



Interview Guide



INTERVIEWS

The interview process

There is a technique to successful job interviewing and the applicant who masters this fine art has a definite edge over the other applicants.

The job interview is the best opportunity you have to gather facts about a job and to sell yourself to the potential employer. Though other factors such as your CV and references play an important role, the decision on whether or not you are hired will be largely based on the interview.

Most interviewers are concerned with trying to find out the following:-

- Can you do the job?
- Will you do the job?
- Will you fit into the organization?
- Your potential.

How to succeed at interview

Preparation

- Verify the process: timelines, steps including number of interviews, interviewers backgrounds, what if any psychometric tests will be used
- Obtain as much information as possible about the company past, present and future objectives to demonstrate your interest in the company and the job
- Be clear on your own motivations both personal and professional
- Prepare and anticipate potential questions
- Understand the competencies required and be ready to demonstrate your ability by example in each one

The majority of interviews are conducted using competency, behavioral and values interview techniques. These are very straight-forward and only a variation on the more traditional interview. They seek to gauge future behavior of a candidate, by examining the candidate's past behavior. Put simply, this means you need to have a good, clear understanding of the core skills required and have a quantifiable example prepared of how your skills relate to each of the competencies being sought.

Some leadership competencies:

Vision

The CEO, possibly with the help of his executive team, creates and communicates a compelling and inspired sense of core purpose. This is based on the vision of the future, not the reality of today.

Strategic thinking

Once the vision is created and understood, it is essential to put together a workable plan to move from the current situation to the desired goal. An effective CEO can see ahead clearly and anticipate consequences and trends accurately, has broad knowledge and perspective and can translate this into a plan based on key strategies that will provide long lasting progress for the company.

Culture & Values

The CEO is responsible for creating and maintaining the desired culture and environment. If vision is where the company is going, culture and values tell how the company gets there. Values outline acceptable behavior. Work gets done through people, and people are profoundly affected by culture. Culture is built in many ways, and the CEO sets the tone. His every action or inaction sends cultural messages.

Communication

This skill goes further than being able to articulate the company's values and vision. It is about aligning people to the right direction and the specifics of their role in driving the business forward.

The CEO must communicate effectively not only internally but externally, with the Board, the financial community, customers and suppliers. Some may argue that effective communication with the Board is the primary core competency. Weakness here is certainly going to be trouble.

Building an effective executive team

The CEO's responsibility is to find, manage and develop the senior team in such a way that departments and individuals work together to fulfill the vision. That requires putting the right team together, motivating them and providing development opportunities so that they grow as the business grows and they can handle increased responsibility. A CEO needs to be focused on how to optimize people and so have a high level of emotional intelligence.

Business acumen

The CEO must have the following attributes:

- Knowledge about trends, practices, and policies affecting the industry and business.
- A firm understanding of competitors and a good grasp of effective strategies and tactics that work in the marketplace.
- Continuous learning: A quick, relentless, and versatile learner. Can analyze both successes and failures and learn from the experience.
- Ability to sift through vast amounts of information, solicit opportunities and possibilities, and communicate effectively with others.
- Ability to blend intuition with analytical skills.

Flexibility and handling risk

The CEO has to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty, coping with and embracing change and using it to the advantage of the company. They are able to act without having the total picture and able to adapt to dynamic environments with ease and speed. CEOs take and manage appropriate risks and use them to the organization's advantage.

Customer focus

CEOs have a clear understanding of customers' needs, preferences, interests, timelines and decision-making criteria. Focusing on meeting those needs and doing so profitably means success for both the company and the customer. Long-term customer satisfaction builds loyal, repeat customers.

Financial acumen

While much of this often falls to the CFO, the CEO must have solid financial acumen, such that they understand the key leverage points in the Income Statement and the Balance Sheet as well as the critical aspects of ensuring short-term cash flow and long-term profitability. It is often said that cash is king and certainly cash flow is key to success.

Use of current Best Practices.

This does not mean jumping on fads but rather the ability to capitalize on technology, outsourcing, managing the remote work force and social networks for example. Included in this would be identifying and using resources such as specialists, consultants, etc. The great CEOs have always been able to bring in the right people at the right time to help drive profitability.

The interview

There is a tendency for people to exaggerate their skills. It is recommended not to exaggerate as the interviewer's code is "when in doubt, disregard the interviewee".

Another question often arises, 'do you let the interviewer lead or do you take the lead?'. The right answer is a little of both. It is usually best to let the interviewer lead but you should have your own agenda and steer the interview to include this when necessary.

Prepare one or two clear messages about yourself and what you have to offer to the potential employer. Research shows that interviewers retain more information at the start and end of an interview so this would be a good time to get your agenda across.

Some hints:

- Re-confirm your attendance in advance.
- Allow sufficient time to make the journey and to arrive early.
- Listen carefully to the questions asked and ask them to repeat if you are unsure what has been said.
- Answer what you have been asked and try not to go off on tangents.
- Be aware of your body language and what message its conveying
- Ask questions throughout the interview – not just at the end.
- Avoid making derogatory or negative statements about former employers or positions.
- Dress appropriately.

Things to take that you may or may not need:

- A copy of your CV
- Reference letters
- Examination Certificates

General Interview Questions

In addition to competency or values questions some typical questions that are given below. Every interview process is different and subjective to the interviewer(s) conducting the interview. Quite often the format will start off with an introduction to the interviewer(s) and an opportunity for you to introduce yourself and give a summary of your career to date. This is the perfect moment to get across your agenda. Thereafter more in-depth questions and competency questions are asked.

Can you do the job?

In your present job what are your responsibilities?

What features of your current position do you like the most? The least ?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

If I spoke with your most recent boss, what would be said about your strengths & weaknesses?

What was the result of your last appraisal? Pluses and minuses ?

If you could suggest changes in your present job what would they be?

How does your experience match the requirements for this position?

Give me an example where you excelled in.....(a particular competency)

Demonstrate to me you ability to (a particular competency)

Given that there are areas where you lack experience, how would you cope?

Will you do the job? Are you keen on the job and company?

What do you know about our company?

Why do you want to work for us?

You would like to be part of a company project. You would like to solve a company problem. You like what you have heard about the company, its policies, goals, management, etc

What do you understand of what this job entails ?

Describe what you think are the tasks you would be required to perform?

What do you consider are the skills necessary to do this work?

What do you feel, you as a person, can offer this company

What other jobs have you applied for?

Why in your opinion, were you not offered the positions/s you applied for?

Of the interviews you have attended, which one would you favour - why?

Will you fit in ?

How would you evaluate your present firm?

Be positive. List the strong points

Why are you leaving your present position?

Mention more responsibilities, new skills, change of environment etc

What motivates you?

Describe the people with whom you work.

Start with your boss. Define their strengths and weaknesses. Again, try to be positive. List their strong points

What type of boss do you best work with?

What would you change about your current boss or colleagues?

What kind of hours are you used to working?

Give an answer that asserts your flexibility

What are your salary expectations?

What do you do in your spare time?

Your potential.

If you were to start college again what would you choose to study?

If you had your life over again what would you change?

What have you done to keep up to date in your field?

What are your objectives?

Long term - five or more years.

Short term - one to three

Where do you see yourself in five years?

How do you intend to achieve your career goals?

What is the ideal job for you?

Awkward Interview Questions

When dealing with questions that are looking for your weaknesses and failures:

Try to make the answers as positive as possible

Make them unrelated to the job where possible

They are in the distant past

Demonstrate how you overcome and learned from them

Some questions may be perceived as just being nasty! But do remember that in order to recommend you for the job the interviewer may have to face his boss be able to sell you to him.

Why have you been out of work for so long?

Why have you changed jobs so often?

Were you fired or made redundant?

Why did you fail at that job?

What difficulties are pushing you out of your current role?

While all of these questions may not be asked of you the discipline in preparing answers will help your confidence and may equip you to answer other questions.

Questions You Can Ask

At the end of the interview, you will be given the opportunity to ask additional questions. Prepare some that will help you to understand the job's parameters and potential. You might ask:

- Why is this position open? Is the company expanding or are you replacing someone?
- If I am successful in securing this position what are the 3 most important tasks I need to work on?
- What is the reporting structure
- How soon would you expect the successful candidate to start?
- What are the long term career opportunities?

Questions to Avoid

- Stay away from asking too many 'me' questions – for example "how many holidays do I get in a year"
- Avoid raising the issue of your potential salary. Instead, wait for the employer to do so and then be honest, but fair, about your expectations.

Closing the Interview

Finally, the close usually affords another opportunity to get your agenda across.

- *If you are interested in the position, let them know!*
- If the interviewer offers you the position and you want it, accept it on the spot. Prevarication is not considered desirable in an employee. If you are genuinely unsure, be tactful in asking for a little time. Set a definite date by which you will respond.
- Do not be discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary is discussed. The interviewer will probably want to interview more applicants before making a decision.
- If you get the impression that the interview is not going well, do not let your discouragement show. Occasionally an interviewer who is interested in you may seek to test your reaction to the stress of rejection.
- Thank the interviewer for considering you. If you have the two questions uppermost in the interviewer's mind: "Why are you interested in the Company?" and "What can you offer the company?" you have done all you can.

Evaluating the Interview

Whether the interview leads to a job, to another interview, or to rejection, you should consider it a learning experience for any future interview.

- Jot down a few notes immediately after the interview. Other areas discussed reasons why you are suitable for the job, any negative points.
- Did you listen, make any interruptions?
- How did your background fit the job specification?
- Can you do the job?
- Was the "chemistry" good? Did you get on well with the interviewer? Did you agree with the next step in the interviewing process?
- Are you compatible with the corporate culture of the company?
- Are there good career prospects?

Factors Contributing to Negative Response at Interview

- Lack of preparation for the interview
- Failure to ask questions about the position
- Persistent "What can you do for me" attitude
- Poor personal appearance or posture
- Lack of interest & enthusiasm. You exhibit passivity or indifference
- Lack of tact, maturity or courtesy
- Overemphasis on money
- Evasiveness: you make excuses for unfavorable aspects of your records
- Lack of appreciation for the value of experience
- Being conceited and/or overbearing.

Conclusion

In order to succeed at interview it is crucial to be well prepared and practice your interviewing skills prior to interviewing for any position that you really want. Remember the "5 P's": Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance!