

Produced by XL Recruitment - Premier Financial Services Recruitment Specialists
www.xl-recruitment.co.uk

Hints and tips to help you perform the perfect interview. Employers today want the very best employees and XL Recruitment aim to assist you in securing the position that you've always wanted but never actually got.

SUCCESS PACK

Or 'Get The Job You Want'



Interview Success Pack

Produced by XL-Recruitment

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Interview guidelines



Introduction

Stress counsellors tell us that one of the most stressful situations in which individuals will participate is that of a job change. One way in which job seekers can reduce this stress is to take control of the situation.

Most people will change jobs on average every five years so therefore, get very little practice in being interviewed. An interview is not an easy process; it is full of pitfalls, especially if you are unprepared. There is, however, a good deal of positive action **YOU** can take.

These notes are designed to assist you, not only to maximise your opportunities but to leave as little as possible to chance.

Our message is: **'TAKE THE TIME TO PREPARE'**.

So, please read these notes carefully and act upon the advice

The process falls into five sections:

1. Keeping an Open Mind
2. Preparation
3. The Interview
4. Meeting Review
5. Feedback/End Result

Keeping an Open Mind

When looking to change company or environment, it is very easy to rely on preconceived ideas or even fail to appreciate the dramatic changes that have occurred within the industry particularly in the current economic climate.

Our aim as a preeminent recruitment specialist is to help you investigate as many sectors of the market as possible. In doing so, any potential move you make would be as a result of your investigations of the various options available with the companies that you meet.

We would ask you therefore, to keep an open mind and attend EVERY interview arranged - all interviews are relevant experience. In addition the company would, at the very least, have received a full breakdown of your background and experience before meeting you so will already have a good idea as to whether or not you would be a good fit. Whatever their outcome, interviews will always provide you with greater experience and therefore a further insight as to what the current job market is like and what direction you wish to take.

DO NOT PREJUDGE

From experience, we know that many of the better positions have been secured as a result of very speculative first meetings - both parties having got on so well that a position had been created!

Preparation

Did you know that 90% of people who go for an interview do not do any preparation? Why not be one of the 10% that do and give yourself a big advantage over the other 90%?

When anyone attends an interview they are being judged not only on their qualifications and experience but, more importantly, how they present themselves and the impact made. It is a fact that people who are less experienced but are better prepared will have a far higher chance of getting the job!

USEFUL TIPS ON PREPARATION:

- If time permits, get as much information as possible about the company you are visiting.
- Find all your commission statements for the past 12 months and accurate details of your API production figures, number of cases and persistency records. Include previous years, but only if they are impressive as its current figures that are the main criteria.
- Figures must be in writing and produced by your current and last company. Figures given verbally or prepared by you may be totally accurate but are rarely accepted at face value.
- Prepare a brief summary 'front page' showing figures, commission statements and anything that promotes your achievements, including any FPC passes or qualifier for conventions. Also state if you have been in the top 10 at your branch or region

in any year, quarter or month

- Put a copy of all the above in a presentation folder. Keep a master for yourself plus one folder that you can show at the interview and leave with them if requested. This will enable you to have accurate information at your fingertips and prevent different information being given at a later date.
- Ascertain from your diary the input measures required to make your particular job role successful. If you are a financial consultant this will be the number of calls, 1st/2nd interviews and sales made. For a Manager, information regarding team monitoring.

The Interview

Good interview preparation will not only help ensure your interview runs more smoothly but it will also allow you to concentrate more on finding out about the job and opportunity itself, as opposed to talking about your production figures, etc. All the necessary relevant information surrounding your performance will have been set-out in your presentation folder already.

The following suggestions, in no particular order, will help you to make the meeting productive and successful:

- Remember the purpose of the 1st interview is to progress to a 2nd interview and get to see the key decision maker
- Allow more time to get to the meeting than expected. Give yourself time to prepare (½ hour minimum).
- Ensure that the answers you give to questions are precise and concise. Think about the answer rather than making off-the-cuff responses. If you need to, repeat questions back to the interviewer to ensure that you understood the question and give yourself time to formulate a good response.
- Prepare your questions, e.g. products, location, input expectations. Take brief notes for reference.
- Remember that the interviewer has an agenda and possibly a tight time scale.
- Be yourself. If you try to change your personality a good interviewer will spot it. Be enthusiastic and smile a lot, you should be enjoying the meeting.
- Be totally honest but don't highlight any weaknesses. It is up to the interviewer to find them (if any).
- Leave on a positive note and secure a commitment for another meeting if you want to proceed. Always trial close with 'at this point can you see any reason why I won't be progressing to 2nd stage

REMEMBER, YOU ONLY GET ONE CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION!

Meeting Review

As soon as possible after the meeting take some time to review what happened.

You should ask yourself the following questions:

- Did you feel comfortable with the interviewer and could you work with him/her?
- Did you like the perceived culture of the company?
- How did you feel about any of the other staff you may have met?
- What were the positive points of the meeting?
- What are your areas of concern, if any?
- Were there any questions you did not ask and require further information or clarification?

Feedback

There is a phrase which says that feedback is 'the breakfast of champions'.

This is certainly true. It is a very important part of the service that we offer both you and our client companies. After each appointment or meeting, preferably as soon as you return to your home or office, please carry out a detailed and honest meeting review and call us to discuss. You can do this at any time.

If we are not available, please leave a message on the answer-machine and we will return your call as soon as we can.

You will find this an extremely useful call. We will discuss the outcome of the meeting and we will hope to assist in putting things into perspective for you. It will also provide you an opportunity to query anything that was not made clear at the meeting, which we will hopefully be able to clarify ourselves or if not, we can find out from the company.

If there is not a 'match', it is better that both parties know as soon as possible.

However, should both the company and yourself want a further meeting, rest assured that a meeting would be arranged without delay - Strike whilst the iron is hot!

From this point on, and throughout any subsequent meetings and negotiations, we would keep in close contact with both yourself and the client company to ensure everything we can reasonably do is done, to make the process run as smoothly as possible and secure you the best possible position.

In terms of assisting you in making the right decision, feedback is a highly valuable value added service that the professional consultants at [XL-Recruitment](#) are only too happy to provide. Skilled in assimilating and breaking down interview information the skilled consultant will simplify the entire interview and bring often needed clarity.

The Interview 'script'



First interviews, often used to gauge whether you are a good fit for the role applied for and the company or organisation itself, will always follow a similar format, usually revolving around carefully crafted questions designed to elicit answers that will determine whether you show ability in the key competencies for the role.

It doesn't particularly matter whether the role is a sales based, support or other type position, the questions asked will often revolve around your skill set, experience, historical performance and key achievements, therefore building up a picture for the employer of what to expect were you the successful applicant.

In this section we aim to give you examples of the type of question you will be asked. In fact we provide you with the 12 questions an employer is most likely to ask you at first interview, affording you the opportunity to design answers that will present your skills, expertise and achievements in the best light.

We also provide you with the seven most common reasons why potential applicants are rejected at the first stage interview and what 'you' can do to avoid making the same mistakes. Your aim at the first interview stage, is to make sure you secure a second bite at the cherry!

The Twelve questions.

The twelve questions most commonly asked by an employer at the first interview stage are designed to filter out unsuitable applicants that might have got through initial screening by determining whether or not you have the requisite skills, experience and performance levels. Examples are as follows:

1. Tell me what you consider to be your key achievements?

Answers to give could include any FPC or advanced qualifications you may have taken. Any outstanding performance figures. Convention attendances or awards won. Also any league tables indicating top quartile or top percentile positioning. If self employed - any renewal or gross commission figures or client numbers.

2. What would you consider to be your greatest achievements in life and why?

This will be a personal rather than generic answer.

3. What would you consider to be your three main strengths and why?

Again, this will be a personal answer describing your personal attributes and what you consider to be your main strengths, highlighted in a positive manner. Use historic examples if possible.

4. What would someone consider to be your three main weakness's and why?

It is vitally important that any weakness's you highlight are turned into positives. Let the employer make their own mind up as to whether or not the trait you have described is a weakness. Example: *I suppose I could be considered to be too single minded sometimes in focusing on the achievement of my goals* - turning a weakness such as single mindedness into extreme focus on targets.

5. What things do you enjoy the most about your current employment?

Personal answers. Tailor it to the role applied for. If its a sales role then you enjoy closing, meeting people, proactively generating new contacts, etc

6. What motivates you?

Always focus on elements of the role being applied for - if its a sales role then you are motivated by achieving targets, peer recognition, closing sales and of course income. If its a support or customer service role then you are motivated by a job well done, knowing you have served that customer or colleague to the best level, high levels of proficiency. Tailor motivators to the role.

7. What part of your role do you find most demanding?

The employer is trying to determine whether you have the level of competency required in elements of your role and how you cope with parts of it.

8. What frustrates you about your job?

9. What has been your biggest career disappointment to date?

10. Give an example of when you didn't succeed - how did you cope with it?

The employer is testing your tenacity, your ability to take a knock and get straight back on your feet and come back better having learnt from the experience.

11. What would be your typical day?

12. How and when do you ask for referrals?

Whether sales or customer service based referral business is highly important especially given the current economic situation so the employer needs to know you are not afraid to ask and that you know the best time to broach the subject.

The Twelve questions - Your Answers

Question: List your past achievements with any of your previous companies, e.g. persistency awards, Convention qualification, top 10 (or top quartile) salesman in your company/branch/ region in any year/quarter/month.

Answer: _____

Question: What do you consider your greatest achievements in life and why?

Answer: _____

Question: What do you perceive as your three main strengths?

Answer: _____

Question: What do you perceive to be your three main weakness's and why?

Answer: _____

Question: What things do you enjoy most about your role?

Answer: _____

Question: What motivates you?

Answer: _____

Question: What do you find most demanding about your current role?

Answer: _____

Question: What frustrates you about your job?

Answer: _____

Question: What has been your biggest career disappointment?

Answer: _____

Question: Give an example of when you didn't succeed - How did you cope?

Answer: _____

Question: What would be your typical day - give an example of what your working day consists of, from the beginning of the morning and right through to the evening - remember many roles don't end at 5.30pm!

Answer: _____

Question: How and when do you ask for referrals?

Answer: _____

REMEMBER, TRY AND BE AS HONEST AS YOU CAN BE WITH YOUR ANSWERS!

The 7 Key Reasons

'Why Most Employers Reject An Application At The First Interview'



Rejection

There are a number of standardised responses to applicants that are rejected at the first interview stage. Your aim is to secure progress to stage 2 of the interview process. To help you do so, take a look at the reasons for rejection below and make sure that you are not one of the candidates that are fed back one of these:

1. Candidates do not show enough enthusiasm about themselves, the industry or the job.
2. Candidates cannot convince the employer that they are achievers in life.
3. Candidates cannot demonstrate that they can overcome adversity
4. Candidates give the impression that they are only applying because leads are supplied and take the attitude "what can you do for me? Rather than "what can I bring to the party".
5. Candidates are ill-prepared for the interview and don't 'SELL' themselves or their abilities.
6. Candidates are unlikely to fit into the culture of the organisation
7. There is no chemistry, charisma or personality.

How To Secure A New Employer

Do's & Don'ts of the Professional Interviewer

List of Interview Do's

- 1: Do find out as much about the company as you can before the interview - research thoroughly!
- 2: Go to the interview to prove you are the man/woman to solve the employers problems.
- 3: Do look at the interviewer as an equal - its your interview too.
- 4: Do as much as you possibly can to secure a 2nd interview.
- 5: Do think carefully and take your time before answering any questions.
- 6: Indicate to the employer how you are going to do the job.
- 7: Do tell them all about your achievements and skills. Show them your folder and blow your own trumpet.
- 8: Be positive, confident and proud throughout the interview.
- 9: Do highlight your strengths.
- 10: Give the employer plenty of reasons to want to eventually offer you the job.
- 11: Do use trial closes throughout the interview to gauge the level of the employers interest.

List of Interview Don'ts

- 1: Don't attend any interview without the proper research and preparation.
- 2: Go to the meeting/appointment just to get a new job.
- 3: Don't behave like a subordinate, you're not!
- 4: Don't forget that getting a 2nd interview is your reason for being there.
- 5: React to any questions by saying the first thing that comes into your head.
- 6: State or imply that there is any part of the job you cannot do.
- 7: Don't be too modest about your successes, you need to stand out.
- 8: Give any negative vibes about your abilities.
- 9: Volunteer your weaknesses.
- 10: Provide any employer with ammunition that might cause you to be rejected.
- 11: Don't forget to ask if there is any reason why you wouldn't be progressing to the next stage

Self Appraisal & Feedback



Self Appraisal

One of the most important aspects to any interview process, particularly for those that haven't interviewed in some time, is the honest and searching post interview self appraisal session. As soon as possible after the interview, sit down with a piece of paper and write down things that went well and things that didn't - highlight any strengths and conversely, any weakness's.

It is hugely beneficial for you to take an honest look at how you felt the interview went and to write down anything that you felt went well, anything that didn't go well and also highlight any areas of concern. You may have felt that you didn't connect well with the employer or that you didn't sell yourself enough. This is all important feedback that should be taken note of and discussed with your consultant.

The Consultants at [XL Recruitment](#) offer an empathic appraisal and post interview feedback service where they will take into consideration any concerns you have with regards your performance, post interview and offer solutions and an insight into what to do at the next interview to redress any issues.

It is vitally important in each case that you take as honest and considered a view on your performance as possible. Not everyone can perform the perfect interview every time and there will be things that you will think you could have done better. It is a good idea to share that with your consultant, allowing them to compile and deliver a professional and multi dimensional report aimed at improving your performance.

Feedback

A Detailed Look

Although we have already partly covered the feedback part of the interview process in an earlier part of the success pack, it is a good idea to take a look at it in further detail.

Feedback, where the consultant will contact both you and the employer to get and give a detailed analysis of the appointment, is an absolutely essential part of the interview process and its importance cannot be underestimated. In view of the current economic situation it is important that you are given the best chance possible to secure your position in the least time and feedback is a very good way of ensuring that mistakes made once are not made again as well as getting an unbiased view of your interview performance. Important areas of consideration for an applicant are as follows:

- **How you felt you got on well with the interviewer?** It is highly likely that the person interviewing will be your direct line manager so its important that you felt you built a good rapport with them.
- **What did the interview consist of?** Most first interviews will be fairly informal affairs, an opportunity to find out more about the role, whether you feel you would be a good fit to the company and whether the role matches your skills and experience, however in some cases they may be slightly more formal and competency based.
- **Did the employer highlight any areas of concern or focus questioning on certain aspects of your CV, work history, experience, etc?** Remember the employers role is to find out whether you would be a good match for the role and will want to know you have certain competencies.
- **Were there any areas of concern about the role that were not brought to your attention previously?** If the consultant has done their job properly you should already have a pretty good idea of what to expect but things can and often do change quickly so there could well be things such as bonus structure, support framework, travel expectations, etc that the consultant might not have known. Remember, its the consultants role to give you as much information about the job as they reasonably have but the interviewer can always give you more detailed information.
- **Finally, the hundred dollar question. If everything has gone well and the employer wants to progress, is it something that you would feel comfortable with?** Its always a good idea at this point to consider whether or not you want the role and if you could see yourself doing the job. If its positive then its onto the next stage, usually a competency based assessment, a fact find or a role play but if its a negative then don't worry, at this stage its not usually too difficult to pull you out of the process.

And Finally.....Some Pointers

- 1: READ XL REC 'INTERVIEW GUIDELINES'
- 2: RESEARCH THE COMPANY BACKGROUND / KEY FACTS
- 3: WHAT DOES THE ROLE ENTAIL?
- 4: THE OPEN MINDED APPROACH
- 5: THE FIRST INTERVIEW OBJECTIVE
- 6: PRESENTATION OF YOUR CAREER, ETC
- 7: INTERVIEW DRESS CODE
- 8: THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK
- 9: CONFIDENTIALITY
- 10: ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL

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