

BE SOLID AS A ROCK...

Your interview guide to success.

“One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation.” –*Arthur Ashe*

There isn't a more appropriate quote to use when it comes to being successful in an interview. By being prepared, you will not only be more impressive when answering your interviewer's questions, but be able to ask the right questions yourself, to make an informed decision on whether the position you are interviewing for is a move in the right direction for you.

The information below is designed to take away the stress involved with interviewing for a new job, and give you a step by step guide on how to prepare. We cannot provide answers for every eventuality, but hopefully we can guide you in the right direction.

STEP 1 - KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST

- Know the time and location of the company. How to get there, how long it will take and is there parking. If necessary consult [Google Maps](#) or [131500.com.au](#)
- Confirm the interviewer's correct title and pronunciation of his or her full name. Familiarise yourself with their career to date by looking them up on [LinkedIn](#).
- Research specific facts about the company - its history, financial position, competitors, products and services. Research the company's website in full.
- Refresh your memory on facts and figures about your present and former employers. You will be expected to know a lot about a company for which you have previously worked.
- Read over your resume. You must know the exact dates you worked in each company, the exact title of each position and all the responsibilities and achievements you have included.

STEP 2 – DRESS TO IMPRESS

- Dress conservatively, in dark or neutral colours. Ladies and gents should wear a smart suit with pressed pants and matching jacket. Ironed shirts (front and back) are essential.
- For female candidates, keep jewellery and makeup to a minimum
- Facial piercings and tattoos should be removed or covered if possible
- Don't smoke beforehand, no matter how nervous you are
- Ensure you have neat fingernails, and be conscious of what colours are considered corporate
- Polished, closed toe shoes are a must

STEP 3 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

- Arrive early or on time! Not too early – more than 15 minutes is excessive. Being late is inexcusable. If you feel there is a danger you will be late call your consultant in advance. If you are late acknowledge the fact, and always apologise for keeping your interviewer waiting.
- Shake hands firmly, maintain eye contact, and smile!
- Keep a straight posture, or lean slightly forward towards the interviewer
- Talk enthusiastically and passionately about your experiences to date and your interest in the company and the role concerned.

STEP 4 - SELL YOURSELF

There is no hard fast rule for an interview format or style, although generally the interviewer(s) will ask you a mixture of questions covering:

- Your work and personal experiences and qualifications
- Your skills, strengths and weaknesses
- Your technical knowledge
- Your knowledge of the company and role
- Your reason for wanting to leave your current employment and past positions
- Your career aspirations, and motivation to do the role

Do not rely on the interviewer to ask you an endless stream of questions to coax out your good points. Remember, the interviewer may be inexperienced or forget to ask a question. **It is crucial that you sell yourself.** Be forthcoming with information regarding your suitability for the position.

They may speak to you in detail about the role, the company and their plans for the successful applicant.

The interview should not be a one-way question and answer session where they ask questions and you give responses. Ideally, conversation should flow, and both you and the interviewer will provide information and ask questions in a natural way. You are much more likely to succeed if the meeting is an interesting dialogue than a one sided interrogation which will be uncomfortable for you both.

THE SIMPLE TRUTH

Performing well in this kind of interview can be supported by five simple steps you can take:

1. **Read the job description**, and speak to your consultant. Find out what the key skills and characteristics required for this position are. Check with your consultant if the interviewer has any concerns about your background, or gaps in your skills set, so you can address them.

2. **Know your experience and resume** - not just what you were doing generally, but have at least one detailed example of your behaviour which demonstrates each of the skills and characteristics required on the position description. Ideally each of your examples will demonstrate a range of skills - e.g. attention to detail, team-work, communication skills.

3. **LISTEN!** During the interview, the interviewer will give you a lot of information about what sort of person they are looking for, where they see the role or person going, even what sort of candidate they would like to avoid. Use this information intelligently and tailor your answers to highlight your suitability.

4. **Sell yourself** - Do not necessarily wait for that key question to come up to show off your great achievement - it may never come. Describe in detail, why you are good at your job, and why they should hire you. For example – Your attention to detail and focus allow you to complete your Accounts Payable position with a high level of accuracy. This ensures you are the most time effective as possible, and have little errors to resolve in the reconciliations process.

5. Using the **CAR** approach can help structure your answers to questions - it will make life a lot easier.

BEHAVIOURAL BASED INTERVIEWS – USING THE CAR TECHNIQUE

A good way to frame your answers to even the most general interview questions is to draw a positive general conclusion about yourself from a specific example of something you've done. It's much more impressive than simply telling the interviewer how great you think you are. Think of it this way; for everything good you say about yourself, have some concrete evidence in the form of an example to back it up.

A good way to do this when answering interview questions is to use the Circumstances, Action, Result (CAR) technique. Behavioural based interviews will contain a number of questions where you can use this method to respond, and are used predominately by HR and corporate recruitment teams as a way of identifying whether you fit the cultural mould they are looking for.

Your answer to a behavioural based questions should be broken into three separate parts:

CIRCUMSTANCES

First describe the background to your example in as much detail as possible – This is like setting the scene.

- The situation the company/team was in.
- The problem or challenge you faced.

- Any other relevant information (e.g. it was year-end, the company had just introduced a new system, etc.).

ACTION

Describe your response to the challenge or problem. If there was more than one possible way of approaching the problem, explain why you chose your approach. Ensure this part of the answer focuses on your actions, not someone else's (you are applying for the role, not them!)

RESULT

What the outcome of your efforts was. If this is not an outcome that shows you and your skills in a positive way, you are giving the wrong type of example!
If the result was not favourable, admit that it didn't go to plan, what you learnt from the situation and what you would do differently next time.

EXAMPLE TIME –

QUESTION

What do you think one of your strengths is?

ANSWERS

"I feel I have good communication skills."

Rating: DLacking detail and evidence to support your opinion

"I feel I have good communication skills because of the experience I gained in credit control convincing people to pay their outstanding bills"

Rating: C Better, but not detailed enough.

"I feel I have good communication skills because of the experience I gained working in credit control for X Company, because I had to convince consumers to pay their overdue telephone bills."

Rating: B.... Even better, but still not detailed enough and the example is a little vague.

"I feel I have good communication skills because of the experience I gained working in credit control for X Company, a telecoms business. For example, one particularly challenging situation was when I had to convince a customer who was experiencing severe financial difficulties to pay their telephone bill.

The customer was upset and aggressive when I called initially. I remained calm, and rather than being negative, I tried to focus on a positive solution to the customer's problem. Eventually I was

able to work out a realistic payment plan with the customer, and in the end the money was repaid in full."

Rating: A... A great answer. Detailed, to the point, and demonstrating exactly why you think you have good communication skills.

QUESTION TIME

It is also important that you ask questions in interview, even if you feel you know all you need to about the job or company. If you don't ask any questions you risk giving the impression that you are not enthusiastic about the job or curious about the company.

Even if you feel the job isn't for you - be smart. Be enthusiastic and always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing.

Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in a position where you can choose from a number of offers - rather than only one.

This is also an ideal opportunity for you to impress by displaying your research and knowledge about the company by asking intelligent questions.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Why has the position become available?
- How does the position fit into the structure of the organisation?
- What training programs are available to ensure continued personal and career development?
- What plans does the organisation have for future development?
- How would you describe the culture of the company?
- What motivated you to join the organisation?

QUESTIONS TO POTENTIALLY BE AWARE OF ASKING

- Too many questions about hours, salary package and bonuses may not be appropriate for a first round interview, when they detract from your opportunity to sell yourself. Discuss these with your consultant to avoid giving a bad impression.
- If a topic has already been covered in detail by the interviewer in the initial part of the interview, you will look silly for asking them to repeat themselves. Do not ask a question for the sake of it.

WRAP IT UP

Finally, make sure you leave the interview on a positive note.

- Thank the interviewer for taking the time to see you



- Tell the interviewer that after learning more about the company and role in the interview, you are certain it is right for you, and say that you hope they will consider offering you the job (if you feel this way).
- Confirm what the next stage of the process is.
- Be bold, ask if you have satisfactorily answered all the interviewers' questions, and if you could reaffirm any of your experience.

GOOD LUCK!