

# INTERVIEW PREPARATION

This guide aims to provide information, which may help you prepare more effectively for interviews.

## THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

An interviewer's objectives are:

- To verify the information on your application/ CV
- Give you a chance to demonstrate you have the appropriate competencies for the job
- Establish the relevance of your experience and achievements
- Give you information about the position and a chance to ask questions

It is useful to keep these objectives in mind when preparing for an interview. Also always remember an interview is a two-way process and should leave both the candidate and interviewer clear and satisfied about what each has to offer.

## PREPARATION

### Know the employer and the position

Gather information on the following:

- The nature of the job and responsibilities
- The skills, knowledge and experience required
- The team/ department
- The products/ services involved
- The position of the department within the company
- Any changes/restructuring within the department/ directorate

You can use the Intranet for the majority of the above but if possible talk to people to gather more information. The more you know about the job and understand your responsibilities and the nature of the work, the more you will be able to extract relevant anecdotes about your experience to demonstrate the competencies required.

### Your questions about the position/ department

Prepare some questions in advance to ask at the interview. Asking questions is a good indication that you are interested in the position/department and demonstrates listening skills. Make sure that the answers are not already hidden in the job description, etc. Write down some questions if you think your mind may go blank at the end of the interview.

If at this stage you feel that you have not demonstrated your skills adequately say 'its not exactly a question but I would like to tell you a time when I.....'

### Know Yourself

- Make sure you know your CV well and how your skills, experience and achievements apply to the position
- Identify all your transferable skills, e.g. planning, time management, interpersonal, leadership, problem solving, communication and IT skills

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- Match the job requirements to the skills and experience which you possess
- Prepare and then rehearse answers to typical interview questions (but do not try to learn these parrot fashion)

### **Preparing answers to potential questions- the SOAR strategy**

By putting together a number of examples, which demonstrate different competencies, you will hopefully be prepared for nearly all interview questions.

Use the following for each example:

**Situation-** describe the situation and your role in it

**Obstacle-** describe the problem you had to overcome/goal you had to achieve

**Action-** describe the action you took to overcome the problem/ achieve results

**Result-** state the outcome of the action you took

### **Practice makes perfect**

- It is essential to practice adapting your examples to answer different styles of question
- If possible ask someone to go through a mock interview with you or practice in front of a mirror!
- The key is becoming confident to talk about yourself and your achievements. The more practice and feedback you get the more confident you will become in an interview.

## THE INTERVIEW ITSELF

### **Take control**

- If you find a question or point unclear ask
- Take your time when answering questions
- If you want to buy yourself time to prepare your answer ask for clarification, this will help you avoid waffling! Say 'I'm sorry, I don't quite understand the question' or 'that's a difficult question' or reflect back part of the question and then pause
- Use every question as an opportunity to demonstrate your skills and experience even if you are asked a closed question (requiring a yes/no answer)
- Emphasise your contribution if you are talking about a team goal, etc.
- Provide evidence to back up claims about your strengths
- Try to use recent experiences as these will be most clear in your mind allowing you to answer any probing questions
- If you are asked about your weaknesses make sure you turn any information regarding a weakness into something positive (e.g. my natural tendency is to pay too much attention to detail because I'm a perfectionist but working within time constraints I have learnt to keep the bigger picture in mind in order to meet deadlines)
- Avoid talking constantly about yourself and how the job will benefit you, emphasise how the employer will benefit from taking you on
- Don't talk for more than two minutes at a time