **An Interview Guide for Candidates:**

### ***Succeeding at Interview:***

You have been selected to attend an interview. This guide is designed to help to give you confidence during the interview process.

### ***Prepare yourself:***

Understanding yourself is the first step when preparing for the interview. If you have spent time objectively considering what you have to offer to a prospective employer you will feel more comfortable presenting these strengths and skills to an interviewer. Taking the time to think through the following areas will help you to understand yourself better. Completing the exercises yourself and asking the opinion of someone that you trust will also help you to be objective and consider other people's perceptions of you.

- Your skills
- Your strengths
- Your achievements
- Your areas for improvement
- The whole picture

The interview is an opportunity to stand out and be noticed. An interviewer will often see many candidates in one day. The one who will be remembered is the one who had something interesting to say and left a definite impression.

### ***Your Skills***

An interview will be looking to establish what your skills are and to the extent these fit with what they are looking for. You should aim to expand upon your CV or application, focusing on when and in what context you have performed well using your skills you have applied or gained in the process. Remember that you may have acquired or developed skills outside of the work environment, possibly whilst pursuing interests or whilst raising a family. Write down all the skills you believe you possess. Then consider which of these are likely to be the most useful in carrying out the job for which you are being interviewed.

Once you have identified these relevant skills, it is important that you feel able and confident to present them in an interview. You may find it helpful to practice by saying them out loud to yourself, this will enable you to get used to talking about yourself without feeling embarrassed or apologetic. Practice in front of a mirror or with a friend who can give you encouragement and positive feedback.

### ***Your Strengths:***

The interviewer will be interested in how you will perform in the job not just whether you have the ability to do so. Your skills show what you can do and your strengths show how you do them. Use the following list to help you identify your strengths.



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Think about the following traits give yourself a rating on a scale of 1-3 to show how often you believe you demonstrate the strength: 1 - Frequently 2 - Occasionally 3 - Never

The list is not exhaustive and you should add any other strengths you believe you have. Remember that if you believe you possess certain strengths, simply stating, "I am an enthusiastic person" in an interview is unlikely to be convincing. Use the same list to think of specific examples when you have actively demonstrated these qualities either in a work environment or in your personal life.

- Assertive
- Conscientious
- Creative
- Determined
- Displays Initiative
- Enthusiastic
- Flexible
- Quick Learner
- Self-Motivated
- Self-Reliant

***Your Achievements:***

To help you consider your achievements, make a list of all your accomplishments, not just the important ones but also everything other people should know about. This can be difficult; hopefully the list below will give you some ideas to work from.

- Your academic record
- Your qualifications
- A difficulty you have overcome
- A significant problem you have solved
- A skill you have mastered
- A sporting accomplishment
- A way in which you have improved results
- An example of when you led or supervised a group
- An initiative you came up with
- Any other area which you have studied

***Your Areas for Improvement:***

You may be asked about your weaknesses or limitations at an interview. It can help to think of the areas for improvement and look for the positive ways to present them. For example, if you know you can take longer to accomplish some tasks, view this from a positive slant and present to the interviewer that you are conscientious and like to take your time to avoid errors. This is a way of being realistic about areas in which you still need to develop whilst looking for the positive. Remember no candidate is perfect all of us can improve in some way.

***The Whole Picture:***

You have now given thought to your skills, strengths and achievements and been realistic about your areas for improvement. By putting all these together you will have a whole picture of the sort of person you are. You may find it useful to write down a number of phrases that you can use in the



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interview to present yourself positively. Again remember to give specific examples and always look to slant these examples to match the position you are being interviewed for.

**Summary:**

An interview is often described as a “selling” exercise in which you sell your skills, experience and personality to the interviewer. Your challenge is to persuade an interviewer that you are worth “buying”. Remember that if the company recruits you they have taken a decision to make a long-term investment in you and it is in their interests to make the right choice.

**Do your Research:**

Now that you have prepared yourself, the next stage of your preparation should be geared towards the interview you will be attending. The more research you can do, the better prepared you will be and the bigger advantage you will have over other candidates. The key areas to research are:

- The interview
- The job
- The company

**The Interview:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Impressions** - Key elements for a great 1st impression are:

- **DON'T BE LATE** - Get there early. (To be early is on time, to be on time is to be late, to be late is unforgivable)
- Dress appropriately - smart and well presented
- Clean nails - not too outrageous polish, especially if you are a chef
- Clean and tidy hair. Remember to take an umbrella on the day - this is England
- Jewellery to a minimum
- Clean shoes
- FIRM handshake smile and a clear greeting
- Maintain eye-to-eye contact throughout the interview – If there's a panel of interviewers; look at all of them in turn
- Keep your voice volume up - but don't shout. Keep your voice bubbly. Communication skills are so important
- Body language - Face them. Keep upright, don't slouch

**Listed below is a selection of questions that candidates are frequently asked by HR/GM's at interview**

**You may be asked:**

*Tell me about yourself*

*What do you think are your strengths?*

*What are your weaknesses?*

*What can you do for us that someone else can't?*

*What do you do outside work?*

*Why are you leaving your present position?*

*What did you enjoy most about your last position?*

*What did you least enjoy about your last position?*

*How long would you stay with us?*



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*What sort of person do you think we are looking for?  
Why should we appoint you?  
What was your biggest achievement and why?  
Where do you see yourself in 1 year, 5 years, and 10 years?  
What do you think you would enjoy most about this job?  
Describe the worst experience you have had working in a team  
How did this affect you?*

**Intelligent Questions that you as the Candidate could ask prospective Employers at the Interview**  
**Choose some questions to ask them:**

*What are the company's short, medium and long-term goals?  
What is the company culture like?  
Who do you see as the main competitors? What makes you different?  
What is the usual structure of the day/week?  
What are the expected productivity levels/targets?  
How will I be measured? What Key Performance Indicators do you use?  
What are the immediate priorities for the successful person?  
If you recruited me, how would I know that you thought of my progress development in the role?  
After meeting me today, do you have any reservations as to whether I could perform the role?  
What are the opportunities for progression?  
What obstacles might I encounter within my first few months?  
What was your business plan last year how did you achieve against it?  
What is your business plan next year how are you going to achieve it?*

**Questions to AVOID:**

*How much will I be paid?  
How many days paid sick will I get?  
How many holidays will I have?*

You should take along some well-prepared and neatly presented questions in a tidy folder or note pad. This shows that you are methodical, organised, given thought and reason to why you are going to that company – it does impress a client to go in with questions prepared

**At the End!**

Offer them a firm handshake whilst maintaining eye contact and smiling – body language plays as big a part at the end of the interview as it does at the beginning. Thank them for their time ask them when you can expect to hear from them – via us of course!

**GOOD LUCK**

Don't forget to ring us the first chance you have after the interview to tell us all about your interview!