

INTERVIEW TIPS

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

- Prepare
- Dress well
- Mobile phones off
- Firm handshake
- If you use glasses, wear them in the interview
- Think before you answer
- Be enthusiastic about the meeting
- Smile
- Sit up straight
- Try not to fidget

INTRODUCTION

So we have helped to secure you an interview.....

Now it's up to you to convince the employer that you are the best person for the job. It's time to sell your skills, your experience and most importantly sell yourself!

Although your technical abilities are most important, interviewers don't only consider your qualifications and on job experience. Employers also use interviews to assess:

- Your communication skills
- Your ability to articulate your views
- Your ability to perform under pressure
- Your ability to think on your feet
- Your personality

Therefore the way you answer the questions is as important as the content of the answer.

PREPARATION

Even if you are a successful contracting professional, and have attended countless interviews it pays not to be too complacent.

Always spend some time preparing for the interview – the extent of the preparation is up to you, but make sure that you are ready.

Some helpful preparation tips:

- **Where to go?**
Do you know exactly where you need to go? Address? Floor? Contact name?
If you do not have all the information make sure that you ask.

- **Find your way.**
Do you know how to get to the interview?
If you are not sure take the trip the day before if you can. Make sure you know how you are going to get there and how long it will take you. There is nothing worse than panicking the morning of the interview because you're not sure how to find the office or you thought there was a bus at 9.00am and in fact it left at 8.50am – do your research and make sure that you can get there in good time. If driving, make sure that you know where you can park.
This will also help to calm nerves as you will have 1 less thing to worry about on the day of the interview.
- **Who are they?**
Find out some background information about the organisation. Make sure that you know something about their products, services, systems/applications, technical environment. What you don't know – ask in the interview.
- **Questions please?**
"No, I think we've covered everything" is not something that an interviewer want to hear when they ask if you have any questions. Make sure that you have some questions prepared, and make sure that they are relevant – it always helps if you are actually interested in the answer. Try not to ask the same old questions. Think about things that you really want to know about your potential employer.
- **Refresh.**
Make sure that you re-read the job description, your application and your resume before the interview as you will be questioned on these.
- **Practice.**
If you are not confident or do not have much experience of interview try to practice with a friend or family member. Make sure that you treat this as a practice and not a rehearsal – don't try to memorise answers, instead use this exercise to get you thinking.
- **Wearing out.**
Make sure that you know what you are going to wear. If possible a day or 2 before the interview make sure that everything is clean, pressed and shoes polished. At that stage you still have time to do something about it.

INTERVIEW DAY

Depending on the time of the interview will depend on you exact routine, but here are some basic point to remember:

- **Have breakfast.**
As they say – breakfast is the most important meal of the day.
Feeling hungry during an interview is not a good feeling. Having a healthy breakfast will help your concentration and will eliminate any embarrassing grumbling noises from an empty stomach.

- **Dress to impress.**

No matter what the job, always dress to impress. Wear your best suit for the occasion – make sure that your clothes are clean and pressed. Neutral, clean colours are best. It is said that coloured shirts on men show confidence, but be mindful that heat and stress cause perspiration and if invited to remove your jacket, a coloured shirt may disclose your anxiety more than a white shirt. A white shirt is by far the safest option.

There are mixed opinions about jackets – on or off. I personally would keep the jacket on, unless specifically invited to remove and hang it up. Correct use of jacket buttons on sitting and rising is a nice touch that is noticed.

- **Be kind on the nose.**

Try not to eat right before the interview. If you find that you do not have a choice make sure you do not eat or drink anything right before the interview that may linger on your breath – i.e. onion, coffee etc. Also do not smoke before going into the interview. Before going into the interview have a mint to freshen the breath. Chewing gum is an alternative, but make sure that you find a bin outside the building and discard the gum before you go in. Interviews are a No Gum Zone!

- **Be early.**

It's better to be early than late. Aim to get to the interview at least 10 minutes early. If transport dictates that you either get there 30 minutes early or 2 minutes early, always take the 30 minute option. Obviously you do not want to arrive 30 minutes early, so take a walk around, clear your head, relax, read through your resume again, re-read the job description.

- **Arrival.**

10-15 minutes before the interview go directly to the floor/office specified and notify the receptionist of your arrival.

Most offices will have a waiting area. The table will more than likely have some publications on it. Usually there will be a number of publications relating to the organisation – i.e. a departmental magazine, a technical publication or annual report. These will normally be accompanied by a few general interest magazines such as 'Home and Garden', 'TV Weekly', 'Women's Day' etc..... Always pick up one of the publications that relate to the employer. You may learn something important in the minutes before the interview, or you may just get a better feel for the organisation. An interviewer will notice which magazine you were reading, and it will go in your favour.

Do not be afraid to refer to the publication during the interview if the opportunity arises. For example you could start a question in the interview with "I was just reading the departmental news letter in reception and it mentioned <xyz>, I wonder if you could give me some more information about this?" This instantly shows the interviewer that you have a genuine interest.

- **A firm hand.**

When greeted by the interviewer, make sure that you give a firm handshake. Be mindful that there will be at least 2 people in most interviews, sometimes 3. As you are introduced, shake hands with each person in turn and try to repeat their name as you do so.

- **In the interview.**

During the interview keep the following in mind:

- Show enthusiasm – there is nothing worse than interviewing a personal who gives the impression they do not want to be there.
- Be confident, but not cocky or arrogant.
- Speak slowly and clearly – make sure that the interviewers fully understand your responses.
- Think about your answers. Do not be afraid to think, pause or ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify a question.
- Use open body language. Open your body to the interviewer, and be sure to give eye contact.
- Answer the person who asked the question. It is tempting to find 1 person to talk to – the one you perceive as the nicest (easiest to convince), but make sure that you connect with the person who asked the question. Interviews find it frustrating when an interviewee only talks to 1 interviewer.
- Do not be afraid to laugh with the interviewers. This does not mean that you should start telling jokes, but there is nothing wrong with being light-hearted if the opportunity is there. An interview does not need to be formal for the entire duration. If you are relaxed and this will rub off on the interviewers
- Ask questions – do not wait until the end to ask questions, if the opportunity arises during the interview ask the question. A flowing conversational interview is easier for interviewers and interviewees.

At the end of the interview, thank the panel. Try to use their names if you can remember them. Do not be afraid to ask what happens next and when you may hear from them.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

This is just a small sample of possible questions:

<p>Ability To Learn</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What strategies do you use to ensure that you keep abreast of changes in your technical field? 2. Tell me about a situation where you had difficulty understanding something complex. 3. Describe the aspects of your current position that you found easy to pick up when you first started. 4. Tell me about a time when you had to learn something complex in a short period of time. 5. Tell me about a time when you felt you were over your head in a project. Why? What did you do? 	<p>Attention To Detail</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about a situation when you identified an error that had escaped someone else's attention. 2. What process do you adopt to reduce errors in your daily work? 3. Describe an aspect of your current position that requires close attention to detail. 4. We have all been in the situation when details have been overlooked while working on a project/assignment. Tell me about a time when this has happened to you. What was the cause of this? What impact did this have on the end result?
<p>Analytical Thinking</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe a complicated problem that you have addressed in your position. What action did you take to solve the problem? 2. Can you tell me about a situation where you have identified a problem in the early stages before it became a major problem? 3. Tell me about a time where you were unsure about what a customer wanted. What steps did you take to handle the situation? 4. Describe a time when you have been responsible for reviewing detailed reports to identify a problem. 5. What is the most difficult problem that you have solved in the last 12 months? 6. Tell me about a time when you had to obtain information from a variety of sources. How did you determine what sources you needed to approach? 	<p>Computer Literacy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What computer software packages do you use in your current position? What level of proficiency do you have in each system? Describe some of the functions you are able to perform. 2. How many words per minute can you type? What is the accuracy associated with this speed? 3. To what extent have you been involved in formatting reports on the system? Provide an example of a difficult formatting assignment that you completed. 4. Describe the most difficult report you have had to produce on a computer.
<p>Influence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe a situation where you had to present an idea that required the "buy-in" of 	<p>Independence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you ever had to make an unpopular decision? Tell me about that decision.

<p>your team. What was the idea? What strategies did you use to influence your team members' opinions?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can you think of a time when your team was off-track on an issue and you intervened to get them back on track? Describe a situation when you had difficulty in getting a team member to co-operate. How did you handle the situation? <p>What are some of the best ideas that you have presented to a group, that were accepted by the group? What strategies did you use to present the ideas?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me about a time when you have gone along with an idea, due to co-worker or management pressure, even though you did not agree with the idea. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your manager. How was it resolved? Describe a time when you had to make a decision on your own.
<p>Motivational Fit</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What aspects of your current role do you find most enjoyable? Describe some of the conditions or tasks that have been dissatisfying to you. Describe some of the specific tasks that frustrate you most at work? Jobs differ in terms of how much decision making is involved. Tell me about a time when you were most/least satisfied with the amount of decision making required in the position. What are some of the main decisions you have made over the last six months? Some positions require a fair amount of routine work to be completed. Tell me about a time when you had to complete a lot of routine work. How do you feel about completing this type of work? Some positions offer greater leadership opportunities than others. Tell me about a time when you were satisfied with the extent of leadership opportunities you were given. 	<p>Information Monitoring</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What system do you use to keep track of the work that your employees' are completing? What system do you use to keep track of issues that require your attention? What process do you use to keep informed of what your competitors are doing? Describe a time when you have used this information. What system do you use to monitor the ongoing performance of your employees?
<p>Planning & Organising</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do you determine what constitutes a priority? We have all been in the situation where we 	<p>Negotiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me about one of the key negotiation meetings that you have been involved with. What was your role in the

<p>can't get everything done on time. Tell me about a time when you could not meet a deadline.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me about any work scheduling that you have done. Tell me about any conferences or workshops you have organised. What is the most challenging aspect of organising such an event? What type of project planning have you done previously? Tell me about one of these projects. What system do you use for organising your work area? 	<p>negotiations?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me about one of the most successful negotiations you have been involved in. Describe a time when a negotiation did not go as planned. Tell me about the negotiating techniques you have used. Tell me about a time when you have negotiated with a vendor or supplier to obtain a better deal for your organisation.
<p>Teamwork</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a situation where there was an unproductive member of the team. What did you do? Tell me about a time when you assisted a co-worker to meet a deadline. Tell me about the last idea you shared with a co-worker. When was the last time you had difficulty getting along with a co-worker? What did you do to handle the situation? Describe a time when you needed some assistance from a co-worker and the co-worker was uncooperative. What did you do? 	<p>Rapport Building</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What strategies do you use to build rapport with customers over the phone/customer service counter? Tell me about a time when you had difficulty establishing rapport with a customer. Tell me about the process you use to develop long-term relationships with clients.
<p>Tenacity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me about a time you approached your manager with a good idea that wasn't actioned. What did you do? Describe a situation in which you tried your best, but failed. Tell me about a time when your manager did not agree with the way you handled a situation. How did you react? 	<p>Technical/Professional Knowledge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What strategies do you use to keep up-to-date with changes in your technical field? Describe some of the projects you have been involved in that demonstrate your technical expertise. Tell me about a complex technical issue that you have resolved. In terms of your technical knowledge, where do your strengths lie? What areas do you see as needing development?

Work Standards	Tolerance For Stress
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about a time when you have disagreed with a manager's evaluation of your performance. What did you do? 2. Tell me about a time when you were not satisfied with your own performance of a task. 3. Tell me about a project that you have worked on that you are proud of. 4. Can you think of a time when you felt that your performance was above standard and a time when you felt that you performance was below standards. What were some of the reasons for the differences in your performance? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What parts of your job do you find most stressful? How do you handle those tasks? 2. Tell me about a time when unreasonable sales targets were set for you. How did you respond? 3. Tell me about some of the pressure situations you face at work. 4. Describe a difficult customer complaint that you have had to handle. How did you react?
Written Communication	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about the most difficult report that you have ever written. Why was it so difficult? 2. Describe the writing assignment of which you are most proud. 3. Tell me about some marketing/sales material that you have written. What types of forms are you required to complete on the job? 4. Tell me about a letter you have written in response to a customer complaint. 5. Tell me about the experience you have in writing policies and procedures. 6. Describe a time when you have had to draft correspondence for your manager based on brief notes only. 7. Tell me about a time when you have written a report containing technical material for a non-technical person. 	