

How to Develop Effective Interview Skills

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Preparing for Interviews

Interviewers predominantly select the candidate who projects themselves as being the best person for the job. This does not necessarily mean that the best qualified or the most appropriate applicant will be offered the position.

Some managers are highly skilled in interviewing and are trained to identify both the positive aspects of applicants as well as the potential developmental aspects in a candidate. Interviewers are also under pressure during the selection process as they are trying to solve the company's skill shortage problem and a poor selection will reflect on them as an individual, some may even be more nervous than you are about the interview – and less skilled.

The interview should be a two-way process – you are evaluating the company/employer and the company/employer are evaluating you – seeking to ensure the best “FIT”.

Interviewing as part of your overall communications strategy

Effective communication is a key element in your job search strategy. The manner in which you communicate affects the impression you leave on others. It determines your success in obtaining interviews and meetings. It also determines your success at interview and securing job offers.

The words you use to describe yourself in an interview should “sell” you to the prospective employer. Interviewers will make judgements based on what you communicate to them.

Effective Listening

Active listening is important in an interview or meeting process. Listening alerts you to the employer's needs and wants. It helps you achieve your planned objectives in a meeting or interview. If you can determine the assets and qualifications an employer values in a candidate, you can better address them in the interview. You can also collect information, which will permit you to do effective post-interview follow ups.

Be sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal communications of your interviewer. Do not assume that everyone understands you. No matter how clear you think you are, the interviewer or contact person might misinterpret what you say. Check back with the other person to make sure your message is clear. Active listening means that you are seen to be listening.

The Interview

The interview is the culmination of all your preparation and search efforts. Everything that you have accomplished had led up to and prepared you to market yourself during the interview. You developed your marketing package, or CV, to communicate your transferable skills. Now, through the interview you have an opportunity to present and sell the total package from a market driven perspective.

To market yourself during an interview, you need to match your qualifications and skills to the position. Consequently, you should actively listen, respond with interest and ask questions to get as much information as you can about the responsibilities of the position and the related needs of the company. This will prepare you to respond with specific accomplishments and information that validates your compatibility with the position.

Concentrate your efforts on presenting yourself positively in relation to the role. You do this by establishing a rapport with the interviewer at the beginning of the interview and by honestly establishing your appropriateness for the position.

Be prepared to substantiate your qualifications with specific examples of your accomplishments. You can expect an interviewer to probe for areas of weakness during any interview. Most of these “probes” are predictable and preparing responses for them is essential. Make sure that you respond to all the interviewer’s questions with positive answers.

A list of interviewing questions is included to prepare you for the interview process. Sample responses are suggested. If you can respond to the interview questions in this section with positive answers you will be able to answer the questions posed by your interviewers. Not all interviewers are adequately prepared to interview candidates. There are good and bad interviewers. Your challenge will be to meet your objectives regardless of the level of expertise of the interviewer. Your job is to communicate your strongest and most relevant selling points, whether you are asked about them or not.

Be positive, be prepared and provide information as you respond to questions. The same positive attitude is important when you ask questions from your prepared list. Prepare an agenda of information you want to provide and questions you need answered. Meet your agenda by listening, probing and responding to the interviewer. You might even be asked inappropriate questions. If you are prepared and confident you can handle any interview situation.

The Interview Process

The Screening Interview

The purpose of a first interview, usually referred to as a screening interview, is to see if you can support your written potential and credentials for the role. Your initial interview with a company will often be a shorter meeting and is used to determine whether you will be considered more seriously as a candidate for the job. Your goal at a first interview is the same as it is for subsequent interviews; to market yourself effectively. First and foremost, you want to be asked back for another interview. **First impressions count.**

Very few offers are made on a first interview, you may be asked about salary expectations early in the interview process. If this does happen – it’s important you are prepared. Above all, guard against the temptation to evaluate a job before it is offered but do gather information to allow you to have an informed choice on whether you wish to proceed to then next stage. The second interview where you can gather further additional information is essential.

Further Interviews

When you are invited to a second interview with an organisation, it is likely that you are being seriously considered for the position. A job offer may be made at or after a second interview but is most often made at (or after) a third or even later interview. Salary and benefits discussions are usually best handled after an offer is made.

In subsequent interviews develop a strategy for presenting yourself in direct relation to the position and take advantage of all opportunities to highlight your “fit” with the role and the organisation. Use information you gathered in previous interviews. Your strategy will enable you to control the information that you present about yourself. Employers are usually exploring your competencies for the role and your compatibility with the company and its culture.

What the Interviewer Is Looking For

Compatibility:

The personal qualities that “fit in” with other people and the environment or culture in the organisation

Competency:

The ability to perform the specific functions of the position effectively.

Your objective in subsequent interviews is to present as much information on competency which will match you to the position and the organisation and to gather additional information which will increase your effectiveness in making the match. In addition, you and the interviewer(s) need to spend time together to test compatibility.

Subsequent interviews may involve meetings with other individuals in the organisation to gain their approval before an offer is made. These are usually with individuals who will be working with you either inside or outside the department. Use the same strategy for managing these interviews as you used with your original interviewer. Treat them with the same importance and professionalism as all prior interviews.

Prepare for the Interview

Research the company prior to the interview to find out about its reputation, size, products, history, philosophy and corporate culture, as well as the names and titles of the decision makers that you should meet. In addition, try to get information about the position for which you are being interviewed and the people for and with whom you would be working. Obviously, some of this can only come from inside contacts that you may not be able to make.

Find out who will be conducting the interview, including that person’s name, title, division, and line of authority. Try to determine this information prior to the interview. Review interviewers/panel members on LinkedIn or Google.

Based upon your research, prepare several questions about the company that you want to ask during the interview. You may wish to ask about staff turnover & how the role became vacant?

Take your research notes on the company, your previous correspondence, a list of questions you intend to ask and several copies of your CV to the interview with you.

The Interview

Plan to arrive at the interview a little early – 10/15 minutes - to get a sense of the company culture and to review any company information available in the reception area. If appropriate, try to engage with the person on reception.

Conduct yourself with confidence and enthusiasm from the moment you arrive at the company to the time you leave. Remember the names of receptionists, and assistants for follow-up purposes. You will probably need these people at a later stage. Be courteous and personable, where possible develop a rapport. Guidelines to remember:

1. Your Personal pitch - Tell me about yourself?
2. Ensure you have completed your research into the company.
3. Always respond to an interviewer’s questions with positive answers. Remember any negativity will be noted and could be used against you.

4. Try to postpone salary discussions if possible. If you are pressed to give your salary, provide the total compensation, all the components of your current salary. Know your worth. You might lose your leverage for future negotiations. Instead put the question back to the interviewer: “to help me to understand your salary structure could you provide me with the main components of how your salary packages are configured.
5. If you are asked to meet with other people in the organisation, determine their relevance to the position as well as their names, title and lines of authority. Do not be afraid to ask a few polite questions when introduced.
6. Before concluding an interview, make sure all your questions are answered. Know, if possible, what other steps are to be taken and what the timing is for them, including when you can expect to hear the results of the interview.
7. Before leaving, check when and how you may expect to hear back. If you do this, you will be in a very strong position to follow up if you do not hear back. Because you know when the recruitment decision will be made, you will also be better able to manage the rest of your search.
8. In concluding, summarise with - I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing more about the role and it would be an ideal fit for me”.
9. Follow up with an e-mail – “thank you and re-emphasis the fit”.

Do's and Don'ts at Interview

- Dress to impress – 1st Impressions
- Watch out for habitual signs of nervousness, such as laughing, fidgeting, or squirming. Be aware of your body language. Focus on what you can bring to the employer. Be confident – the interview is about fit.
- Maintain eye contact – with all in the room.
- Never be critical of a past employer or the performance of any employee or manager. It could come back to haunt you!
- Admit it if there is something you do not know. No one knows everything if you are already aware or a shortage of some skill, take the time ahead of the interview to find out how you can resolve this and turn it to your advantage – your personal development plan.
- Never underestimate the influence of any other non-decision maker who you may encounter during the interview process.

Image and Self Presentation

What image would you like to present at an interview – one of self-confidence, credibility and capability?

How do you know that this is the image you are presenting?

Well, you probably don't. So, let us consider what image is and why it is important.

Image is not just the clothes you wear and how you put them together, it is also how you project yourself through your body language and even the way you sound. Image is non-verbal communication and it is now widely believed that candidates most likely to succeed at an interview are those most skilled in the use of non-verbal communication.

We all use non-verbal communication; it is part of human behaviour but is normally below our level of consciousness. We make judgements about people within 15 – 40 seconds of meeting them, using the thousands of visual and auditory signals we receive. In fact we are so busy making judgements that we quite often forget the name people give us during this time. The “first impression” is the basis for how we proceed with the interaction:

- Do we like them?
- Do we want to know them better?
- Will they fit in to the organisation?
- Do they look as if they can do the job that needs to be done?

First impressions are notoriously difficult to change. Research has shown that a decision about your suitability for an organisation is made within the first four minutes and this decision will “colour” the remainder of the interview. If this is negative, there is little chance of recovery, because the interviewer will be inclined to filter the incoming data about you, in order to confirm that negative decision. If the decision is positive, then you are likely to have a fair opportunity.

It does not mean, however, that you will get the job. It is worth considering that during the first few crucial minutes it is usually the interviewer who is doing most of the talking and therefore the decision is made, not based on reasoned argument, but on the non-verbal signals. Four minutes is certainly insufficient time to reason verbally. How do we receive and use this non-verbal information and how therefore do we make judgements about people? Albert Mehrabian, the French psychologist, was the first to analyse these signals and his approach is now widely accepted. He identified the following:

55% Visual	– Our Appearance,
38% Auditory Tone	– How we say it!
7% Words	– What we say!

If only 7% of the communication is the words used - then 93% is conveyed through other signals such as first impression, our appearance, the energy we bring and how we engage with others.

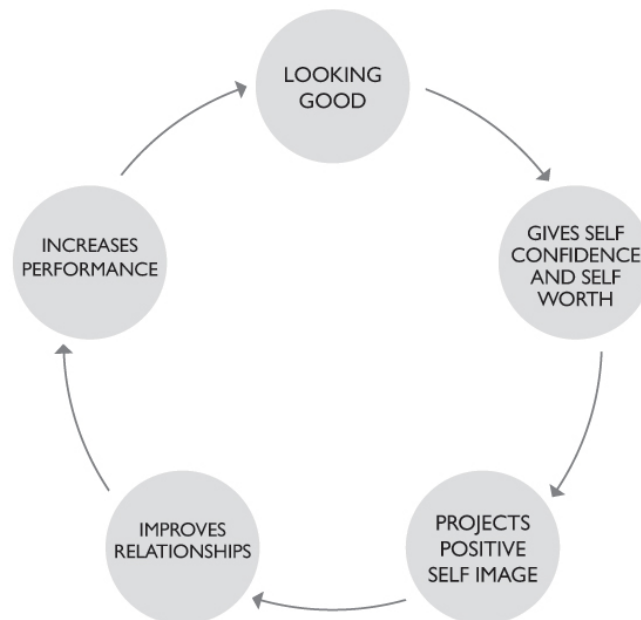
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We make sense of these signals by matching them to what we have learned about human behaviour, and to our own personal experiences of life and our many prejudices. We can identify social standing, education, class, wealth, success etc. But the overall judgement we make is:

- Do I like this person?
- Do I believe what I am being told?
- Are they credible?
-

If the words and visual/auditory signals support each other all is well, if however, there is a conflict, this evidence allows that we will believe what we see rather than the words used. So although you may say that you can do the job, if you do not look and sound as if you can then you will not be seen as a credible candidate.

Being a credible, confident and capable candidate involves projecting a successful self-image. This self-image can be improved by considering the psychological circle of success.



If we project a confident and positive self-image, people will believe that we are confident and positive and therefore will treat us as such. In turn, because they treat us as such, we will become more self-assured. However, if we show signs of low self-esteem and lack of confidence, they will believe that instead. Unless we feel good about ourselves, we cannot expect others to feel good about us. We are therefore able to control the behaviours of others towards us, simply by the way we present ourselves. This is called Impression Management.

So how can we project a positive image?

In order to do this we need to understand some basic principles of body language, be able to recognise the importance of what we wear and be aware that it is not just what we say, it is also the way that we say it. Let us consider body language first.

Body Language

This is a very important part of the total image and will need some careful “objective” self-analysis.

Exercise

Stand in front of a full-length mirror and take a hard, critical look at yourself – what do you really see? Consider your posture first. What does it say about you? The way you hold your body identifies your state of mind, your physical fitness and how you feel about your body image. In order to present a confident, self-assured image you need to look relaxed and upright, with shoulders down and back, body balanced, and head held high. Now sit in front of the mirror. Are you sitting tall, bottom well back in the chair with open body posture – that is nothing crossed or folded – feet firmly on the ground? Do you look relaxed and comfortable without looking laid back? Folded arms, crossed legs, stooped bodies are all defensive postures, which will project an image of not wanting to reveal too much about yourself? Open body posture, however, shows that you have nothing to hide and indicates that you are self-assured and willing to answer questions. It says: “what you see is what you get.”

Appearance

So, what should you wear for the interview? The suit is the most formal business wear and therefore is generally the most appropriate “dress” for both men and women. However, you will need to understand the “code of dress” not only for the job but also the industry that you are considering. More creative businesses, such as advertising and architecture may look for signs of creativity in the way in which you present yourself – however, they may not want a “too creative” looking accountant. There are established rules of business dress, which if considered should eliminate most of the more common prejudices.

First Impressions are vitally important, so let us consider the initial encounter. How can you project yourself more positively and confidently?

The Greeting

Visualise yourself entering the meeting – be confident – make an impact. A warm friendly smile with good eye contact will engender warmth towards you. Think about your posture – stand tall. You have a right to be there.

The Handshake

This is used by many as an indication of character; it should be firm but not gripping. If unsure ask a friend for feedback.

The Territory

Maintaining personal space is very important. Stand too far away and you will appear distant and unapproachable, stand too close and you will appear threatening.

The Interview

Posture/Body Language

Sit only when asked to do so, sit well back in the seat with body upright, use open body language – nothing crossed or folded. Try to look relaxed but not laid back, smile.

Eye Contact

Indicate trust. Good eye contact is normally 60-80% of the time. You will find however, that you will look more when listening than when talking.

Hand Movements

This is a natural part of many people's "speech" but be aware that excessive hand movements can distract from what you are saying. Unfortunately, when we try to control our hands, our feet sometimes take over, so consider these too.

Building Rapport

This will improve communication between you and the interviewer. It can be achieved by subtly reflecting the body language of the interviewer so that you are both sitting in a similar position. Psychologists call it "the dance" and it can easily be seen between two people who are actively communicating well, each naturally matching the movements and positions of the other. Care is needed, however, not to over-do it.

Active Listening

This shows you are interested in what is being said and can be achieved through appropriate nods of the head and by sitting or leaning slightly forward.

Speech

This needs to be clear, easy to hear and understand, consider the delivery – the rhythm, tone and volume. Be enthusiastic but do not talk too fast.

Interview Clothes

Be professional – match to the role and be comfortable. Your normal presentation style should be an indicator of your personality.

You are now ready to go

You should now be aware of the importance of self-presentation in the interview. Projecting a successful image demands perception, confidence and the control of emotions. The guidelines here should help you to understand yourself better and give you the knowledge to feel confident about your appearance and presentation. The control of emotions will come with practice of these techniques and good preparation for the interview

Types of Interview Structures

The usual interview structure is WELCOME, ACQUIRE INFORMATION, and SUPPLY INFORMATION AND CLOSE. Initially, the interviewer will try to establish some rapport with you and then go into your background. However, it is worth recognising that companies may carry this out in different ways and the different approaches are detailed below.

Competency/Behavioural Based Interviewing

It is recognised that past performance is usually a good indicator of how someone will perform in the future. Competency/Behavioural interviewing has increased as it allows candidates to clearly evidence knowledge, experience, behaviours and approaches you have used to handle different types of situations in the workplace. This can help interviewers determine how closely you match the competencies required to be able to successfully carry out the vacant post.

These types of interviews are very structured in approach and the same competency-based questions are asked of every interviewee. For each of the questions the interviewer(s) will ask for real life evidence of where you have demonstrated the behaviours or skills. They will know what the desired behaviours are and will look for positive and negative indicators.

When you are asked a competency-based question, you are expected to talk about how you have tackled real problems in the past. From this, the interviewer(s) is trying to infer how effectively you would tackle future problems if you were to be offered the job. In replying to a competency-based question, the most important principle is to **“Give a real example that actually happened to you”**. Don’t generalise. Think about and talk about a specific example. The interviewers will also be looking for detail about exactly what you did in such situations, not what the team’s role was, or what you would do in a hypothetical situation. You can choose to use relevant examples from your current job, a previous role, or a situation outside of work altogether.

If an organisation uses competency-based interviewing, you will generally be notified in advance of this. Hopefully the Company will also provide you with information on the specific competencies that are relevant to the job you are being interviewed for. N.B. This information may be included in the person specification or job description.

Competency Based Questions

The key difference between competency-based interviews and the more traditional interview, is the way questions are phrased. To gain evidence of your competency, the interviewer will lead in to questions with phrases such as:

1. Give me an example of...
2. Tell me about a time when....
3. Describe a situation in which you...

The best way to respond to these types of questions is to follow what is known as the **STAR** technique, which will allow you to reply in a structured format:

- S** *Situation* – firstly start by setting the scene by describing the situation you were in
- T** *Task* – provide details of what you were faced with or what needed to be accomplished
- A** *Action* – what action did **you** personally take? How did you approach the task? – “I did”; “I spoke to”; “I devised the project plan”. This area accounts for most of your delivery and you need to evidence it
- R** *Result* – what was the result? What were the benefits? (N.B. Think also about a specific time when things did not go so well and what you learnt/put in place as a result).

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It is important when formulating your reply to emphasise what your part was in the whole 'story'. There is sometimes a temptation to talk about 'we', particularly when describing a team activity. However, the interviewer(s) is interested in finding out what **YOU** personally did. When replying, remember to steer clear of jargon and really technical information and be fairly concise in your reply.

You may find that the interviewer(s) will ask some further probing or supplementary questions to obtain fuller information in order to be able to better assess your competencies. It is therefore important not to make up answers or exaggerate your involvement in the situation you are describing since these probing questions will catch you out. Nor is it wise to ask to return to a question – Use your CV to assist you with your delivery and examples.

The interviewer(s) will be taking notes during the interview and this is to help remember the information you have provided. This will allow the interviewer(s) to be able to assess how much positive and negative evidence you have provided, and this will be compared with pre-determined criteria and marked accordingly.

When preparing for a competency-based interview, you need to review your career history and identify your key achievements and quantifiable results as well as any particularly challenging situations you have been faced with. Try to prepare a wide range of brief stories about your achievements and be aware of the specific skills they illustrate. Apply the Star model to each achievement.

Whilst interview questions will vary depending on the organisation, they are likely to be based around generic competency headings such as:

1. Leadership/Management Skills = managing others and achieving results

Planning:	Prioritising; planning and organising; turning ideas into a way forward
Delegation:	Delegation for development and efficiency; allocating tasks and responsibility
Management control:	Developing systems and procedures for monitoring, controlling and organising
Resource mgmt:	Juggling resources; focusing on efficiency; cost effectiveness
Motivating others:	setting the goal; providing a vision and sense of direction for others; acting as a role model
Developing others:	Giving feedback and appraisal; knowing staff as individuals; identifying development needs and addressing them.
Mgmt accountability:	Management identification; responsibility and accountability

2. Decision Making = identifying and resolving problems

Problem identification:	Fact finding; spotting problems; investigating and questioning; probing
Reasoning skills:	Logic and analysis
Judgement:	Reaching conclusions; considering options and making decisions
Problem solving:	Turning a problem in to a solution; devising an effective answer or way forward

4. Teamwork = working with others

Communication:	What to communicate, when and how; clarity, questioning and listening
Credibility:	Professionalism; impact; earning respect; assertiveness
Co-operation:	Being supportive of peers; pulling towards a team goal; adapting and co-operating
Rapport:	Showing empathy, understanding, warmth and humour; establishing relationships
Influencing:	Persuading, selling, lobbying and negotiating

5. Vision = identifying objectives and direction

Creativity:	Innovation; novel ideas and approaches; lateral thinking
Initiative:	Adding value; resourcefulness; looking for ways to improve; entrepreneurial approach
Independence:	Self confidence in decisions; risk taking; standing own ground
Strategic perspective:	Perceiving opportunities; identifying own goals; long term perspective; strategic approach

6. Fit = How your personal and professional values align with the company

Flexibility:	Positive outlook; willingness to try; quick to learn; adaptable
Motivation:	“Buy in” to corporate objectives; determination; commitment
Organisational values:	Company knowledge of systems/approaches/other departments; networking
Business perspective:	External knowledge; knowledge of the marketplace and economic position
Customer orientation:	Providing a service and meeting needs internally and externally

Potential Key Competencies and Sample Questions

Team Working

- Tell me how you manage your top team.
- Give me an example of where you had to work as part of a group to achieve a particular goal.
- Tell me about a time when your interests were subordinated for the good of the team / business.
- Give me an example of a difficult people situation that you have had to handle within your team.
- Give me an example of when you have needed to elicit very sensitive information from a colleague.
- Give me an example of when understanding colleagues has been critical to achieving success.
- Give me an example of when you have contributed to the success of the team.
- Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team.
- Tell me about a time when you have disagreed with the collective decision of a team of which you were a part.
- Tell me about time when you struggled to engage with a team or individuals within a team?

Delivering Business Results

- Tell me about a time when you have had to meet challenging customer needs.
- Give me an example of where you found it necessary to change a process to meet customer needs/expectations.
- Explain how you have gained customer commitment to a proposal.
- Tell me about a time when you have developed services/products to meet unexpected customer requirements.
- Tell me of a time when you have had to allocate/redirect resources.
- Tell me about a time when you improved financial targets and customer service at the same time.
- Tell me of a time when you have had to manage a risk.

Innovation/Problem Solving

- Describe a situation when you came up with an innovative or novel solution to a problem.
- Give me an example of a situation at work where you've found a better way of doing things.
- Explain how you have introduced changes to product/processes/services in your team/ department.
- What methods do you adopt to elicit new ideas from others?
- Describe an occasion when you solved a problem with an unconventional solution?

Managing Customer Relationships

- Give me an example where you have turned around a customer relationship.
- Describe a time when making an impression has been critical to success.
- Describe a time when you've had to make an impression on somebody within a short space of time.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to work hard to build up a good relationship with other people (e.g. colleagues / customers).
- Describe a key customer relationship you have built.
- Provide an example of a time when you struggled to build a relationship with a customer.

Managing Change

- Describe how you have communicated the vision/ goals of the organisation to your team.
- Give me an example of how you have managed the concerns of your team during times of uncertainty/change.
- Describe how you have managed a recent change within your team where you have struggled to gain consensus.
- How have you maintained the pace of change in previous change programmes?
- Tell me of a time when you have use a period of change to your advantage
- Give me an example of where a change has impacted on your customer relationship.

Planning and Control

- Tell me about a time when you have had to plan a project/task/ event.
- Tell me about a time when you had to consider existing/ conflicting workloads, when planning a task/event/project.
- Describe a process you have used to check the progress of your work/ projects.
- Tell me about a time when you didn't meet an objective/deadline. How did it feel, what did you learn?
- Tell me of a time when you have had to re-prioritise in response to changing business requirements/strategic needs.
- Tell me how you have handled a large task.
- How do you handle your daily workload?
- In your current job, how do you manage your time and workload to achieve your objectives?
- What common obstacles do you encounter and how do you overcome them to achieve your objectives?
- Give me an example of a time when you encountered problems in planning and the proposals that were raised to solve the issues.

People Development

- Tell me how you manage the development of others.
- How do you use the development tools available to you?
- Have you ever discovered your staff/team were not performing to your standards? What did you do about it?
- How have you motivated a difficult team member to raise performance delivery?
- What have you done if you've discovered team members deviating from the standards or practices you expected of them?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to deliver negative/constructive feedback to a colleague / subordinate.
- Tell me of a time when you have had to work with someone less experienced than yourself.

Influencing Others

- What have you done to enable you to get things to happen in the organisation?
- Describe a time when you have had to enlist the help of another department or group to complete a piece of work.
- Describe an occasion when you needed to adopt a particular approach to get agreement from others.
- Tell me about a time when you found it very difficult to get the agreement of others to an important proposal.
- Tell me about a time when you have won someone round to your way of thinking.
- Have you ever had to modify your personal style to achieve results with a difficult individual or group?

Information & Analysis

- Give an example of a time when you had to gather and interpret information for a particular purpose.
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyse some information and how you came to your conclusion.
- Give an example of when you have used information to identify opportunities for business development, and how you came to your conclusion.
- What sources of information do you currently use and how do you manage them?

Customer Service

- What steps have been taken to ensure customer requirements are met by your area?
- Give me an example of a non-standard service that you were responsible for providing to a customer.
- Describe a service provided by you, which you were really satisfied with.
- Describe a time when you were really satisfied with the service you had given to a customer, and what did you learn from this?
- Give me an example of a customer complaint you have dealt with.
- Give an example of where you have brought a customer problem to a satisfactory conclusion.
- Tell me of an occasion when a customer has commented on service you provided.

Attention to Detail

- Describe a time when you have made a mistake and the subsequent actions that you took.
- Tell me how you ensure the quality of your and your departments work.
- Tell me about a piece of work you produced where accuracy was essential.
- Give me an example of the ways you check the accuracy of your work.
- How do you ensure all aspects of your work are completed satisfactorily?
- Tell me of a time when you have felt it necessary to consult with others in for more detail
- How do you ensure understanding of detail by your customers / team members?

Self-Motivation

- What do you do to ensure delivery of your department's goals?
- Tell me about a time when you delivered something that you felt proud of.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to strive hard to achieve an aim that was important to you.
- Tell me about a time when you were working hard but just didn't seem to be getting anywhere.
- Tell me about a particularly difficult piece of work you have faced. What approach did you adopt?
- Tell me of a challenging goal you have set yourself.

Leading Others

- Tell me about a time when you led a team of people.
- Tell me of a success you have had which was achieved on a collective basis.
- Describe how you have established the priorities and activities of a team
- Tell me about a time when you've had to manage a team which was tackling a difficult situation.
- Tell me about an occasion when you've had to gain the co-operation of people who don't work for you.
- What problems/successes have you experienced when delegating?
- In what way have you motivated those around you to achieve team goals?

Adapting to Change

- Tell me about a time when you've personally had to handle significant change-
- Describe a time of uncertainty or change you have faced.
- Tell me how you have accommodated business change in your area/team?
- Describe a time when pressures threatened your ability to work effectively. .
- Tell me about an occasion when you felt under significant pressure to accept a change that you may not have agreed with.
- Tell me of a time when interruptions from others have affected your work.

Strategic Awareness

- Tell me how you find out about developments in the marketplace and within the organisation and how they may impact you?
- Tell me how your unit's strategy fits with organisational goals and values.
- Tell me how you have gone about planning direction of your team/ department.

Decision Making

- Tell me about the hardest decision you have had to make recently.
- Tell me of a time when you had to make a decision which you know would be unpopular.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision in the absence of complete information.
- Tell me of a time when you have felt it appropriate to call on others before making a decision.
- Tell me of a time when you have had to justify a decision you have made.
- What would you consider to be the most important decision which you have had to make in your job?
What made it a good decision?

Technical Expertise

- What is the relevant technical expertise that you bring to this role and how would you evidence this?
- How do you maintain your technical/professional ability/awareness?

Oral Communication

- Give an example of when you have had to explain a complex idea to an individual.
- Tell me about a time when you have had to communicate with more senior people and how you evaluated your success?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to make presentations to individuals or groups.

Learning and Self Development

- Tell me about a time when you learned something unexpected, which has since proved useful.
- What have you done for your own Continuous Professional Development in the last 12 months?
- How do you keep up to date with current legislation and how it impacts on the company and, more specifically, your job?

You can read example answers to competency-based questions on the following pages.

Title	Leading and Developing an under-performing Sales Team through a key organisational change
Competency	Leadership
Setting	I agreed to take on a team whose performance had deteriorated throughout a significant period of change. The team consisted of 4 members, with a 5th joining imminently, as part of the sales activity. The team was not performing at the level required to support current targets nor to deliver the desired strategic growth.
Task	My task was to create the desired Business results, which meant I was required to integrate a stand-alone team into a long established dual purpose team and to deliver the business synergies leading to increased sales. Neither team had delivered to targets and neither held any accountability
Action	<p>My initial response was to clear time in my diary and consider how best to approach this task and plan my activity.</p> <p>I met with my Line Manager to discuss my suggestions and invite any input from him.</p> <p>I decided that key to this role was to establish myself as the direct line manager of the team and to engage each team member with the proposed changes.</p> <p>I initially contacted the team by email as the team was located in 2 separate sites and arranged individual sessions</p> <p>I followed up these 1:1 consultation meetings with each member of the team within the first 2 weeks.</p> <p>I set the scene for each meeting by explaining that I wanted to understand what their role was in the team, I needed to understand how that fitted into the overall team activities and how they felt the team could deliver more in the future.</p> <p>I then encouraged staff to share by showing my appreciation of their skills and role in the teams past successes and then let the staff do most of the talking so that they could raise their concerns as well as their ideas of how we could work together to improve sales.</p> <p>I also met with the new recruit, prior to their start date, to update him on the changes to the team structure and location within the organisation since his interview.</p> <p>From this first phase of engagement, I unraveled clear evidence of poor line management and a poor team spirit, so I held multiple consultation meetings as 1:1 sessions with staff to gain a better understanding of their concerns.</p> <p>I met with a lot of resistance as neither team had been held accountable for sales or targets in the past.</p> <p>On completion of this phase, I took some time to reflect on what I had learned from the meetings. This gave me time to scope out ideas and carry out an option appraisal prior to developing a plan to get the team working more effectively at delivering current targets as well as working towards a strategic plan for growth.</p> <p>I decided to run an off- site team planning session to engage them in the growth strategy.</p> <p>I presented past sales activity and encouraged open discussions on potential growth areas. I then allocated to team members (by inviting volunteers) to scope out and determine which areas were most likely to deliver the appropriate levels of sales growth.</p> <p>I worked with the team to review their business cases for growth areas and at the detail of our processes. This involved a series of individual meetings as well as further team planning sessions to maintain engagement</p>

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	<p>I continued 1:1 meetings to monitor delivery against the plan and in particular sales targets.</p> <p>I met with team members individually to advise them of potential structural changes to the team to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to hear this privately before being shared with the team and more broadly within the company.</p> <p>I recognised that the team had mixed ability around sales competency, so I built a case, which I presented to the CEO for budget to deliver relationship selling training to the team, which was approved.</p> <p>I decided to roll out the sales training on a staged basis. The training was delivered successfully, and the team became more confident in their ability to sell.</p>
Result	<p>The team is now high performing with a strong team ethos and clear evidence of the team working collaboratively towards common goals.</p> <p>The team now closely monitors sales and income targets against the operational plan and is over performing against targets.</p> <p>The most compelling evidence of success is the 16% increase in annual sales on the previous year end figures with 2 full months to go.</p>

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Title	BD – Biotech Co
Competency	BD
Setting	The UoE had entered into an exclusive licence deal with a large US biotech company in 1994. The agreement was broad ranging in its rights including a first right of refusal to all IPR generated by the UoE. The biotech company utilised the license IP but did not exercise its pipeline rights. Should the full rights be exercised, the UoE would have been unable to accept certain funding streams for research which would have had a very significant negative impact on its research portfolio.
Task	My role was to deliver the post licence management of the file, including the lead role as account manager. Having done so for 2-3 years without incident, it came to my attention that the Co was in Chapter 11 (UK equivalent of Administration) and that the licence was being considered as an asset to be sold. My role was to minimise the negative impact on UoE.
Action	<p>At the time I was a middle manager in the organisation and thought that the file may be removed from me. However, due to the enormity of the situation I flagged the case to the CEO and was asked my option of the way forward. With the information we had, I advised that it was essential that we secured the licence back and ensured that it didn't get into the hands of anyone else. This was agreed and I was instructed to proceed with the Head of Legal supporting.</p> <p>I took the time to review the terms of the agreement and in particular the licensee's obligation to see if they were in breach. The licensee was behind in reporting and potentially behind in license payments so there was the opportunity to flag this to the licensee and seek remedy which could result in terminating the deal.</p> <p>I discussed with The Head of Legal who agreed but also advised that we may need a US attorney to advise on US Law as well as to act on our behalf in the US courts.</p> <p>I returned to the CEO and reported back the findings of my assessment and ask for a budget to secure a US attorney.</p> <p>I was granted this and approval to proceed with securing the licence back.</p> <p>I used my network of contacts to source someone with experience of working with a US attorney and managed to secure a recommendation of an attorney to approach.</p> <p>I contacted this attorney and spoke with him at length on the phone to establish his experience of Chapter 11 law. As a result of this, I engaged this attorney to represent us and negotiated the contract for his services with legal support.</p> <p>It was then my role to instruct the US attorney to act on our behalf. I worked with my legal support as well as the US attorney to develop a strategy to achieve the goal. My initial strategy was to seek remedy of the licence breach. I explored this with the US attorney but by this time the papers were fully filed with the courts and in the US this means that there can be no legal action taken against the Co. This was a significant blow and required a complete re-think of strategy.</p> <p>In discussing the protection of the Co through the courts it became clear that the court papers were largely publicly visible so that potential buyers could view assets.</p> <p>I advised our attorney to monitor these and keep us up to date. Until such time as the court progressed the case there was nothing that we could do.</p> <p>During this time, I was informed that a second US biotech Co had shown an interest in the Co. This biotech had very similar interest and business needs and was a direct competitor. It was my opinion that they would be interested in the licence and if they purchased it they would review the terms and very likely exercise all of their rights. This would be catastrophic for UoE and needed to be avoided at all costs.</p>

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I reverted to my CEO with an update and advised that we would need to compete to purchase the licence. This option would of course costs money and so we would need to establish the amount willing to be paid to regain the IPR in full.

My CEO took this to the highest level at the UoE and was given a war chest to achieve the required goal. My role was to achieve it at the best price possible.

During this time, I explored the technology space and identified various companies that worked in this space and may benefit from access to the technology. The reason for doing so was to try and find new licensees for the IP so that we could license on a non-exclusive basis to multiple licenses and hopefully recover against the cost of purchasing the licence.

I identified a small number, including a an academic researcher who had been involved in collaborating it's the inventor and had recently joined another large US Biotech Co.

The US attorney then advised us that we could now pitch for the licence. I held an internal meeting with legal and the CEO and discussed figures to gauge the appetite for how much we could pay. At this time we were aware of at least 1 potential competitor seeking to buy the licence.

I then consulted with the US attorney and we agreed a 6 figure price to pitch to the courts. The process would for the first time show our interest in buying the licence to the licensee as well as competitors. It would then be for the licensee to negotiate the best deal on offer.

I led the negotiation with the licensee and discussed the fact that UoE owned the IPRs and now had a working practice to license platform technologies like this on a non-exclusive basis to multiple parties to deliver the best possible societal benefit. I confirmed that we would look to licensee to any party that had shown an interest during Chapter 11. After a small period of time we were advised that our offer had been accepted.

As the legal aspects were concluded by the lawyers, I turned my attention to seeking licensees. I contacted the companies I had previously identified and advised them that UoE had secured all of the rights to the IP and offered them non-exclusive access. I managed to secure a single non-exclusive licensee, the US Biotech Co that had recently appointed the inventor's collaborator and secured the same price as UoE had paid to purchase the licence.

Result

The result I achieved was to purchase back the licence for the UoE, thereby removing the risk to UoE that it would be blocked from receiving certain significant research funding streams (in the region of £20-40M p.a. in awards).

I managed to secure the licence at a cost neutral level with the only outlay being the legal fees at the time of the Chapter 11 activities and the ongoing patent annuity costs.

The Panel Interview

In panel interviews you will be meeting more than one person all at the same time in the same room. Panel interviews are done for a variety of reasons; to see how you fit in to a particular group, to see how you handle talking with several people at once, or to get a cross-section of opinions from the same interview. And, sometimes group interviews are done so that all the people involved in the selection and recruitment can see all candidates at the same time.

In a panel interview, you might be interviewed by a mixture of people – clients, co-workers, managers or other interested groups. Panel interviews require you to adopt more of a presentation style to your answers - and questions. It's advisable to establish in advance of your interview who the panel members will be.

Some Tips:

- Maintain good eye contact with each member of the group or panel throughout the interview.
- Try to remember each person's name and title and direct appropriate questions.
- Give each person some attention – verbally and non-verbally.
- Remember to shake hands with all participants when entering and leaving the interview – even if they do not initiate this.
- Have a least one general question that works for all participants, such as: "What is the most important skill you want the person recruited for this job to have?"

Headhunters, Executive Search and Recruiters

Most Executive Search Consultants are highly professional and go out of their way to make you feel relaxed at interview. Do not lower your guard. A headhunter will not put you forward to their client unless they think you are a credible candidate, so they need to find out everything about you in order to earn their fee. Beware of any attempts to "pump" you for information that may be commercially sensitive. Beware also of any offer to circulate your details to some of their clients – you may have contacted them already, and this could simply muddy the water. By all means keep on good terms with headhunters, but manage them to your advantage.

These remarks apply equally to recruitment agencies, particularly because their standard practice is to circulate details of candidates to their clients.

Presentations

It is quite common practice for short-listed candidates, as well as those attending Assessment Centres and panel interviews, to be asked to make a short presentation. The subject may be chosen for you for example: "what would you deliver or what are the challenges for you in the first 100 days?" or you may be given free choice. It is vitally important that you observe the allocated timetable, take control and set the scene – questions at the end of your presentation to ensure you do not get derailed or blindsided by questions being interjected during your delivery.

The only way to do this successfully is to practice before hand, either on your own or with your Career Coach. If PowerPoint or a flipchart are available, use them – visual aids give powerful support to any presentation. They are not a substitute, however, for your delivery, which should be simple and clear, with plenty of eye contact. Glance sparingly at your notes, and never read from a prepared script. Tell your audience what you are going to talk about, then talk about it, and then summarise what you talked about.

If using PowerPoint best practice is to keep your slides to a minimum – high level bullet points – remember they are an aid not a full description of your commentary. You may wish to consider offering each panel member a soft copy of your presentation at the end of your delivery.

Traditional face to face, 1 to 1 or biographical interview

A general discussion around your CV – exploring fit for the role and experience.

Remote/Skype/Video Clips

Technology has provided us with a platform which allows interviews to be conducted with greater freedom to reach people in remote locations and reduce costs in the interviewing process. Always be mindful that you are and can be seen. Treat your remote interaction as if the interviewer were in the room with you.

Assessment Centres

The use of Assessment Centres for selection has become more widespread in recent years, as research in to the selection process has progressively questioned the effectiveness of more traditional methods.

An assessment centre is not a place, but a process whereby a small group of participants undertake a series of tests and exercises under observation, with a view to the assessment of their skills and competence in relation to a particular role. The tasks are designed to reflect those you would be doing in the job, measuring you directly against the skills you need to do the job.

Assessors would normally consist of managers; HR specialists; possibly an occupational psychologist or external consultants. They would be working with a schedule of the characteristics and behaviours to be sought – aligned to the competencies and there will be some predetermined recording and scoring mechanism agreed.

Some Tips:

It is worth remembering that not everyone is good at certain exercises but the assessment centre provides you with a number of opportunities to show your strengths and meet the employer's criteria. If one aspect didn't go very well, please do not try and analyse it – refocus and move on to the next activity.

You should be made aware at each stage in the process which competencies are being evaluated - try to be yourself and adopt a stance of being in the workplace, your normal style and behaviours.

It is always good to socialise and get along with the other candidates, as this will also be observed. Although you are taking part in a competitive activity in that you want to get the job, the assessment centre in itself is not a competition.

Assessment Centre Activities

A feature of the assessment centre is the use of a range of methods, including:

- Competency or Panel Based Interviews
- Psychometric assessment Ability Tests and Personality Profiling which can be either delivered and administered on-line or within a classroom setting.
- In-tray exercises - You will usually be asked to work through a pile of fictitious correspondence in an in-tray. The exercise is designed to measure job skills such as your ability to organise, prioritise and perhaps delegate work, your approach to communicating with colleagues and customers, and also your written communication skills.

- You will probably be faced with lots of information and it can be easy to be overwhelmed by this. However, the main thing is to try to imagine you are at work doing this for real and then quickly try to classify the material according to its urgency and importance. There will usually be one or two major issues hidden amongst the items and it is important that you identify these so that you can be seen to be a credible candidate. You should strive to complete the task in the allotted timescale.

It is important that you clearly demonstrate your reasoning for taking the various actions as you may be required to sit with the Assessor afterwards and talk through your approach and how you arrived at your decisions.

- Group discussions or Group problem-solving job simulations

The activity is designed to evaluate your interaction with others & your behavioural skills. It is important that you try to be positive and enthusiastic and are actively engaged at all times – your body language will also be taken into consideration. However, you need to be yourself, not who you think the assessors are looking for. Remember you are being assessed throughout the day and inconsistencies in your behaviour will be noticed.

- Written Exercises; Job Simulations or Report Writing

This activity is designed to assess your evaluations skills- production of written reports; reaching conclusions and making recommendation. Time will be your enemy on this task- the positioning of your recommendations and completion is the key for success. Usually candidates are offered the choice to write the report free hand or a lap top will be provided - the spell check removed, hence quality and eye for detail will also be assessed.

- Job related role plays

This activity may consist of an imaginary situation e.g. 'imagine you are called into your Managers office to explain... OR "you are working with an external client and the project is not on track... and you then have to manage your approach with an Assessor(s)/Actors assuming playing the other role(s). Success will be measured by your ownership of the role, be yourself and conduct the role accordingly to the guidelines set in your brief and always assume a professional business stance.

The Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews are used most often in the selection process as a result of a CV you have submitted. Telephone interviews also sometimes happen if you are using the telephone to network and the call moves in to talking about a job opening.

Telephone interviews are done initially to screen applicants and are usually conducted by one person. However, there are occasions where a group/panel interview may come into play. Your preparation should be just as thorough as a face-to-face interview, with the advantage of your being to use notes.

When being interviewed by telephone, it helps to remember that the other person cannot see your personality or body language. Instead, you will be relying on your voice to convey your qualities. It's therefore important to try to put some inflection and energy into your voice and smile!

Some telephone interviews are scripted, such as "Gallup" and these are likely to be recorded. Other formats may include competency based; biographical, situational or just a "Chat". It's best to determine which type of interview before embarking on the call.

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Some Tips:

- Write down the interviewer's name and telephone number. Ask permission to call them back if you have any additional questions.
- Answer questions completely.
- Be prepared. Take notes so you can ask follow-up questions. Have your CV and their job description in front of you.
- If surprised by an unexpected telephone interview, stay calm, let them know you are very interested and try to reschedule for later that day to allow you time to prepare and position yourself professionally.

Telephone Techniques

- Dress professionally when you place business calls. Your confidence and business approach come through on the telephone.
- Stand up when you talk on the phone. You tend to have more energy and vitality when you stand.
- Smile while you talk on the telephone. It will relax you and put you in a more positive frame of mind. In addition, your friendly approach will be transmitted over the phone line.
- When working at home, find a private and quiet location to make your calls. Stay clear of the television, barking dogs or other inappropriate background noises.
- Have a clean desk or work areas that are well organised and comfortable. This will facilitate note taking and help you feel more confident as you place your calls.

Commonly asked General Interview Questions

This section raises a number of different interview questions; some are unimportant or sensitive yet they may still be asked. Frequently the same question can be asked but in a number of different forms at different interviews, you need to revise your response to reflect the way the question was asked. As already indicated, interviewing is a skill that develops with PRACTICE.

You and Your Career

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. Tell me about your last job?
3. Where do you see yourself in your career over the next three to five years?
4. What motivated you to apply for this position?
5. What achievements have you enjoyed most in your career?
6. Describe or tell me about your most satisfying/greatest achievement?

Your Current or most recent Position

1. Why are you leaving (or did you leave) your present (most recent) employer?
2. What size budget have you been responsible for managing?
3. Describe your most recent manager's style?
4. What aspects do you enjoy most in your current / previous position?
5. What is your current salary/ remuneration package?
6. Tell me about your current/previous role and your accountabilities?
7. How many direct reports do you have? How would they describe your management style?

Your Skills and Experience

1. Describe your leadership style?
2. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
3. What do you believe is the most difficult responsibility that a manager/director must perform?
4. How would you define success? How successful have you been in your career to date?

Research

1. What do you know about this company?
2. Why are you interested in working for this company?
3. What contribution will you make to this company?
4. What are your future goals and aspirations?

Sensitive Questions

1. Tell me how you feel when your work is criticised – what behaviours will I see?
2. What have you done for your own continuous professional development in the last 12 months?
3. How did you get along with your last boss?
4. What is the most difficult job you have ever had to perform?
5. What would your last manager describe as your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
6. Tell me about your greatest failure/regret?

How to Handle “Tell Me about Yourself”

Frequently the opening question at an interview is: “Tell me about yourself?” This is an opportunity to set the scene for the interview and to ensure that you are selling what the organisation needs. You should already have developed a Personal Pitch Statement as part of your self-awareness preparation. You can now build an expanded statement by addressing the match between what you have to offer and what the company needs.

Review the outline below. Notice how the added (italicised) information shifts your Positioning Statement in to a statement that matches the company needs. Write an expanded Personal Pitch Statement by using the following format. If possible, tailor the entire statement to an advertised or other actual position:

My name is... and I have extensive experience as a (*profession/level*)

I have worked for/with (*types of organisations/industries*)

I bring proven expertise in (*function and/or capabilities*)

And my strengths include (*specific professional qualities*)

One of my particular accomplishments or distinctions relevant to this particular position is.....

And I am looking forward to hearing more about your organisation and the role today.

Suggested Responses

Listed below are some possible responses to a number of commonly asked interview questions. Your answers at an actual interview must always be tailored to the context of the question and specifics of its intention. The following responses are intended purely as suggestions to assist you in your thinking, not as rigid answers. Apply your common sense to these suggestions and to your particular situation.

Your Career:

1. Tell me about yourself

Talk about skills, traits, achievements and interests. Focus on what you know this employer needs and select the most relevant information pertaining to you and your experience. Be sure this is concise and of reasonable length.

2. Tell me about your last job

Discuss what you have done, stressing achievements, results and benefits to the organisation. This is another opportunity to point out achievements. In selecting material, pick the items most relevant to the needs of the employer who asked the question.

3. Where do you see yourself in your career over the next three/five years?

The interviewer is usually looking to see if your aspirations fit with the realities of the organisation. This question can also be a way of gauging your level of ambition. Some organisations would like to hear you say that you plan to be their Managing Director in five years. Others would immediately screen you out for the same answer. If possible, suggest career paths that you know are realistic and reasonable for the organisation. You can also turn this question around, asking your interviewer: “What kind of career progress is possible, assuming that I do well in the immediate position?”

4. What motivated to you to apply for this position?

Match your response to the transferable skills they are looking for and align your hunger for the role with the excitement the role will provide for you.

5. What achievements have you enjoyed most in your career?

Key for success is to pick one of your achievements which will dovetail into the role. Talk about how you delivered the piece of work, and the sense of achievement it brought you.

6. Describe or tell me about your most satisfying/greatest achievement?

Pick something which you can really relate to focusing on what made it so satisfying.

Your Current or most recent Position

1. Why are you leaving (or did you leave) your present (most recent) employer?

This question is usually asked to determine whether you have some problems or flaws which led to you leaving your last position. Your answer needs to reassure your interviewer that there were no such problems. This is a predictable question - it is almost always asked. Your confidence and tone are nearly as important as your words. Your answer should be well thought through and thoroughly rehearsed. Position your Reason for Leaving Statement.

2. What size budget have you been responsible for managing?

Answer the question, possibly with more than one example from various positions. Ask immediately (possibly before answering) how big is the budget you will need to manage in the position under discussion.

This question could be asked to get a feeling for the scope of your previous responsibilities. It could also be asked because your interviewer suspects that you are not qualified for the position at hand.

3. Describe your most recent manager's style?

This is an excellent opportunity to discuss some of the things you most admire about your last Manager or the person's achievements. If you criticise your last Manager at a job interview, you have just signalled your willingness to criticise your next Manager behind his or her back as well.

4. What aspects do you enjoy most in your current/previous position?

If there are responsibilities which are identical with those in the job under discussion, you become a better candidate. If they have nothing to do with the job under discussion, you might be seen as less of a candidate. If your last job and your next job are significantly different, find honest ways to bridge the gap.

5. What is your current salary/ Remuneration Package?

The employer may seek remuneration/salary information to determine if they can afford you – you could counter this discussion by asking what benefits are available within their organisation.

Think carefully about your response – break it down into base salary, pension contribution; private healthcare; dental plan; bonus; car allowance; and holiday entitlement are all elements you should know the value of.

Question when/how the salaries are reviewed; do they benchmark? Defer saying how much you are looking or until –offer stage-this is when you are at your strongest to negotiate your package.

Your Skills and Experience

1. Describe your leadership style?

This question is a way of getting you to describe your management and leadership style. This is a predictable question and people seeking management roles should be prepared to answer it.

As with most questions, a carefully thought out honest answer is the best approach. If your management style or leadership style differs significantly from the organisation's you probably do not want to work there.

2. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

The first question represents an opportunity to present your skills and achievements. Make them as relevant as possible. This question is nearly always a lead-in or set-up for the next question.

“What are your weaknesses?” is a predictable question. Think about this – it will come up in some shape or form. Be realistic – pick one weakness or development need. Something you are aware of and you are actively managing.

Research

1. What do you know about this company?

Nowadays, the internet makes it very easy to carry out research on any potential employer. The company website will generally contain lots of useful information and a general internet search may throw up any press articles about the organisation. You may also know someone who works (or has worked) for the company.

It is essential to research the organisation – print of the information & take it with you to the interview. Use social media platforms, Twitter, blogs etc to source as much information as possible.

Be prepared!!

1. Why are you interested in working for this company?

2. What contribution will you make to this company?

3. What are your future goals and aspirations?

Sensitive Questions

1. Tell me how you feel when your work is criticised – what behaviours will I see?

Be honest – take your time and think of a time and talk about how you dealt with the feelings and what you learnt from the experience.

2. What have you done for your own continuous professional development in the last 12 months?

Talk about recent in house or external course – don't forget on line learning and networking. Employers are expecting you to take control of your own development.

Questions for You to Ask

The interview is a two-way process and to evaluate the position against your own qualifications and requirements for your next role you will need to ask relevant questions. We have listed below a series of questions that you may find useful.

- What would be the next step in career progression?
- What do you see are the initial priorities /challenges for this position?
- Can you describe the dynamic of the people I will be working with and will there be an opportunity to meet then/tour the facility/department?
- What is this department's budget, and who manages it?
- What is the company's training and development policy? Is there an Education Assistance Policy?
- What is the reporting/organisational structure?
- What are the established guidelines and procedures for making decisions in this position?
- What level of authority would I have in this role?
- Will I have direct input for the department budget? Would I be totally responsible for developing the budget whilst in this position?
- Can you expand on the short and long term goals of this role?
- What is the company's performance review system?
- How is performance measured against the goals of the department?
- What is the most important contribution that you would expect me to make during the first six months in this position?
- What is the culture within the organisation?
- Do you operate in a centralised or de-centralised manner?
- What are the inter-departmental relationships like?
- When did, this position become available and why?
- What is the staff turnover in the organisation?
- Are all the promoted posts or new roles advertised internally prior to external recruitment?