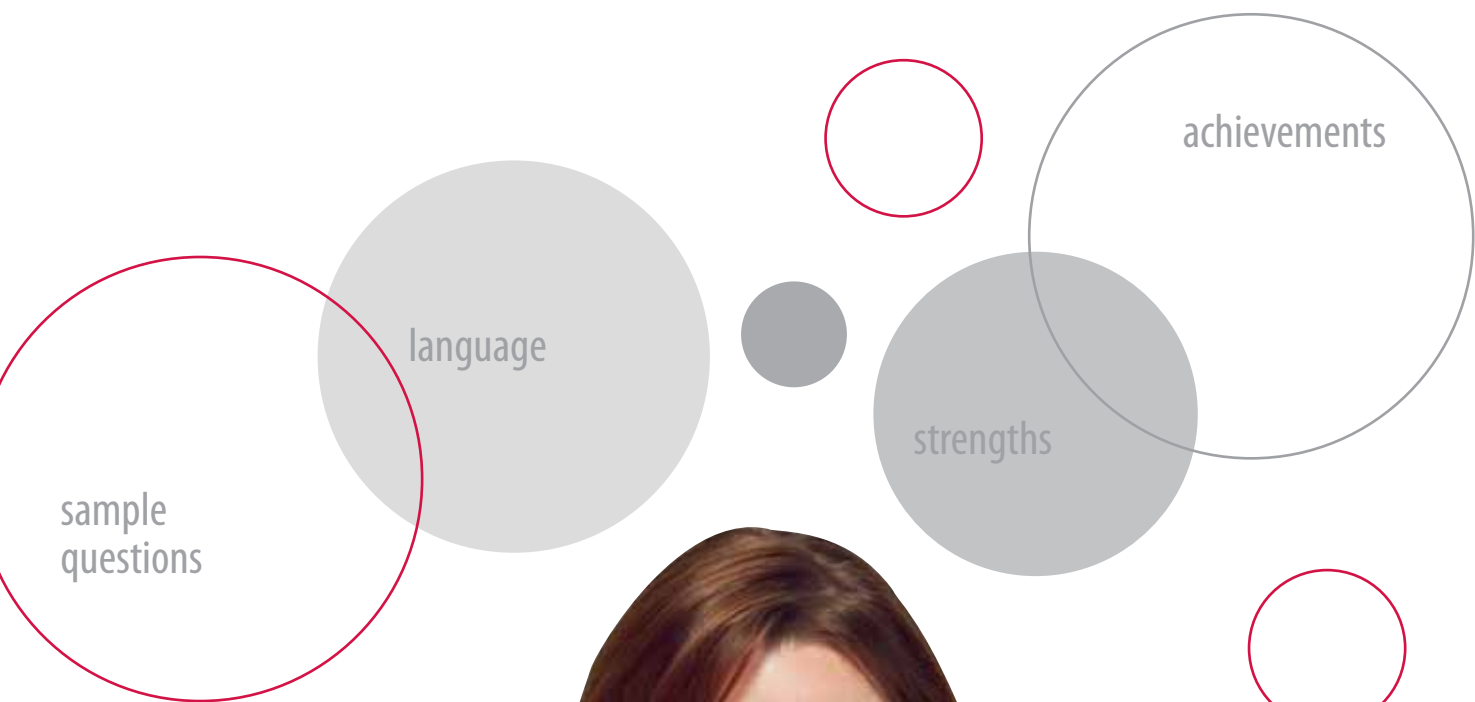


PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW



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Preparing for
interview

FROM THE INTERVIEWEE'S PERSPECTIVE

Preparing for the interview

In your preparation for a job interview, contemplate the difference between content and process.

- Content is about what is said and exchanged between yourself and the interviewer or panel.
- Process is more intangible and is about the interaction between you and the panel. There is some overlap between the two.

Managing content	Managing process
Anticipate questions	Develop presence – handshake, walk, body language
Prepare answers to generic criteria	Put zest into your answers
Practise, practise, practise	Make a positive first impression and end confidently
Listen to the questions asked	Take notice of subtle hints and incorporate them into your responses

An interview is a two-way process. There will be some points you will want to make at the interview. If they are not brought out through the questioning process, you may be able to make them at the end of the interview.



HEAR THE QUESTIONS - PREPARE SOME ANSWERS

Hear the questions

Take note of key words in the question - they make a difference to the form of the answer:

- Describe
- Outline
- Give an example of
- Explain
- Why, how, what

Different types of questions require different types of answers.

1. Facts

Can you give some examples of computer programs you have used and how effective you have found them?

2. Understanding

What are some elements of a good team? What can go wrong?

3. Self-analysis

How effective are you in the role of project manager?

4. Views and ideas

How could we reduce the time customers wait in line at the counter?

5. Examples of experience

Give an example of a difficult interpersonal situation you have handled.

6. Hypothetical

You are faced with a customer who is very angry about a service they say has been delayed for over a week. How would you handle this?



Prepare some answers

You do have some control over what happens in an interview. To reduce nerves and present more confidently, spend time beforehand thinking of the questions you might be asked. Prepare and practise your answers.

For example*, you might be asked:

1. What attracts you to this position?
2. What are three of your most significant accomplishments in life?
3. What are your professional goals in the next 12 months?
4. How do you go about building relationships with customers?
5. What are the major elements in managing a project?
6. What's one of the more difficult interpersonal situations you've had to deal with, and how did you handle it?
7. With the benefit of hindsight, what might you have done differently?
8. Where do you see yourself in three years' time?
9. Why is the ability to listen important?
10. Name one of your major job achievements during the last 12 months.

**From 101 Interview Questions*



PRESENTING ACHIEVEMENTS AND STRENGTHS

In an interview, it is important that you feel comfortable talking about your strengths and accomplishments. You need to be able to present yourself in a manner that is not perceived as arrogant and obnoxious. Also try to avoid sounding vague – the panel will need to know where your conversation is leading them.

One way of doing this is to make a sound assessment of yourself, then present that information in a matter-of-fact way, backed up with evidence. Team contributions should be acknowledged whenever appropriate.

A model to use as a basis for this approach is:

- identify a number of strengths relevant to the position
- outline their relevance
- show how they were developed.

Describing the relevance of those strengths informs the panel that you understand their needs and how you can add value. The evidence is designed to be reassurance that you can do what you claim. The wording of your answers also implies that you have strengths other than the ones mentioned.

Being able to demonstrate that you can use your skills, knowledge and experience for the benefit of the employer is the most important factor.

Example:

My key strengths related to this position are:

Firstly ...

which I gained from/established/developed ...

This strength is relevant to this position because ...

Secondly ...

which I gained from/established/developed ...

This strength is relevant to this position because ...

Suppose the position involves marketing a service in regional areas. From your research and the selection criteria, you know that the critical elements to this job are project management, liaison and supervisory skills. Your response about strengths might be:

My key strengths related to this position are:

Firstly, project management. I established this at the Dynamic Realty Company and developed it further at the Largo City Council. This strength is relevant to the position because it involves team-based marketing projects where tight budgets and deadlines are critical.

Secondly, liaison skills. I gained these through liaising with environmental groups, Aboriginal communities, and academic researchers. This strength is relevant to the position because in order to complete housing projects effectively, the team needs to consult with academic and community groups to make sure that their concerns and needs are taken into account.

And thirdly, I bring extensive supervisory experience, which I've developed over the last ten years through leading teams of 10 to 25 staff of diverse ethnic, educational and work experience backgrounds. As I understand it, you will need a strong leader to ensure that these services are delivered effectively and are relevant to regional areas.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERVIEW

If you have been short-listed for interview, you can assume that you have met the main competency factors for the job.

What the interview offers is the opportunity for you to demonstrate:

- your enthusiasm
- the lessons you have learnt from experience
- your insight into, and understanding of, what is involved in the position and its duties
- the value you can bring to the business or organisation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Be aware that your body language should display interest and commitment.

- Your voice should sound motivated and enthusiastic
- Speak clearly and confidently
- Try to make the interview as conversational as possible
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer/s
- Answer in the first person as much as possible
- Use words that demonstrate your confidence and skills.



SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General staff

Opening questions

Why are you interested in this position?

What attracts you to this position?

What qualifications, training and experience can you bring to this position?

Describe one of your major job achievements during the last 12 months.

Team

Can you give us an example from your past experience of the benefits you have gained from working in a team?

What can go wrong when working within a team? How do you get things back on track?

Setting priorities

How do you determine which of a number of tasks should be given the highest priority?

Customer service

What steps would you follow in dealing with an angry or dissatisfied customer?

Problem solving

Can you tell us about a challenging situation you have faced at work in the past and walk us through the process you used to resolve it?

Innovation

Tell us about one change or innovation that you introduced in a past position. How did you go about implementing the change?

Organisational skills

As you know, this position involves a variety of complex procedures that are sometimes carried out concurrently. To arrange your work so that things are done well and efficiently requires good organisational skills. Can you explain how you organise your work in your current job?

Initiative

Can you tell us about a time when you needed motivation to get through a long and difficult day? How did you keep up your motivation? What did you achieve?

Meeting deadlines

Please tell us about how you have handled high-pressure work tasks in the past. What strategies would you use to handle heavy workloads or tight deadlines in this position?

INTERVIEW TIPS

Pre-interview

- Prepare for questions
- Use relaxation techniques, e.g. visualise, breathe, drink herbal tea

In-interview

- Have two points you want to make in the interview
- It is acceptable to have notes or dot points to refer to during interview
- Bring a job portfolio that includes samples of work
- Be conscious of body language
- Establish eye contact
- Insight and enthusiasm are qualities that are better demonstrated at interview than in the application.

Expect a number of generic questions

- What led you to apply for this position?
- Can you tell us about two highlights of your career/education?
- What gives you a feeling of satisfaction in your work?
- How do you evaluate whether you are performing well?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?



CAREER-RELATED WEBSITES

www.positionsvacant.com.au

www.careerbuilder.com

www.career.com.au

www.seek.com.au

www.mycareer.com.au

www.careerone.com.au

www.hays.com.au

www.askoxford.com/betterwriting/successfulcv



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