

Appendix 2

CONGRATULATIONS YOU ARE NOW THROUGH TO THE FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW STAGES OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Below is a comprehensive guide on how to prepare for your face to face interview. If you have feel you have unanswered questions at the end, please do not hesitate to contact the recruitment team on [dedicated recruitment team], lines are open Monday to Friday 9am until 5.30pm

Candidate Guide – Interview Tips

With the range of techniques used to evaluate a candidate's suitability for a job or company (not to mention intense competition for the best jobs), it's never been more important to be prepared for the interview process and to create a positive impression. Here are some of the more critical factors to consider before your interview.

Preparation

As well as checking the time and date of the interview, you will also need to double check the location. Find out how long it takes to get to the interview location by doing a check on route planner or even doing a trial run. Find out about parking, if you are planning to drive or public transport routes and times. You should also know who you are due to meet. You will have already conducted some research on the company but you should refresh your memory and ensure you are fully aware of exactly what they do. The same applies for the job, make sure you know exactly what it involves and it is something you *want* to do.

The basics

First impressions are key; psychologists will tell you that you are evaluated within the first 3 seconds of contact, so it's worth paying attention to your visual presence to make sure you're perceived as a visual fit for the company. Typically this means sober and professional business dress, no loud colours and no bizarre attire. Don't give anyone reason to say anything of your dress, other than "they were smart". Interviews are not the time for skiing off-piste with your dress.

Body language is a discipline in its own right these days; there's simply too many sites dedicated to it. Suffice to say, that a firm handshake (whilst standing) at the outset of the interview is the best way to greet your interviewer followed up with regular eye contact throughout the meeting. This will suggest confidence and integrity in what you're saying and also put the interviewer at ease. Sitting upright rather than slouching.

The listening

Listening in business is as important as any skill and never more so than in an interview. It's important to remember that an interview is just a conversation so remembering to listen and not simply be set to transmit is important; be yourself, stay alert, read between the lines, listen to what the interviewer is really asking and keep a grip on the big picture and don't talk yourself into trouble. Answer the question, write it down if you need to, so you don't wander; be economical with your words and don't be afraid of silence. Be open and honest, and animated where you have to be. You need to come across as a human, not a robot. Chances are the interviewer is going to have to spend time with you if you're successful, so it's important you come across as natural to them.

The structure

Most interviews follow a similar structure – introductions, an overview of the role/company, a set of questions from the employer to help establish your suitability and then an opportunity for you to ask questions before concluding the meeting. Be factual and concise whilst avoiding one-word answers. If faced with a difficult question, stay calm and consider your response for a moment. The key is to remain positive, rely on the preparation you have done and if you really don't know the answer, just say so. It's much more impressive to be frank than stumble through an ill-considered answer.

Interviews are a two way meeting so don't be afraid to ask open questions throughout – this will confirm your interest and enthusiasm, creating a better rapport with your interviewer. After all, you need to demonstrate you've done your homework to ascertain if the job and company are right for you.

Competency based questioning

Competencies emerged in the 1980s, partly in response to the ever-increasing skills gap between education and employment, and partly due to a real disparity between personal characteristics displayed at interview and performance once in the work environment. Today, the vast majority of larger organisations employ some sort of competency framework, and an ever-increasing number are using competencies as their preferred selection method. Competencies provide a means of assessing, appraising, and developing people based on specific behaviours that they exhibit. Competency based interviews – also referred to as skills based, behavioural or situational interviews work on the premise that evidence of past performance is a valid indicator of future performance within a similar role. Companies develop competency frameworks that are specific to the behaviours required to succeed in their specific environment, however common examples include:

- Planning and organisation
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Selling skills
- Managing staff

What to expect?

Competency based interview questions will ask for specific examples of prior experience and will often start with: please provide an example of when.... or describe a situation where....

How to prepare?

Much of the preparation will be similar to any interview preparation: research as much as you can about the organisation; company websites and / or job descriptions will provide you with information on the competency framework and skills required.

Draw up a list of common competencies and start thinking through them in terms of Situation, Task, Action and Result (STAR). The answer that you provide must relate to a specific example within your experience and you should always aim to use the most recent experience that you can. For example, an interviewer assessing for the competency "leadership" might ask the following question:

"Tell me about a time when you have had to deal with someone who was underperforming?"

The answer should include a description of what happened, the approach you took as well as the outcome. Once you have provided an answer, follow up questions may be asked to drill down into the specific detail. Examples of these include:

"What was the outcome?"

"What could you have done differently?"

How did the outcome affect your business / store / team morale?"

The close

With most of the hard work behind you, it's important to be remembered for the right reasons, so be positive and confident:

- If you're impressed with what you've seen and heard about the company and those you have met, be sure to say.
- If your interviewer does not discuss what happens next, ask - and re-affirm your interest.
- If you're interested in the role, explain why and exactly what you have to contribute to the position.
- It's important to show enthusiasm for the role, (but not desperate) it could be the clincher. 'Wanting the job' is as critical a criteria an employer will have for interview success as anything else. Leave them in no doubt that you want it.