

## Interview intelligence

### The Plan Getting Started

In this guide we will be going through some key steps that will help ensure that you:

- Identify the key requirements of the position that you're interviewing for.
- Familiarize yourself with questions that will possibly come up in the interview.
- Develop answers for interview questions even if you have not planned for them.
- Highlight the keys to making an interview a successful interview.

#### Getting Started

##### Step 1

"The Position"

##### Step 2

"The Application"

##### Step 3

"The Questions"

##### Step 4

"The Answers"

##### Step 5

"Interview Day"

Some possible questions and power words

#### The position

The first bit of information that you most probably are likely to have is the description laid out in the advert. This ad or "Job Specification" gives you the key factors that the interviewer will be looking for in the interview. The wording is not there by accident! Too often people make the mistake of overlooking this. The first step is to make sure that you match what the company is looking for. You have to remember that it is highly unlikely that a company will hire you if you do not have the type of experience that they are looking for, so look at what THEY want and break the job down into segments. They are normally broken up into headings like.

- Position or Role
- Qualifications and experience required
- The Duties or responsibilities
- The personal attributes

#### The Application

This is the first hurdle that you will have to overcome, it is the interviewer's first "screening" or appraisal of your competency relating to the position, so whether you are making a telephonic application or submitting your CV make sure that you are prepared for the possible questions that they are most likely to ask. These are most often the key competencies/requirements laid down in the job advert.

Prepare yourself for the questions and write down a few notes on these competencies and how they relate to you or the job you are currently doing. If you are going to make an electronic application, make sure that these competencies appear in your CV! The interviewer is going to have no other information about you initially, you could include it in a covering letter or note but in my experience these letters are often overlooked initially and only gone back to once interest in you has formed as a result of a good CV.

It may be useful to keep these notes handy, next to the phone or easily accessible as you can't control when the consultant is going to call you! Having the notes on hand, preferably with a copy of the job ad is the best preparation you can have.

Speak clearly! Your voice is the only other information that they have about you besides your CV.

## Should the interviewee research the company?

What a question, a very common question is the "What do you know about our company?" And believe it or not some companies place a huge amount of weight on your answer. Think about it, the person who knows the company has either been in the industry or had the diligence to prepare and do some research before applying for the position, who would you hire, the person who has the knowledge about your company or the one who has not?

And even if you're not asked that question, showing your knowledge of the company to the interviewer displays interest in the company.

The most effective way to narrow what interviewers will be looking for in the interview is to break down the ads or the job spec's **KSA's (knowledge, skills and abilities)** required for the position.

An example:

A company requires a **self-motivated** and **dynamic credit controller**, with experience on **Pastel** and **Excel**, the successful candidate will be a **self starter** and have the ability to work in a **team**, good **communication skills**, and both written and verbal will be an advantage.

### The Questions

Before any questions get asked, this is the interview remember, and it has in fact begun from the moment that you first make eye contact! A great candidate will look the interviewer in the eyes, Shake hands firmly and introduce themselves in a confident manor. I have found that a faint smile at this point can go a long way. Studies have actually shown that in most interviews the interviewer has made up his/ her mind within the first five or so minutes, give your self the best chance! Believe me, the small things like a smile or positive body language go a long way. A clear confident tone and a clean well presented appearance can sometimes get you the rest of the way.

Now that you have determined what the key factors influencing the possible questions asked from your list of **KSA's** you can start to formulate a list of possible questions that you are likely to be asked. In the case above, **self-motivation**, **credit control**, **pastel**, **excel**, **team work** and **communication skills**. It is also advisable to think of examples in each case as most interviewers will at some point ask for this.

Possible questions here might be:

- Tell me about a time when you had to use your **verbal** or presentation skills to influence someone's opinion. (*communication skills*)
- How do you ensure that you remain motivated and Give me an example of a time when you motivated others? (*self motivation*)
- Please discuss an important **written** document you were required to complete. (*communication*)
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal as a **team**, some of the problems that you encountered and weather or not you were able to achieve it. (*Team work*)

Does this make sense? I hope so because this is the general format that the interview will most likely follow!

### The Answers

Most of the questions asked by experienced interviewers today are behavioral- interview questions, designed to get the interviewees key underlying behavioral tendencies. This has been found to be the most accurate predictor or future behavior. Basically what it boils down to is that the interviewer will probe a point or an answer that you might have said or given. These questions usually start with "give me an example of" or "tell me about a time when" some examples

- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- What was going through your mind when that happened?
- What were you thinking when you were making that decision?

These types of questions can lead to a whole lot more on the same topic! And more often than not an interviewer will pick up whether or not a candidate is answering truthfully there is a technique available however called the " STAR" or " SAR" technique. It is well recognized as being the most focused way of dealing with these questions and in general you will find that your answers have more structure.

Situation or Task	Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you had to perform, Be specific here. That is what they will be looking for.
Action you took	What action did you take? Maybe there were actions/measures that you had to take? Be sure to focus on the positive side of things here.
Results you achieved	What happened? Did you achieve anything from this? What did you learn from your experience?

### Interview Day

OK, so its the big day, you have prepared yourself for the questions that are most likely going to be asked using your list of KSA's, hopefully you have a few examples of the times that you displayed this trait or had that responsibility memorized, you have introduced yourself well with a handshake making sure that you were maintaining eye contact and that your smile was not too cheesy! Where to from here?

Well interviews should normally follow a three step process,

- Connection or rapport
- Information
- Closing

### Connection

Connect, it is imperative! You have to establish some type of relationship with the interviewer, and I know that I have mentioned this before but you have to remember that most interviews are over after thirty seconds or so, so these few moments are the most important. You are there because they like the KSA's that you have put down on your CV

So this is a checking stage, to see that you have actually got what they are looking for and if you will be a good culture fit for the company.

The first few questions probably wont be too tough either! But it's never a bad thing to be prepared for the interviewer who likes to go straight in to the technical bits. Just remember that it's more about your body language, physical presentation and attitude.

### Information

The employer will be asking you questions and then matching your answers against their essential success factors. You will get two differing kinds, closed questions like do you have a Matric? Meaning questions that are for the most part yes or no answers.

And then we have the open, more behavioural type mentioned in Stage Four, for example: Why should we hire you? What you should be avoiding here is the closed answer response, the more information the better, remember and use the STAR technique and it should all go smoothly. Even if you believe that you have done well in the first crucial part of the interview this stage is where you can add to the interviewers confidence in you and persuade him/ her into wanting to make you an offer ASAP.

NEVER complain about something or someone for extended periods of time, all you will be doing is telling the employer that you that you might be a difficult person to get along with. It has happened to me so often that a candidate has performed wonders in the interview almost certainly going to the next step and then out of the blue starts ranting and raving about how they were treated unfairly here or the

telling me detailed stories about how they want to take legal action against someone at there last place of work.

Now I am not saying that these things don't ever come up but some things are better left unsaid if at all possible don't you think?

If the money question is asked, this is normally a good sign of the interviewer seriously considering your application. How do you answer this? Well the fact is that no matter what you say you will have been too low or too high. So don't answer the question with specifics, until given no other choice. Ask what the salary range is or, my personal favourite, I am willing to consider your best offer.

### Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- How do you plan your day?
- Please give me an example of a time when you had to make a quick decision.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- Tell me about a difficult decision that you've made in the last year.
- What goals do you have in your career?
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- How do you like to deal with conflict? Give me an example.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead. What was the result?
- What motivates you?
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me an example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you used your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document that you were required to complete.
- Give me an example of a time where you went the extra mile in your company?
- How would you describe your relationships with your colleagues?
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- What is your greatest weakness
- What is your greatest strength?

### Power Words

An awesome way to solidify a great interview is through in a few "power words", words that in my opinion give the interviewer a sense of your character

Make sure you know what they mean&.

Success	Potent	Confidential	Bargain
Exciting	Grand	Prominent	Snatch
Endorsed	Exciting	Distinguished	Miracle
Crammed	Distinct	Professional	Tremendous
Direct	Unparalleled	Influenced	Award
Quality	Leading	Famous	Terrific
Gigantic	Unique	Colossal	Wonderful
Huge	Bold	Unlock	Massive

Benefits	Fascinating	Absolutely	Achieve
Solution	Fresh	Superior	Fierce
Special	Master	Unlimited	Prime
Amazing	Exceed	Unconditional	Rebirth
Expert	Perks	Valuable	Delight
Special	Ideal	Daring	Better
Authentic	Precise	Prized	Mighty
Secure	Clinch	Easily	Unusual
Solid	Approved	Delivered	Big
Beautiful	Attractive	Proven	Uncommon
Extra	Perfect	Intense	Phenomenal
Sound	Successful	Fortune	Innovative
Sensational	Surprise	Merit	Exceptional