

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & TECHNIQUES

Collected by

MBA Dept

General Advice

Before you go for your interview you need to find out everything you can about the company. Reread your application/CV/covering letter, so that you can think about your skills and qualifications, and also questions that you might be asked.

In order to do well in the interview you need to be able to convince the interviewer that you have the right skills for the job, this will include your motivation towards the job, how well you will fit into the company, along with meeting their academic and skills requirements.

You should dress smartly and appropriately and should leave in plenty of time allowing for possible delays, so that you are not late. Remember first impressions last!

Tips

It's a good idea to ask for a glass of water, as you will be doing a lot of talking, but it's also good to take a sip if you want a few seconds to think about the question asked.

- Ensure that you are sitting comfortably in a position where you can address all the interviewers.
- Make sure that you remember the names of the interviewers, and take note of their various roles.

First Impressions

Most people make an initial opinion of a stranger within the first five minutes of meeting them. According to research employers' impressions are made up of the following:

Body Language and image (70%)

Tone of voice (20%)

What you say (10%)

As soon as you enter the building you need to be polite to everyone you meet. You need to remain calm and confident, give a firm handshake, and remember to make eye contact. You need to put both yourself and the interviewer at ease by being down-to-earth whilst remaining business-like, it is often quite a good idea to have a few conversation openers, especially if the interviewer takes you to the interview room, it helps break the silence

The Interview Preparation

You need to prepare well for the interview, finding out about the history of the company, its structure, market position and management style, along with details such as: how big the company is, how long have they been operating, what are their key income revenues and core areas of business, who are their major competitors, and have they had any major upheavals or successes. The easiest place to start the research is the website, or calling

the marketing department and asking for a company profile or press kit. This will not only help you show your enthusiasm to the company but also enable you to be more relaxed about the questions asked. If you are preparing for a specific job interview, you will need to familiarise yourself with the job description, so matching your attributes to their requested skills.

You will also need to prepare information about yourself by building up a personal profile to enable you to answer questions both quickly and accurately. The profile will comprise of both personal and business information. For example:

Personal: 'I am an ambitious, organised and highly-motivated individual who is goal driven and excels at building long-term customer relationships.'

Business: 'I am an experienced sales professional with five years specific experience in the automotive industry'... go into further details.

Be positive, if you are negative the employers will not believe in you. You need to remember that you have been short-listed, and therefore must stand a good chance. It is good to feel a bit nervous before the interview as it shows that you want the job.

Interview Techniques

The interview is not only a chance for the interviewer to assess if you are the right person for the job, but it is also an opportunity for you to see if the job and the company are suitable for you.

During the interview you need to look for opportunities to be proactive and ask your own questions or try to lead the discussion where appropriate. Questions should reflect your keenness to work for the company. Generally you should limit yourself to just a couple of significant questions such as:

- What are the key tasks and responsibilities of the job
- What support and guidance is available
- What training will be available

Other aspects to talk about are:

- Structure of the organisation
- Success of the organisation, its profitability and product portfolio
- Future strategies and development

Keep your concentration levels up during the interview and make sure you listen to the responses the interviewer gives you. The worst mistakes happen when people end up asking questions about topics that have already been covered, or don't hear or understand what the interviewer has said.

Key points:

- Make sure you give the interviewer your full attention
- Wait for them to finish speaking, before you answer the question
- Make sure you ask open questions, to ensure you get full answers
- Check you understand everything that has been said

At the end of the interview find out what will happen next:

- When will I hear from you
- How will I be informed
- Do you need any more information from me

Candidates can easily find themselves on the defensive, trying to justify themselves, rather than sell their attributes. A good interviewer will often throw all sorts of challenging questions at you, in order to see if you are suitable for the job.

To help you cope with these it is best to know the possible questions that you might get asked; these can be divided up into sections:

Selling yourself (mention your strengths)

- What experience do you have to benefit this job?
- Can you work well under pressure?
- What is your greatest strength?
- What interests you most about this job?
- Why should I hire you?
- Do you have any questions?

Questions could include: what your first assignment would be, what type of training is required or given, requesting to see a job description and who the company's major competitors are.

Information giving (information on your experience and skills set)

- Do you consider yourself to be a natural leader? *The interviewer will be interested in your ability to lead when necessary*
- Tell me about yourself. *This is an open question, and is a good opportunity for you to reveal the strengths that you mentioned in your personal profile. This is also your chance to reveal your personality, so just be yourself.*
- What are your biggest accomplishments? *This should be job related, and is a chance to show your competency*
- Where do you see yourself in five years time?

Dealing with objections

- *How do you handle criticism?* Try to portray the attitude that all criticism has a benefit, providing an opportunity for improvement. Also elaborate by giving an example of a poor idea that has been criticised rather than a substandard piece of work.
- *How will you cope with a change in environment?* Talk about how you can adapt and learn quickly.

Turning negatives into positives (change your weaknesses into strengths)

- **What can you do for us that someone else can't?** *If you have understood the details of the job then try to answer this with a combination of your skills/experience which others are unlikely to have.*
- **Describe a difficult problem you've had to deal with.** *Clearly explain how you have approached a problem, the result and how the difficult outcome was averted. This will show that you have a positive attitude to all challenges, and you were not discouraged or intimidated by the situation.*
- **What is your greatest weakness?** *This is your chance to show that you have identified and are working on reducing your weaknesses. Turn your weakness into strength.*
- **How do you handle tension/stress?** *Explain how you avoid stressful situations, and if not how you deal with it, for example: exercising and going to the gym.*
- **How do you take direction?** *Show by giving examples of how you can be briefed and finish the task without unnecessary disagreements/complications*

- **Do you prefer working with others or alone?** *Explain how you can work well in both situations.*
- **How do you handle rejection?** *Much of today's business is commercially orientated; therefore a good answer would tend to be that you move on but take on board what has happened and use it to benefit you in the future.*

Always speak clearly in a controlled range of tones. Do not speak in monotone and always pause before speaking, this avoids instinctively reacting and saying the wrong thing.

Points you need to remember:

- Smiling is a good positive signal, as it reaffirms your good nature
- Maintain eye contact
- Relax do not rush or fidget
- Mirror the interviewers techniques, if they laugh, laugh with them
- Maintain an alert position, sit up straight, don't slump, but be comfortable

Always have a confident and honest attitude.

Do's and Don'ts during the Interview

- Always adopt a professional and business-like manner
- Listen intently

- Use strong positive language
- Ask the relevant questions
- Wear a smile at all times
- Never indicate that you're desperate for a job
- Don't get into discussions about your personal life, and decline any bait to mention secrets of your present employer, the interviewer should respect your trustworthiness and integrity
- Ensure that you don't smell of any strong odours, e.g. alcohol, garlic or even perfume
- Don't fidget or play with your hair, clothing, items in your pockets etc
- Avoid negative phrases such as: 'I don't know'. 'I'm not sure'
- Be persuasive, speak in terms of what benefit you can bring to the company, rather

than the other way around

- Remain calm and don't rush your answers

Psychometric Tests

Psychometric means tools for measuring the mind. There are two types of test:

- Aptitude test: assess your abilities
- Personality questionnaires: which build up a profile of your characteristics

Many employers believe that such tests give a good idea of whether you are able to do the job, and if your personality is suited to that of the job and the company.

Aptitude Tests: These test your critical reasoning skills under timed conditions. A typical test may have three sections each testing a different ability, such as verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning. The test would normally be about 30 minutes long for 30 questions.

Personality Tests: Questions tend to focus on; how you relate to other people, your work style, your ability to deal with emotions (your own and others); your motivations; determination and general outlook and your ability to handle stressful situations. There is no right or wrong answers, just be yourself.

Overview - Ten-Minute Guide

Your aim is to convince the interviewer that:

- You would be able to do the job
- You can bring benefits to the company
- You are the best candidate on both counts

Preparation:

You need to do a mini self-assessment of your profile, for example your work experience so far, the qualifications you have gained, and where you want your career to go. Consider your strengths and weaknesses, so that you have an idea of what to say in the interview. Some points to consider are:

- Leadership
- Self-confidence
- Commitment and determination
- Enthusiasm and Stamina
- Competitiveness
- Good judgement and decision making
- Responsibility
- Initiative and creativity
- Organisation

Ask yourself:

- Which areas could I improve
- What are the tasks and situations that I have had the most problems with
- In which instances did my colleagues react negatively towards me

Questions:

- **Why do you want this job?** Talk about the positive aspects of the job, not that it's the only one you have had an interview for.
- **What qualities do you think will be required for this job?** *Talk about points that were in the job description but also other qualities such as: communications, interpersonal skills etc*
- **What can you contribute?** *Your chance to shine. Tell them about your achievements in previous positions or at University etc*
- **Why do you want to work for this company?** *Talk about why you like the company, mission statement, ethics, international etc*
- **What do you know about this company?** *Give a run down of their products/services, sales figures, accomplishments etc*
- **What interest you about our product/service?** *This can link to the previous question*
- **How would you describe yourself?** *Pick your best attributes*

- **What has been your greatest success?** *How did you achieve it? Pick an achievement related to the companies/jobs needs*
- **What has been your biggest failure?** *Pick something that you were able to correct or that wasn't that important*
- **How could you improve yourself?** *Pick on positive aspects of your personality or a strength/weakness scenario where you are improving*
- **How do you handle criticism?** *Say that you take on board criticism and that it is part of your development so that you can improve certain areas.*
- **Do you work well with others?** *Give examples of a good working relationship*
- **Are you self motivated?** *Give an example of where you have been pro-active*
- **Can you act on your own initiative?** *This can link into the previous question*
- **What motivates you?** *Opportunities to learn new skills*
- **Do you work well under pressure?** *Answer positively*
- **What are your career goals?**

Questions To Ask

- What will be my responsibilities?
- Who will I report to?
- Who are your customers?
- What will my salary/expenses be?
- What training will you provide?

Prior to your interview, it is important that you have read the job description. Go through each aspect and think about how and why you match the requirements. You should not just stipulate that you have good communication skills or strong organisation skills; you must give examples of where you have proven such skills and where they have been of good use. You must also re-read your CV, covering letter and/or application form, as the interviewers may use these as a form of reference and ask you questions related to these.

Remember:

- Make sure you dress smartly
 - Beware of clammy hands for first handshake
 - Be polite, make polite conversation
 - Speak in a confident tone and manner
-

Overview - Questions

- **What are your strengths and weaknesses?** *Think of three examples for each and think of how your weaknesses could be turned into strength.*
- **If your friends were to describe your personality what would they say about you?**
- **What are your ambitions/five year plans?** *Talk about your progression in the next five years, for example: finish your degree, get a job, improve your knowledge, climb up the ladder. NEVER say I shall be doing your job in five years time!*
- **Why are you interested in working for our company?** *You should have done some research on the company such as on the website, media reviews etc. Talk about their strengths (pick out key words from their company mission statement/description), the kind of company i.e.: international, the environment. This is your chance to show them that you have a good knowledge of what they do, and how you think this suits your qualifications and ambitions.*
- **Why do you think you should get the job/what do you have to offer our company?** *Talk about your skills and relate them to your work experience and how you can adapt them to the new role.*
- **Give an example of when you have had to deal with a difficult situation/solve a problem.**
- **Why do you want to work in this job sector?**
- **What would you consider to be greatest career's achievement?**

- **Do you have any questions ask about the role?** *You could ask about the team you may be working in, what hours, do you get paid, are travel expenses covered, if you got the job when you would start.*

Qualification Questions

- **Why did you choose your degree?** *Discuss what attracted you to the course; did you choose the course as it is related to your career aspirations.*
- **What interests you most about the degree?** *Talk about the modules you most enjoy, this should relate to the job you have applied for.*
- **What grade/classification are you on course to receive?**