

Interview Guide

Research

If you haven't put the work in, you will know it on the day and it will affect the confidence with which you present to the hiring manager. Lack of research shows a number of killer traits which can end your chances:

- Disinterest in the role
- Complacency
- Poor work ethic

Everyone Googles the company and has a glance at the website. Few people contact employees for chat, and even fewer get in touch with potential or existing customers. The latter can not only provide superb insight but also demonstrates the kind of work ethic that employers want to see.

Here are some of the things we feel you should be looking at:

- Company culture/missions/values
- Company history
- Products/pipelines/strategies/advantages
- Challenges for the company and its products with ideas about how to tackle them
- Job Description - be ready to match your experience to their requirements

On the day

First impressions

These are so important because we are all human. In spite of having read advice to the contrary, we can jump to conclusions in a matter of seconds, based purely on what we see. Here are some things to remember:

- Put on your best smile and offer a firm, but comfortable, handshake accompanied by good eye contact.
- Gentlemen: wear a single colour shirt and plain tie, dry-cleaned dark suit, with clean and freshly-polished shoes. Ladies: if wearing a skirt make sure it's knee length or longer, choose low to mid-height heels and avoid excessive make-up or jewellery.



What to take

- Spare copies of your CV to give out, as necessary
- Support file with evidence of successes, achievements, examples of work and references
- For presentations, ideally take a hard copy, memory stick and laptop to avoid compatibility issues
- Have directions and phone numbers to hand, in case of delays on the day

About money

There is a time to talk about money, and a way in which to do it. We strongly suggest you take advice from us regarding this before your interview. Here's a few guidelines:

- Never pro-actively raise the topic of money, leave this to the interviewer
- If the interviewer perceives your only agenda is money, you will fail
- When asked about salary, state clearly what your expectation is
- Ensure you ask for a figure which reflects your true market value

Many candidates ask for too much on the assumption that this is a negotiating start point. In practice, an unrealistic salary request can tip the interviewer towards another candidate without further reference to you.

Competency interviews

This is the most common type of structured interview, and is the format of interview that most managers are trained to use. In simple terms, it means the interviewers have a list of the traits and experience (usually included in the Job Specification) they would like to find, and they will ask specific questions to determine whether you have them.

Typically, they will use the **STAR** process to do this. So if they have 'motivational skills' on their Job Specification, they may ask the following:

Situation – Can you think of a situation where you had to motivate others to act?

Task – What was the overall task that had to be performed?

Action – What specific action did you take to demonstrate motivating others?

Result – What evidence do you have of the positive outcomes from this?

Questions

Towards the end of an interview you will nearly always be asked if you have any questions. Don't be caught out here: "No, I think you've answered them all" is possibly the worst way to end an interview, signifying, at best, lack of preparation and, at worst disinterest in the role.

Have some sensible questions planned and written down. Then professionally request if you may make a couple of notes as they answer your questions; this confirms to the interviewer that their answers are really of interest to you.

If unsure, we suggest you speak to your consultant about this. Good questions will show interest and enhance your chances, but be careful not to ask questions which simply reveal poor research and knowledge.



Closing

There is no completely right and wrong way to close an interview - it very much depends on the style of an interviewer. As a general rule, it's good idea to state that after your meeting you are very interested in pursuing the role further, if given the chance.

Some people advocate a very blunt and direct close. At PCC, we feel if the client wants to reveal success on the spot they will, but they won't do it just because they get asked a frank "Have I got the job?" Most of the time you will simply create a moment of discomfort for all, as they tell you they have more candidates to see.

We suggest you politely ask if they have any particular areas of concern that you may be able to address before the interview closes.

