
RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

An Interview – what you can expect:

- An interview is one of the most widely used techniques in the recruitment and selection process. It not only allows you to meet people from the organisation & find out more about what they do, it is your opportunity to talk about yourself, describe your skills and convince the panel that you are suitable for the job and, of course, that the job and organization is right for you! As such it is not a one-way process, it is about establishing the ‘best fit’ – whether you are the best fit for the job and that employer and their team, and vice versa.
- First or casual interviews may be as short as 20 minutes whereas more in-depth and second interviews can be up to an hour or longer. They will be structured around your experience and knowledge to date regarding the skills and qualities required for the position. It will also look at your motivation and interest in that particular job.
- Good recruitment practice specifies that you should be interviewed by at least two people – one male and one female. Most large organisations and public sector organizations in particular may have external interviewers on the panel and panels of significant numbers. In TU Dublin, candidates for academic and senior management posts have been interviewed by panels of up to seven members!
- Interviews may be conducted face to face or by telephone, tele-conference or Skype.
- Best practice in Human Resources requires that panels ask the same questions of all candidates and use generic scoring sheets to comment on and rate your performance. A representative of the panel is expected to be able to give you feedback on your performance, should you require it, after the interview.

Knowing the Job/ Knowing the Company or Organisation

- It is well worthwhile finding out as much as possible about the job you are applying for and the organisation itself. This will help you decide if the job is for you and will also help you feel more comfortable & confident during the interview.
- Check out the organisation’s website. This will give you a very good insight into their core business, structure, values and culture, roles and responsibilities. It is also worth researching any media coverage on them in the past few months.
- TUDublin libraries, City Campus offers access to online business databases that provide very current information on many larger companies. Contact the library to learn more.
- Also find out about the industry in general, what are the challenges, areas for

development, who are their competitors? Have constructive opinions/ideas on the company's products, services, campaigns, etc.

- If possible, speak to people who work in the organisation or to somebody doing an equivalent role in a different organisation. In some cases it may be possible to visit the organisation itself before the interview.

Know the Skills / Qualities for the Job

- If information is not available on their promotional material or on a job specification, try to get information on the skills and qualities required for the job by asking someone in the company directly, talking to someone doing an equivalent role in a different organisation or by doing an internet search of similar roles.
- These skill/quality descriptions are usually carefully worded so that they contain a number of key words which should give you an insight into what the employer sees as being associated with excellence in this area. As a central part of your preparation, try to make sure you use these as a 'cross check' against the experiences etc. you want to talk to the interview board about.

Knowing Yourself

- In advance of applying for a job (i.e. even before filling in the application form) it is worth taking time out to 'reflect on yourself'. See the Career Development Centre Help Sheet on "[Self-Assessment & Career Planning](#)". This will help you to better articulate your skills and qualities in the interview.

Know your own strengths, and the areas where you need to develop / improve.

- Note down your experience to date – education, work experience and your main interests/hobbies
 - a CV type approach would be very useful for doing this – you may have it done already!
- Write down what you see as your main 'achievements' to date, things that you are proud of, where you feel you made a significant contribution, in any area of your life. Don't be modest or shy about this – this is not the time to hold back!
- Aim to get about 10 different achievements down altogether from different areas in your life e.g. education, work (e.g. part-time, voluntary, fulltime), interests etc.
- Write down what you see as your strongest qualities or skills – list about 5. ... Try to

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pick your strongest qualities that you feel are most relevant to the job you are applying for.

Preparing your 'examples'/'experiences'

- It is important to remember that an interviewer will want to know what YOU have done, how you used your skills/qualities & how you feel the example/experience prepares you for the job in question. For each achievement/experience identified already, here are a few tips on how to expand and flesh out the detail. This will help you remember more easily at interview what it is you did at different times during the situations being examined by the panel.

The CARR technique

- The CARR technique is used to prepare for and perform for scenario/competency based questions interview where:
 - **C** = Context
 - **A** = Action
 - **R** = Result
 - **R** = Reflection
- Whether you are asked to describe how you have used a particular competency to date or whether you want to provide evidence of a skill you have told the panel that you have this simple process can help you articulate an answer clearly and succinctly.
- An example of a scenario / competency based question could be: *Give me an example of a time where you worked as part of a team, and the team did not work effectively and what you did about it?*
- Describe the situation/task in question, outline specifically what you were responsible for and what action you took and tell them what resulted. Even if the outcome was not what you hoped, tell them what you learned from the experience. Develop a bank of stories around each competency that you think would be relevant to the job and draw from all areas of your life – work, home, college life, etc., e.g. For a junior management position you might have examples for your leadership, organisational ability, decision making and communication skills. The more interesting your stories are the more likely you are to be remembered by the panel but don't be tempted to make them up as you are likely to be caught out on the day or afterwards!

STEPS TO TAKE IN ADVANCE OF THE DAY

Practice, Practice, Practice....

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- Identify & memorise your unique selling points & be keen about getting those across to the interviewer.
- It is good preparation for all interviews to rehearse the key points you want to get across about your skills & experiences. Practice, practice, practice.
- To build confidence, do a role play or mock interview with an objective friend, colleague or Careers Adviser.
- If possible, tape or video yourself so you can hear/see how you sound and act throughout the interview.
- Don't learn off answers, it is important that you be yourself and talk naturally.
- **Getting There**
- Know the exact time and place of the interview, how you intend to get there and how long it takes.
- If you are unsure of the location, contact the recruiters and ask for directions. If you are driving, check regarding parking spaces – parking in city centre locations may be limited.

DOING YOUR BEST ON THE DAY

On the day of the interview and on arrival

- Try to arrive at least 10 minutes before your interview so that you don't feel rushed or flustered going into the interview.
- Dress professionally and comfortably.
- Make sure to give a firm handshake and a warm smile

During the Interview

- The best cure for nerves at an interview is good preparation and practice. Most people will feel some degree of nervousness going into an interview, and remember nerves are not necessarily a bad thing. They may even help you to keep focused.
- Be attentive and listen to each question carefully. Try not to jump in to answer before the question has been fully asked as you may end up wasting time on answering a question that you were not actually asked.
- Gather your thoughts before answering. Don't worry about a short pause.
- If you are unsure of what you are being asked, request clarification.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. It is better to be honest about this than to struggle

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on unconvincingly.

Closing the Interview

- You will be asked at the end of the interview whether you have anything to ask or add in support of your application. You may wish to add something that you forgot to say during the interview, to re-sell your best qualities and motivation for the job to the panel or to clarify some detail. You will have a couple of minutes to do so here.
- Good questions to ask in first interviews are about initial responsibilities, job content, the company culture etc. It's essential to express an interest in the company and the work being done – are you “hungry” for the job?

What not to ask in the first rounds of interviews?

- Don't ask about salary, holidays, or benefits.
- Don't ask questions that have already been answered, just for the sake of asking something.
- Maintain a confident attitude until you leave the interview room.

After the Interview

- While the interview experience is still fresh in your mind, it's always worth noting down what aspects of the interview you felt went well for you & what didn't go so well (e.g. answers that worked well or that you feel there was a good response to).
- It's also worth noting down any 'good questions' you were asked, which may be of use to you in preparing for future interviews, or may even have helped you to think of things in a different manner.
- If you are not offered the job, politely ask for feedback – it's always useful to find out how the interview evaluated your performance and can provide you with areas to work on.

TOP TIPS FROM INTERVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

- **Prepare, Prepare, Prepare** – Make sure you know about the role/position you are applying for, the challenges involved, the skills/qualities required and the organization itself. Ensure that you know your CV and/or application form 'inside out' and make sure that you can give examples for everything that was mentioned in the job specification
- **Make sure you are able to talk about your own experiences** where you used the skills and qualities which you feel are necessary for the job / role
- Be **friendly and enthusiastic** – panel members want you to be comfortable and at ease.

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- **Listen** to the complete question before answering – if in doubt request clarification or ask for a moment to think about your response
- **Keep your answers focused on the specific question** asked, and remember, the more you can talk about **yourself & how you have used the skill area** the question is trying to tap into, the easier it will be for the interviewers to give you credit
- **Be succinct and to the point** in your replies - any one answer shouldn't take more than 1-2 minutes to deliver – remember you will only have a specific amount of time allocated to you so make sure every moment counts; If you are a bit of a “rambler” when it comes to interviews.
- Don't be afraid to take a moment or two before answering. You can even ask “can I have a moment to think about that?” while you do so.
- If you tend to ramble in your responses (this can happen to us all if we are nervous or not sure about an answer or it may just be a personal style), **structure your answer** by saying ... “there are lots of examples I could give but I'm just going to focus on three: A, B, C” and elaborate accordingly. If you feel they are getting bored or you may be going off the point or talking too much, you could ask “have I answered your question?”, “shall I go on?”, or “is that example sufficient?” etc.
- Reflect on what you want to say and think about your response before replying. It is perfectly acceptable to do this rather than launching immediately into a rambling, unfocused and lengthy reply.
- If you want to buy time to have a little longer to think about the question or, if you haven't understood it completely you can also say “can you repeat the question?”, or paraphrase it back to the panel to ensure that you have understood it clearly.
- Another good tactic is to take a drink of water to give you a few quality seconds of reflection time.

- Don't rely on your application or CV to do the selling for you. No matter how qualified you are for the position, you will need to sell yourself in the interview on the day;
- Try not to be afraid of quiet periods, pauses, or drying up. The interviewers all appreciate how people feel. In many cases they are nervous themselves. If you need a moment to compose yourself, take it, and don't forget to breathe - slowly.
- Bring a bottle of water with you in case water is not provided for you on the day.
- Smiling relaxes the facial muscles and helps to release tension.
- If you tend to get really anxious about these types of situations it might be worth taking a course or class to learn some specific relaxation or deep breathing exercises.
- Be honest at all times – if you don't know something say so.
- Finally, switch off your mobile phone before entering the interview room!

USEFUL RESOURCES

<http://gradireland.com/careers-advice/interviews-and-tests>

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips.htm

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-techniques>

MICROSOFT EXCEL STUDY GUIDES

Excel Basic Functions; <https://support.office.com/en-ie/excel>

Data Analysis using Excel <https://www.edx.org/course/introduction-data-analysis-using-excel-microsoft-dat205x-0>

Advanced Excel [https://www.edx.org/course/analyzing-visualising-data-excel-microsoft-dat206x-](https://www.edx.org/course/analyzing-visualising-data-excel-microsoft-dat206x-0)