

Interviews



You've been called in for an interview, congratulations! Now it's time to prepare. First things first, there are different types of interviews to keep in mind:

- Phone screening (recruiter or hiring manager calling you and having a conversation)
- Casual or informal coffee interview
- Formal panel interview (with a number of individuals interviewing you)
- Formal one-on-one interviews
- Group interview/role plays or presentation

Phone screening

This is quite common, particularly if there have been a number of applications. It is a quick way for recruiters or hiring managers to screen out unsuitable candidates based on:

- Residency status
- Notice period
- Location
- Salary expectations
- Communication skills
- Lack of relevant experience



Casual interview

This is more of an informal discussion, however you should still prepare for this in the same way you would for a formal interview. Do not let your guard down, you would rather be over prepared than under.

One-on-one interview

These are formal interviews, often with the HR rep and hiring manager. This interview will test your skills and often will ask you for relevant examples.

Panel interview

This is a very formal interview, usually behaviour-based. You may have human resources, the hiring manager and 1-2 other stakeholders in this interview.

Group interview

These are common for graduate, retail, hospitality, call centre and emergency services. Presentations, role plays, and group activities are a feature. The intention is to observe your competency throughout the interview and how you interact with others and solve problems.



Video interview

Now a lot more common, video interviews are digital interviews which could be conducted through Zoom, Skype or Teams. You should still prepare for this as you would any other interview. Make sure you dress professionally, have good body language, good lighting and test your set up, making sure your technology works ahead of time.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR

Most common questions to prepare for are:

- Tell us about yourself
- What do you know about our company?
- What are your strengths? (top 3) How do you use your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses? (authentic/a quality you have to continue to work on)
- Why should we hire you?
- Why are you interested in the job?

Make sure your examples are relevant to the job.

Motivational questions

Are designed to understand your motivation for applying for the role. You may be asked things like;

- Why did you apply for the role?
- Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?

Situational questions

The interviewer will be interested in what you would do in a particular situation:

- How do you handle conflict with a team member?
- What would you do if you couldn't meet a deadline?

Behavioural questions

These often start with...

- Tell us about a time...
- Describe a situation...
- Give us an example of...



In this scenario, you will be asked for specific examples and stories that have successfully demonstrated a key skill/competency (such as organisation, dealing with pressure, dealing with conflict).

It is important to plan beforehand. Ensure you have a few examples you can draw on during the interview. You can often tell what interviewers may ask, by looking at the position description and focusing on key responsibilities.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Read the position advertisement and description well
- Highlight any key words, phrases or responsibilities
- Understand the behaviours and skills required to do the job

E.g.: We're looking for a team player who collaborates with colleagues. Prepare a teamwork example

E.g.: Are you comfortable dealing with conflict or handling problems. Prepare an example of conflict resolution or problem solving.

- You could use a volunteer or personal situation, or study example.

COMPETENCIES

Competencies are abilities, skills or characteristics that can be measured e.g.: listening, conflict resolution, communication skills.

How do you identify competencies?

Firstly, read the Position Description (PD) carefully. Highlight keywords or competencies required and mentioned in the Position Description.

Focus on the key selection criteria such as:

- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Customer focused

Prepare a story/example for each of these

Examples of competencies

Customer service:

- Customer service
- Verbal communication skills
- Written communication skills
- Conflict resolution
- Time management
- Team work
- Resilience

Sales role:

- Relationship building skills
- Verbal communication skills
- Negotiation skills
- Results-focused
- Teamwork
- Resilience



STAR RESPONSE

When answering behavioural questions you must use the STAR structure. You will be disadvantaged in a competitive interview process if you don't use this structure.



SITUATION (10%)

Where are you? What happened/problem?



TASK (10%)

What did you have to do?



ACTIONS (60%)

The steps you took/behaviours you demonstrated?
Describe the steps you took to resolve the conflict and the behaviours you demonstrated.



RESULTS (20%)

How effective were you? Measureable outcomes?
How do you know what you did worked?

This provides structure to your story. You should spend most of your time focusing on your actions. This will highlight that you know how to deal with the problem.

UNDERLYING BEHAVIOURS

Understand the underlying behaviours or actions that you demonstrated with the competency e.g. Teamwork

- Shared information with the team
- Asked colleagues for feedback
- Kept them up to date
- Listened to other ideas
- Responded quickly to their requests
- Created a document to help communicate between the team

4 keys to success

1. Use relevant examples
2. Use specific examples
3. Structure of response - STAR
4. Correct timing



Example questions: When your competency is leadership

- Tell us about a time when you used your leadership skills.
- Describe a time when you took a leadership position without a leadership title.
- Describe a situation when you took the lead during a difficult time.

INTERVIEW PRACTICE

Keep your responses relevant, short and succinct. Use 'I' statements, rather than 'we' statements. Make sure you include a list of ACTIONS the panel can note down. Where possible, quantify your results (\$, %, feedback).

- Draft your answers in the STAR structure
- Write them down, read aloud, time yourself (2 mins for general, 3 mins for behavioural)
- Record yourself and play it back
- Ask family and friends to do mock interviews with you

What questions should I ask?

- Open ended that will create a two-way conversation
- Ask questions that haven't been covered
- Ask questions that can't be answered from a website
- Ask questions that will build rapport

For e.g: Can you talk about the team and their background? What are the priorities in the first 6 months? What does the training look like?

Prepare a closing statement

- Plan and practise what you will say at the end of the interview
- Thank the interview panel for their time
- Reinforce your interest in the role and why you believe you are a strong candidate
- Politely ask about the next steps, should you be successful

Follow up

- Send a professional, well-written email thanking them
- Get someone to proof read it, making sure there are no errors
- Keep it short and concise, but mention something about the role that was discussed in the interview
- Reinforce your interest again

GOOD LUCK!



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