**Interview Preparation**

Most people do get nervous in interview. It’s a big occasion! However if you start with some thorough research, you can build some confidence as you start to build a case in your own mind about why you should be sitting in that interview room.

We will give you a thorough briefing, but here are some interview preparation tips to take away with you. You’ll note that we don’t tell you to be on time and have a firm handshake. We’re all adults here. We assume you know basic rules of courtesy.

**Do your research on the organisation**

An interview is a two way process. Think of us as your lens into what makes the company tick. We know our clients, so we can tell you all about the company structure, why the role has come about, the company values and working culture, plus what you’ll need to do to make an impact.

However look online as well. It sounds so basic to say this, but the web is such a wealth of facts. What you need to do, though, is turn this data into information. Look at annual reports, media releases and product guides. Google indexes the latest media news and references from other sources. There are also online directories.  Use sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook as resources as well.

With all this information, you should be looking for reasons that you want to work for that employer. You’ll really impress the interviewer if you have some compelling reasons as to why you want to work for that employer and that employer only.

**Research the job**

When you look at a job advertisement it’s easy to think of it in terms of a series of bullet pointed tasks. What you really want to know is what you will be doing every day, the challenges of the role, and the expectation the employer will have of you, three, six and twelve months out.

Ask us anything at all about the job and we’ll be happy to tell you.

**Research yourself**

For many reasons employers want you to be self aware. They want a whole person doing this job. Have a long hard look at what you have achieved, the way you went about achieving that result and the skills you developed or demonstrated along the way. This reflection will help you understand your strengths. That should also give you confidence.

**Understand the process**

You may be interviewed by your potential direct manager, HR, a team member, one on one or in a group. You may have a coffee meeting, or an over the desk meeting. Remember that any meeting is an interview, and the interview does not stop until you leave the building - by yourself, that is.

As a general rule, The HR person can be the procedural expert. Their job is to ensure the organization meets its legal requirements. They may have set up the recruitment process. They will have a strong attachment to ensuring it is working. You will probably face a more structured interview from them, than you will from a line manager. As they are often the employer’s first screener, they may need to sell you further, depending on their position and influence within the organisation.

A line manager who is your direct manager will be the person who is most concerned about filling the job. They may be a person down or not meeting their organisation’s objectives. In the interview it will probably be the line manager who has the greatest sense of urgency about filling the role. Work hard to build a rapport with them. They will be assessing your fit for their team.

Treat each interviewer as if they don’t talk to each other and know anything about you. You’d be amazed at how little communication sometimes goes on between each party.

Don’t be afraid to quiz us on the recruitment process as well. We can tell you who will be doing the interview, the style they use and where they stand in the process. Look your interviewer up online as well. Most people have a LinkedIn profile nowadays.

**Practice makes perfect**

Most large organizations now use behavioural questions as one weapon in their armory. They will expect you to provide specific examples of where you have demonstrated the skill they are seeking. We have some tips on behavioural interviews below.

Practice for the interview. Talk your examples out loud until you sound confident. We do not suggest you write your answers out then learn them. You’ll then sound over rehearsed and like you have written a speech. However you do want to make some bullet points of the important points and talk through those.

**Be nice to your interviewer**

Be likable and people will like you. Funny that!

Assume the interviewer is on your side. Any negative attitude on your part means you may misinterpret questions the interviewer asks you, in a negative way. I have seen this happen before.

Good interviewers are not interested in tripping you up. Many of them are on your side, or are at the very least they will be approaching the interview in a professional manner.

**Give yourself plenty of time**

Rushing breeds panic. No matter what excuse you have, lateness is noted.

**Be yourself**

That is please be yourself. You’ll do yourself no favours if you try and suppress your personality, or pretend to be something that you aren’t.

**Relax and breathe**

While you think this may be the perfect job for you, it may be that it’s not. If you keep this in mind then you’ll remove some pressure from yourself that this is your only chance to perform.

If you think the interview is going badly, relax and use it as practice for the next one.

**An insider’s tip**

Each and every interaction you have with your future employer feeds into their impression of you. Use this knowledge. Be polite and friendly with whomever you meet in the process from the very first phone call to the last goodbye to the receptionist on your way out.

**Call us**

If you have any questions at all before your interview, call us. That’s what we are here for.

**Behavioural interview tips**

Behavioural interviews are a common form of interview. Nowadays at least one part of the recruitment process will probably be a behavioural interview, or at the very least, an interviewer will ask you to provide an example in one of the questions they ask. These tips will help you answer these questions.

Behavioural interview questions often start with:  “tell me about a time,”  “describe a time” or “provide me with an example.” The idea behind  these interviews is well founded research that past behaviour is a reliable predictor of future behaviour, that is what you’ve done in the past, will predict what you do in the future.

If the behavioural interview is well constructed, the questions you are asked will come from some solid on the job research. Your interviewer should have benchmarked top performers in a role, isolated in detail the competencies required to perform that role, then written questions to allow you, the interviewee to demonstrate those competencies.

**How are you assessed in a behavioural interview?**  
You are judged on the “quality” of the example you provide.

In general under each competency is a set of behaviours that the interviewer will physically or mentally tick off as you answer each question. You may be asked the same question in different ways to check that your skills are well developed and that you’ve used them consistently. You’ll be assessed highly if you demonstrate all the behaviours required in each competency. Interviewers like this method of assessing people because it’s structured and clear and a good answer is obvious to all.

The challenge for interviewers in this scenario is for them to elicit the best answer out of you to enable you to demonstrate your skills. Your challenge is to understand and clarify the intent of the question properly.

**STAR interviewing technique**  
How do you answer STAR questions: “tell me about a time” or “describe a time” in a behavioural interview?

Describe the situation you faced or the task ahead. Describe how you handled that situation and describe how it turned out. Think of it like a story. The interviewer wants you to give an introduction, describe what you did and what happened in the end.

ST = situation and task. Think of this as “the challenge you faced”

A = the action you took to meet that challenge

R = the result

You need to be specific in answering these questions. Not what you would do. Not what you usually do. Not what you do every day. But something you have actually done, and preferably an example from your work environment.

Why such specifics? If you can provide recent examples that you can easily recall, you are actually demonstrating, rather than just claiming, you have the skills the interviewer is looking for. The more easily you recall these examples the more convincing you’ll be.

You also need to cover all areas however the bulk of your answer should focus on the situation/ task and the action.

**How much detail should you give in a behavioural interview?**

As you tell the story you need to provide detail about how you achieved something, but don’t provide so much detail that you lose track of what you are talking about. Give enough to be credible which will reassure the interviewer you have the skills they are looking for. If you are confused, remember interviewing does not need to be a one way interaction. You can always ask the interviewer if they need more detail or how much detail they need.

If you think you are providing too much detail, check with the interviewer. Or use your cue from the body language of the interviewer. If they stop writing, then it’s a good idea for you to stop talking, and check back in.

**What if you can’t think of an example in a behavioural interview?**

It’s not a great idea to pass on too many questions. However it is easy to freeze up under the stare of an interviewer. Don’t put pressure on yourself by trying to think of your best scenario. If you can’t think of your best example, then think of your most recent. Many people take for granted the skills they use every day, yet if you are doing these things every day, you may under rate your competency in that area.

**Can you use a general example in a behavioural interview if you can’t think of a specific example?**  
For a behavioural interview the short answer is no. Try not to. It’s too text book, and just not convincing. You could have made it all up and you will sound just like the next person in line.

**What if you can’t provide examples based on a similar role to the job you’re being interviewed for?**

One of the beautiful things about behavioural interviews is that they allow you to showcase competencies. You may have developed these skills in a role unrelated to the position for which you are applying. So listen carefully to the question and provide an example that answers that question, regardless of where you have gained that experience.  Again if you are not sure whether you can present an answer from another context, ask the interviewer.

**Sample Behavioural Interview Questions**

To prepare examples, look at the key competencies listed on the position description. Prepare at least one or two examples to demonstrate your skills.

Example behavioural questions are:

* Tell me about a time when you managed a customer complaint.
* Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to help a customer
* Describe a time when you worked under pressure
* Tell me about a situation at work where you had to unexpectedly change what you were doing to work on something else?
* Describe a time where you were criticized at work
* Tell us about a time when you met a goal
* Can you give me an example of a team that you have managed?

**Questions to ask if you’re asked for any questions**

* Why has this position come about?
* How would you describe the company/ team?
* What do you see as the key challenges of this role?
* What are the plans over the coming year?
* What will be the next step in the process?

**After the Interview**

After your interview call usto debrief on the interview. If you have any questions or concerns about the job, tell us.

These tips were brought to you courtesy of [www.interviewiq.com.au](http://www.interviewiq.com.au)

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