

INTERVIEW PREPARATION FORM

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BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS LIKE

- Why did you choose a career in IT / FINANCE / SCM / ACCOUNTS / ETC?
- Why would you like to work for our company?
- What do you want to be doing in your career five years from now?
- When was your last salary review?
- What style of management produces the best from you?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- Which did you enjoy the most and why?
- What have you done that shows initiative in your career?
- What are your major weaknesses and what are your strengths?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- What are your hobbies/ interests?
- What does 'teamwork' mean to you?

NEGATIVE FACTORS TO BE AWARE OF

During the course of an interview, the interviewer will be evaluating your negative factors as well as your positive attributes. Listed below are negative factors frequently evaluated during the course of an interview and those, which most often lead to rejection?

- Poor personal appearance.
- Overbearing, aggressive, conceited 'superiority complex', 'know-it-all' attitude.
- Inability to express thoughts clearly, poor diction or grammar.
- Lack of planning for career – no purpose or goals.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm – passive and indifferent.
- Lack of confidence – nervousness.
- Over-emphasis on money – interested only in remuneration.
- Evasive – makes excuses for unfavourable factors in record.
- Lack of tact/maturity/courtesy.
- Condemnation of past employers.
- Failure to look the interviewer in the eye.
- Limp handshake.
- Failure to ask good questions about the job and company.
- Lack of preparation for interview – failure to get information about the company, resulting in an inability to ask intelligent questions.

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

Preparation is the first essential step towards a successful interview.

Interviewers are continually amazed at the number of candidates who have not prepared and possess little or no information about the company.

1. Ensure that you know the exact location and time of interview, the interviewer's full name, the correct pronunciation and title held.
2. Find out specific facts about the company – where its offices are located; what its products and services are; what its growth has been; and what its growth potential is for the future. There are a number of research publications providing this kind of information. Among the most helpful are: The company's annual reports / Kompas/ Textline/ Library/ The Stock Exchange Research Handbook/ Hambros Company Guide
3. Refresh your memory on the facts and figures of your PRESENT/FORMER employer. You will be expected to know a lot about a company that you have previously worked for.

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4. Prepare the questions you will ask and remember that an interview is a 'duality'. The interviewer will try to determine through questioning if you have the qualifications necessary to do the job. You must determine through questioning whether the company will provide the opportunity for growth and development that you seek
5. Probing questions you might ask....
 - A detailed description of the position?
 - Reason the position is available?
 - Culture of the company?
 - Anticipated induction and training programme?
 - Advanced training programmes available for those who demonstrate outstanding availability?
 - Company growth plans?
 - Best-selling products or services?
 - The next step?
 - Dress in a smart business suit with black shoes and tie (if applicable) and a clean, ironed shirt/blouse. Don't wear casual clothes even if you know it's the company policy.

THE INTERVIEW

You are being interviewed because the interviewer wants to fill a vacancy. Through the interaction which will take place the interviewer will be assessing your strengths and weaknesses. In addition, specific characteristics will be probed such as attitude, aptitude, stability, motivation and maturity.

Some "do's" and "don'ts" concerning the interview.

- ♦ **DO** plan to arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable.
- If presented with an application:
- ♦ **DO** fill it out neatly and completely. If you have a personal resume, be sure the person to whom you release it is the person who will actually do the hiring.
 - ♦ **DO** greet the interviewer by their surname, if you are not sure of the pronunciation, ask the interviewer to repeat it.
 - ♦ **DO** shake hands firmly.
 - ♦ **DO** wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright in your chair, look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good talker. Smile.
 - ♦ **DO** look a prospective employer in the eye when you converse.
 - ♦ **DO** follow the interviewer's leads but try to obtain a full description of the position and duties expected early so that you can relate your appropriate background and skills.
 - ♦ **DO** make sure that your good points get across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner. Keep in mind that only you can sell yourself and make the interviewer aware of the potential benefits that you can offer to the organisation.
 - ♦ **DO** be prepared to answer typical questions like:
 - What kind of job are you looking for?
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses?
 - What do you know about the company?
 - Why did you choose your particular vocation?
 - What are your qualifications?
 - ♦ **DON'T** smoke even if the interviewer smokes and offers you a cigarette.
 - ♦ **DON'T** answer questions with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Explain whenever possible.
 - ♦ **DON'T LIE.** Answer questions truthfully, frankly and as much to the point as possible.
 - ♦ **DON'T** make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers.

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- ♦ **DON'T** 'over-answer' questions. The interviewer may steer the conversation into politics or economics. These topics can be controversial, it is best to answer the questions honestly, trying not to say more than is necessary.
- ♦ **DON'T** enquire about SALARY, HOLIDAYS, BONUSES etc., at the initial interview unless you are positive the interviewer is interested in hiring you. However, you should know your market value and be prepared to specify your required salary or range.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

- ♦ **IF** you are interested in the position enquire about the next interview stage if applicable. If the interviewer offers the position to you and you want it, accept on the spot. If you wish for some time to think it over, be courteous and tactful in asking for that time. Set a definite date when you can provide an answer.
- ♦ **DON'T** be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to consult with colleagues first or interview other candidates before making a decision.
- ♦ **IF** you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in your possibilities may seem to discourage you in order to test your reaction.
- ♦ **THANK** the interviewer for the time spent with you.

Interview preparation techniques

- Find out as much about the company as you can. The type of information you might want to research: nature of the business, number of people, revenue of company, revenue forecast, number/location of offices, general dedication to career development.
- Allow plenty of time to travel to the interview location - plan to arrive 15 minutes early. Be aware of how long your interview will take (a single interview usually lasts up to 1 1/2 hours).
- Always wear smart business attire (even if the company allows casual dress.)
- Make sure you are clear on who is interviewing you and what the interview process is. How many interviews will you have? What are the interviewers' names/job titles? How will these people contribute to the decision making process? Will there be any tests? If you have applied through a recruitment consultancy (such as VERTEX) this research will have been done for you.
- Bring along a spare copy of your CV.

At the beginning of an Interview

- Upon first meeting your interviewer make sure you shake his/her hand firmly - make eye contact, smile. Be prepared to make polite conversation - 'Did you find us OK?' - always try to answer these questions with more than just Yes/No answers. Perhaps you might want to comment on the attractiveness of the office environment or the ease by which you got there.
- In the interview room, play safe with your etiquette. Don't take your jacket off without asking, sit down after or at the same time as the interviewer.
- Pay close attention to your physical communication throughout the interview. This means good eye contact (ie looking at the interviewer for over 70% of the time - if you have more than one interviewer always try to address all of them with your answers). Don't cross your arms (it looks very 'defensive'), don't slump in the seat, smile.

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During and after an Interview

- Be clear about what your major selling points are. If, by the end of the interview, these haven't been covered make a point of talking explicitly about these.
- Be to the point, make sure that you answer the interviewer's question (it sounds obvious but nervousness and a keenness to communicate your selling points can often lead you away from the point.) If you are asked to talk about a specific project, a good way of approaching this might be to talk about the overall business aim of the project, then talk about your role in the overall project and then cover the scope/size of your role.
- Never say something in an interview which can't be backed up by examples. If you say you are a 'good team player', 'creative' or 'enthusiastic' you will inevitably be asked for proof.
- Be positive. Don't overly criticise your current employer. Generally, every time you talk about a problem or issue you should always be looking to say what your involvement was in overcoming this issue.
- Sell yourself. Try to avoid giving cliched answers to interview questions (it is likely your interviewer has heard these responses more than you care to imagine). Use examples from your own experience, give your opinion.
- If you don't know the answer to the question, don't try and answer it. Instead say how you would approach the problem/answering the question.

Common interviewer questions:

- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why do you want to leave your current employer?
- What is the most difficult thing that you have done in your current position?
- What attributes make someone a good?
- What are your most significant accomplishments?
- As a manager, what do you look for when you recruit people?
- How would your team describe you?
- Describe your personality
- What are your goals?
- What are your three main strengths/weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Common Interviewee questions:

- Why has the position become vacant?
- How will the position evolve in x years time?
- What opportunities are there for training/career development?
- Do you have an appraisal system?
- What could I expect to do in the first 6 months?
- Describe the corporate culture

At the end of the interview and after

Ask how you did. Re-affirm your interest in the role. Ask what the next stage is and when you can expect to hear. Ask how many other candidates are being interviewed for the role.
2 questions that **MUST** always be asked at the end of interview.

- **HAVE I ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS TO YOUR SATISFACTION?**
- **DO YOU HAVE ANY RESERVATIONS ABOUT MY ABILITY TO DO THE JOB?**

These are excellent closing questions!!!!
Follow up with a thank you letter

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR

1. Tell me about yourself?

Cover four segments about your life – your early years, education, work experience, and what you have done in recent times. Keep your answer to not more than 2 or 3 minutes. Be sure you don't ramble or elaborate.

2. What can you offer us?

Be sure you know something about the job situation they have in mind before you try to answer this. Then you can relate some of your past experiences where you have succeeded in solving problems that appear similar to those of your prospective employer.

3. What are your strengths?

By now you should be able to relay 3 or 4 key strengths that are relevant to their needs.

4. What have you accomplished?

Try to pick out accomplishments that bear on the challenges you have been discussing. Stay away from ancient times.

5. What are your limitations?

Respond with a strength which if over-done can get in your way and become a weakness. For example you might say "My ambitions to get the job done sometimes causes me to press a little too hard on my organisation. But I am aware of this problem and believe that I have it under control". Or deal with your need for further training in some aspect of your profession. Do not claim to be flawless.

6. How much are you worth?

Try to delay answering this until you have learned quite a bit about the job and, if possible, explore beforehand the typical ranges they are accustomed to paying for similar positions. If you feel obliged to answer something you might reply along these lines. "You are aware of what I have been earning at my present employer and I would hope that coming here would be a progressive step. Perhaps we can discuss this question a little better when we both have a more complete idea of what job responsibilities and scope would be".

7. What are your ambitions for the future?

Indicate your desire to concentrate on doing the immediate job well – and your confidence that the future will then take care of itself. You do not want to convey the idea that you have no desire to progress but you need to avoid statements that are unrealistic – or that threaten some of the present incumbents.

8. What do you know about our company?

If you have done your homework, you can honestly state that you have studied the information that is publicly available about them and are thus aware of quite a bit of the published facts. However you might also state that you would like to know more – and then be prepared later to ask some intelligent questions. Don't try to be a show-off and recite all the things you have learned, but merely let your knowledge show gracefully through the informed way in which you handle the interview.

9. Why do you want to work for us?

Indicate that from your study of the company, many of the activities and problems are the sort that would give you a clear chance to contribute to the company – through your past experience and skills. If you can honestly say so, explain your admiration for the company and what it is that appeals to you.

10. What do you find most attractive about the position we are discussing?

What is least attractive?

Mention three or more attractive factors, but hold the unattractive factors down to one or two minor ones.

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11. What are you looking for in this position?

Keep your answer opportunity orientated. Talk about the chance you would have to perform and get recognition.

12. How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?

Be realistic and speak in terms of six months to a year.

13. Don't you feel you might be over-qualified or too experienced for this position?

A strong company needs strong people, with the right experience to deal with current problems. Explain that your interest in the company would be a long-term one, and that you are willing to bet that your accomplishments in the first year or two will lead eventually to growth opportunities for you.

14. What is your management style?

This is something you that you should have seriously thought about. If the job you are going for has a management responsibility. You might want to talk about how to set goals and then get your people involved in them. Also describe the techniques that you would like to bring out the best in people. Try to sense whether the company believes in a highly participative style, or is more military in its approach.

15. Why do you feel you have good potential to be a manager?

Keep your answer question orientated toward your past achievements and the task to be done. Explain how you go about getting work done – either by yourself or through your organisation.

16. What do you see as the most difficult task in being a manager?

Getting things planned and done on time and within budget.

17. Why are you leaving your present job?

This is one of those sensitive questions that must be handled crisply and briefly. If it was a forced reduction due to economic circumstances, make that clear. If possible, explain how your termination was part of a larger movement. When you have finished answering, let it go. Stay away from analysing your friction points with your boss.

18. How do you feel about leaving all your benefits at your current position?

Concerned, but confident that you will make it up when you are established in your new company.

19. Describe what you feel would be an ideal working environment

This is the place where you can bring in some of the “satisfiers” and “ideal job preferences” – but don't make it sound too sublime and impractical.

20. What have you done that helped increase sales or profit? How did you go about it?

Be specific and give examples if possible.

21. How many people have you supervised on your recent jobs?

Be specific – and feel free to refer to those over which you had influence, such as task force or a matrix organisation.

22. Which do you like better – working with figures or words?

Answer honestly.

23. How do you think your subordinates perceive you?

Be as positive as you can, but remember to be honest, too. They can check your references easily.

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24. In your last position, what were the things that you liked most? And liked least?

Be careful on this one. Emphasise the positive and don't carry on at length about the negative.

25. In your recent position, what were your most significant accomplishments?

Be ready to describe three or four of them in detail. Where possible, try to relate to the nature of the new challenges you might be facing.

26. Why haven't you found a new position after these many months?

Finding just any job is not too difficult, but finding the right job takes care and time.

27. What do you think of your previous boss?

Be as positive as you can. And avoid getting too deep.

28. If I spoke with your previous boss, what would he/she say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

Be honest about this one, but do not emphasise the negative. Your boss will probably want to give you a good send-off. Recount some of the good things you did for him/her.

29. If we were to offer you this position, exactly how much would you expect?

Again, be careful about pinning yourself down – either too high or low. If possible, deal in terms of what the market value is for the job. However, this is best left to your recruiter to negotiate for you!

30. Do you have any objections to taking psychological tests?

No, none at all (this would mean you are a serious candidate)

31. What other types of jobs or companies are you considering at this time?

Don't feel obliged to reveal details of your other negotiations. But certainly let them know that you are in conversations with other organisations

32. How would you describe your own personality?

Balanced and human. Mention 2 or 3 of your useful traits.

33. Are you a leader?

Yes (give examples)

34. What are your long-term goals?

Relate your answer to the company you are interviewing with, rather than give a very broad, general answer. Keep your ambitions on a realistic track.

35. What are your strongest points?

Be ready to present at least three – preferably in a way that relates them to the potential job opening.

36. How long would you expect to stay with our company?

As long as we both feel there is challenging work that I can do.
