

**Career Development
Seminar Series 2013**

Interviews skills

Seminar objectives

By the end of this seminar you will be able to:

- Describe the purpose of an interview
- Prepare effectively for an interview
- List and prepare responses to common types interview questions
- Link your job search strategy to job targets

Activity

- A well constructed interview will have 3 broad streams.
- The first stream has questions related to the skills and knowledge needed for the job

Task:

- Discuss – there are usually 2 other streams or broad categories of questions – what are they
- Give examples of questions that might be asked in these 2 categories

The interviewer's purpose

To determine:

- **CAN** you do the job – your skills, knowledge and qualifications
- **WILL** you do the job – interest in the position, organisation, industry, overall motivation to perform the role, energy, work ethic etc
- **FIT** – personality, values, communication style, likeability, appearance & dress

Your purpose

- Assess the opportunity against your needs and preferences – the organisation, job role, 'fit', remuneration & working conditions
- Demonstrate your interest, capabilities and potential contribution
- Make a positive impression
- Qualify for the next stage of the selection process

Types of interview

- **Screening** – usually done by recruiting agencies, seeking to develop a short list of the best candidates, sometimes done over the phone
- **Panel** – two or more people, often includes line manager, peer, HR representative, or other key stakeholders
- **Behavioural** – questions focus on examples of what you have done in the past – STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result)
- **Situational** – questions about real or hypothetical situations you may have to deal with in the role
- **Assessment Centre** – group & individual assessment activities - interview, role play, group work, possible psychological assessment
- **One to one** – just you and the interviewer

Interview preparation

- Research the industry and organisation – what information?
- Find out who will be at the interview, remember their names, and do some research on them where possible
- Check out the location, and other logistics e.g. travel time, parking availability
- Review the advertisement, selection criteria (obvious areas for questions), application letter and resume
- Take a folder with this documentation to the interview

Interview preparation (cont)

- Be clear about your objectives e.g. what 3 things do you want the interviewer to remember about you?
- What will I wear?
- Refer to employment and HR websites for examples of possible questions (and suggested answers)
- **Practice, practice, practice** saying your answers aloud

It's not what you say....

How meaning of a message is achieved in face to face communication:

- **7% Verbal** – the words we use
- **38% Vocal** – tone of voice, diction, inflection, rate of speech etc.
- **55% Visual** – facial expression, gestures, posture etc.

Interview stages

Beginning

Middle

End

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Beginning the interview

Activity

The first few minutes of an interview are critical to you making a positive impression.

Task

What suggestions do you have for making maximum impact during this time?

While waiting.....

- You are 'on show' from the time you enter the premises – be aware when interacting with others
- Positive visualisation
- Energise, project confidence – manage 'self talk'
- Offers of coffee, tea etc

Introductions and first impressions

- Eye contact and smile
- Maintain good posture
- Firm handshake
- Try to use the interviewer's name during introductions and during the interview
- Wait to be directed to your seat
- Maintain relaxed, upright posture during the interview
- Avoid distracting mannerisms

First questions

Possible first questions:

- Tell us a little about yourself (your personal commercial)
- Why are you interested in this position (or organisation)?
- What do you know about us?
- Why do you believe you are suited to this position?

Have answers well rehearsed but not word perfect!

Your personal commercial

A 30 – 60 second explanation could include:

- **Your profession, main function, or area of specialisation**
- **Your key area/s of professional interest**
- **Brief description of relevant career history and a summary of a couple of key accomplishments to date**
- **Your strongest skills**
- **The industry and/or role you are seeking**

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Mid interview

The middle

- Sell your strengths
- Which ones? - focus on those attributes, or similar, mentioned in the job advertisement, selection criteria
- Describe your strengths in terms of benefits to the role/organisation

Example – I have very well developed interpersonal communication skills **'which means'** you can be confident that I am be able to develop the type of key relationships that are an important part of this role

Give examples

Give examples from your experience when answering 'general' questions:

S.T.A.R. (Situation, Task, Action, Result)

Example:

Q. 'What is your current knowledge of MS Office software?'

A. At school we have a strong policy towards developing our computer literacy. In years 8 – 10 we have to do two semesters of information processing in which we have gained basic knowledge in MS Office software such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher and Outlook. In my first year of SACE I undertook a VET course in Information Processing in which I fine-tuned and mastered in Word, PowerPoint and Publisher. In the process I gained certificate III in Information Processing which has developed a specific and in-depth knowledge of these software packages.

Possible 'general' questions

- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- Describe your work/leadership style
- How would you describe yourself?
- What are your career goals for the next 5 yrs?
- What position do you expect to have in 5 yrs?
- If you are hired what do you see for your future with us?
- Why are you interested in us/this position?
- What contribution do you think you can make?
- What is the most/least satisfying thing you have done so far, why?

Behavioural questions

This type of question is used to explore past behaviour as a predictor of future performance

Examples of behavioural questions:

- **Tell us about a situation where you wish you had acted differently with someone in a work situation. What happened? What did you do?**
- **Describe a situation where you had to work with others to resolve a problem.**
- **Tell us about a time when you had to exercise leadership. What approach did you take, what was the result?**

Situational questions

These are based on real life, or hypothetical situations you may encounter in the role

Example:

A co-worker has unfairly criticised your judgement several times, and has obviously been talking to others in the team about this. What would you do?

Questions to ask

Questions you might ask:

- What are the immediate priorities in this role?
- Who will I be working with?
- How will I know I am meeting expectations?
- What objectives or standards would I be expected to meet?
- What are you looking for in an ideal candidate for this role?
- Tell me about some of the people this position is likely to frequently interact with
- **Avoid raising questions about salary or working conditions**

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Ending the interview

Career Management

At the end of interview...

Always:

1. Find out about next steps – what and when!
2. Leave the interview on a positive note – have a closing statement prepared

A closing statement – what, how?

Deliver your closing statement when any of the following happens:

- You are asked if you have any more questions e.g. **‘I don’t have any more questions but I would like to say in closing....’**
- You are asked if you have anything more to say e.g. **‘Yes, I would like to conclude by saying....’**
- When the interviewer indicates the interview is finished and when people are getting up to shake hands e.g. **‘Thank you for this interview opportunity, I would like to say in closing that.....’**

Post interview

- Make brief notes about the interview – the role, employer requirements
- Evaluate your performance – what did you do well, what can be improved?
- Brief your referees if applicable
- Consider sending a follow up letter or email – recover from a poor answer, emphasise your interest, sell the contribution you can make
- Make contact if you haven't heard

Summary

- The secrets for a successful interview include:
- Thorough preparation and rehearsal
- Being clear about what you want to achieve
- Having a well prepared opening and close
- The ability to describe your 'features' as 'benefits' to the employer
- Your attitude – expect that you will perform well, visualise your successful performance
- ***The most successful applicant is the one who walks into every interview with their hand outstretched for a handshake, has done their homework on the interviewer and company and is dressed to fit effortlessly into the culture of the workplace.***