



Goodman Masson

# INTERVIEW GUIDE





## A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

Your performance at any interview could have a significant impact on your career progression and long term career goals.

You can never know how an interview will go, however there are a number of things that you can do to ensure that you are as prepared as possible.

For many, job interviews can be a daunting experience yet, with the right preparation and planning, you can stand out from the crowd and secure that new role. An interview provides an opportunity to present yourself to a potential employer in the best possible light as well as a chance to see if this is the best role and organisation for you.

A good recruiter will want to discuss your CV with you and will be able to give more specific advice in terms of aligning you to the roles that you are looking to pursue. Your consultant will also be able to help you when preparing for an interview and will be able to offer insight in to what key competencies the client is looking for and the best way to approach it. They are also there to discuss salary negotiations and at what stage this should be discussed during the process.

This guide covers the various areas you should look at before you go, what to do once you are in an interview and includes some example questions as well as information on competency based interviews.

## PREPARATION

It is important to prepare before your interview, completing the necessary research prior to attending the interview to ensure you make the most of the opportunity and make sure the client knows you are serious about the role.

You should approach each job interview as a business meeting where you are presenting a product (yourself) to a prospective buyer; someone who is interested in meeting you and keen to understand you and your skill set. Many people fail due to nerves and lack of preparation so having a positive attitude and, where possible, trying to enjoy the process can often be the difference between success and failure.

Below are some aspects that are important to get right.

**Research the company and the industry** – this is essential to complete prior to the interview. There is an enormous amount of information available to be found on your potential employer online and through other forms of media. Make sure you research the industry as well by reading trade publications or websites and have some relevant questions ready. You should also research any recent events that have affected the firm – there would be nothing worse than being asked your opinion on ‘yesterdays news’ by the interviewer and have no idea what news the company broke the day before.

**Know your CV** – read through your CV and know it inside out so you can answer in depth questions about your work history. Many times we have seen candidates fail on the basis of a piece of information on their CV which they cannot back up in interview; if you claim an expertise on a certain subject or that you played a key role in a specific project you should expect to be able to discuss this in detail with your interviewer. Be prepared to provide examples.

**Prepare interview questions** – think about what questions potential employers may ask you and think about your answers in advance. Think about times when you have demonstrated skills relevant to the role as employers will almost definitely ask you about these. When answering questions your responses should be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time specific. You should be prepared for questions that relate to the role you are trying to secure; for instance if you are looking at a role in banking that would require you to give advice on where someone should invest expect to be asked for your own opinions on specific investment ideas; alternatively if discussing a FC role you might be asked about your views on improving the timeline of a reporting cycle. More examples of questions employers may ask are listed later in this guide.

**Know where you are going** – understand how long it will take you to get to your interview and aim to arrive at least 15 minutes before it starts.

**Make sure you know who you are meeting** – this includes knowing their correct job title and how to pronounce their name.

**Dress appropriately** – regardless of whether the client is dress down or not, you should always wear a suit (and tie for men) and be smart in appearance.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

- **Think about your body language** - you should aim to impress immediately, make eye contact, smile and shake hands firmly. Throughout the interview maintain good eye contact, be enthusiastic and open in your body language and remember to smile. If there is more than one interviewer present make sure that you engage all of them even if only one is asking questions.
- **Compose yourself** – do not interrupt questions, think first about what the interviewer has asked and take time before you answer. Clients prefer to hear a well-thought out answer after a pause rather than the first thing that comes into a candidate's head.
- **Answer Concisely** – while you should not answer questions with a simple 'yes' or 'no', clients will not want to hear you 'waffle'. You should give examples wherever possible, keeping these succinct and to the point.
- **Give examples** - simply saying you have that experience isn't enough; think about strong commercial examples that you can talk the interviewer through to back up your point. This should relate directly back to your CV experience.
- **Be honest** - If you don't know the answer to something, simply state that you are unsure, rather than guessing, or ask to come back to it.
- **Enthusiasm** – showing desire and enthusiasm for the role and organisation in a constructive manner will put you above your competitors. After all, you will be up against your peers for the role.
- **The Interviewer(s)** – Different interviewers have different styles. It is important that you adapt your interview style to meet the demands of your meeting.
- **Ask questions** - show that you have thought about the role, the company and how it fits with what you are looking for. Make sure you have a list of them with you. Example questions you could ask include:
  - What is the culture of the company?
  - What is the structure of the team?
  - What sort of training/induction would be provided?
  - What work does the team mainly focus on?
  - What are the company's future plans?



## QUESTIONS

While we can never predict the questions that an employer will ask, below are some questions to give you an idea of what you should be prepared to answer. Make sure you take time to read though and prepare answers with appropriate examples.

- What made you apply for this role?
- What are your career aspirations?
- What appeals to you about the company?
- What do you want from this role?
- What do you enjoy most about your role? What do you enjoy the least?
- What do you see as your major strength?
- What is your main weakness?
- What were the main skills you took from your last role?
- Do you work best in a team or as an individual?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Why have you made certain steps in your career?
- What are your personal and professional motivations?
- What do you enjoy to do outside of work? (this question gives the employer an opportunity to get to know you).

Interviews may also involve competency questions, detailed information on these can be found on the next page.

## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

In addition to why you are suited to the role, interviewers will also be assessing why you are not suited to the role. Below are some elements that may be evaluated and could impact negatively on the interview:

- Lack of confidence or nervousness.
- Lack of courtesy.
- Making critical remarks about former/current employers.
- Asking about remuneration and benefits during the initial interview. Unless the interviewer asks you these topics should be avoided.
- Arrogance.
- Poor communication.
- Lack of interest in the role/company.
- Lack of knowledge of the company/industry.
- Being defensive in answers to questions.
- Lack of relevant questions.

## COMPETENCY BASED QUESTIONS

Competency-based questions are designed to test one or more specific skills and evaluate a candidate's competence. They differ from conventional job questions that focus on a candidate's previous experience.

Typically you will be assessed and scored on a predetermined scale based on your answers and all candidates will be asked the same questions.

Competency based questions can cover a wide range of skills depending on the sector, industry and level of the role you are applying for. Usually they will ask you to give situational examples of times in the past when you have performed particular tasks or achieved particular outcomes using certain skills.

Some examples of the types of questions that may be asked are below:

- Tell us about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you cope with it?
- Describe a situation where you had to explain something complex to a colleague or a client. Which problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them?
- Demonstrate how you vary your communication approach according to the audience that you are addressing.
- Tell us about a time when you were asked to summarise complex points.
- How do you feel writing a report differs from preparing an oral presentation?
- How do you plan the writing of a report?
- Tell us about a project or situation where you felt that the conventional approach would not be suitable. How did you derive and manage a new approach? Which challenges did you face and how did you address them?
- How did you reach the decision that you wanted to change jobs?
- Give us an example of a situation where you had to make a decision without the input of key players, but knowing that these key players would judge you on that decision (e.g. superior unavailable at the time).
- Describe a situation where you started off thinking that your approach was the best, but needed to alter your course during the implementation.
- Describe a situation where one of your projects suffered a setback due to an unexpected change in circumstances.
- Describe a situation where you were asked to do something that you had never attempted previously.
- Describe a project where you needed to involve input from other departments. How did you identify that need and how did you ensure buy-in from the appropriate leaders and managers?
- Give us an example of a situation where you knew that a project or task would place you under great pressure. How did you plan your approach and remain motivated?
- Under what conditions do you work best and worst?

- What is the biggest challenge that you have faced in your career. How did you overcome it?
- Which course or topics have you found most difficult? How did you address the challenge?
- Tell us about a situation where you played an important role in a project as a member of the team (not as a leader).
- Give an example of a time when you had to deal with a conflict within your team? What did you do to help resolve the situation?
- How do you build relationships with other members of your team?

Your consultant will be able to discuss competency based interviews with you in more detail and give you advice on the sorts of questions you may be able to expect and how to deal with them.



## CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

It is important to end the interview on a positive note. If you are still interested in the role you should make this clear. Always thank the interviewer for their time and let them know that you have enjoyed meeting them.

Even if the interview has not gone well you should still remain positive. The interviewer may have an interview style you are not used to or they may be testing you. In addition you may meet them later on in your career and want them to have a positive image of you in their mind.

## FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

After the interview it is important to speak to your Goodman Masson consultant who will keep you fully informed of any post interview developments and are there to help you make the right decision. They will help you decide on taking the right role for you and will not send you to interviews you do not want to attend. You must be open and honest about what you are looking for, so that they can ensure that they are working in your best interest and find the roles that suit you.

You must always let your consultant know of any changes in your situation. Consistent communication is essential to you getting the best you can from your consultant.

Good Luck.