

Interview Techniques

Interview day is fast approaching and your anticipation levels are rising. You have done your research, but how confident are you that you can and will successfully verbally communicate your suitability for the role?

Ensuring your success at an interview rests on preparation, practice and clear communication. Fortunately, there are some simple techniques to help you put your best foot forward.

Types of interview

Before you start practicing your communication skills, it's good to know the type of interview and the context in which you are meeting your future employer. Interview types vary and include: panel interviews, telephone interviews and informal interviews.

Panel interview: These are typically very formal and can consist of up to four interviewers at the one time. These can feel a bit daunting, but focus on one question at a time. Address the person who has asked the question and as you answer, make eye contact with each panel member. Make sure you have people's names and positions clear ahead of time.

Telephone interview: The challenge with telephone interviews is communicating your message without physical cues, such as eye contact and gestures. Your tone of voice is critical, so speak with confidence and be careful not to speak too quickly or for too long! An old sales trick is to smile while you are speaking - it helps inject warmth and positivity into your voice.

Informal interview: These can be very deceptive! If you're invited for a casual coffee catch-up, don't be fooled into behaving or presenting casually. The usual interview rules still apply, so you need to focus on building rapport whilst still communicating your skills and experience. Don't let the interview morph into a social chat - you still need to get your message through.

Behavioural interviewing: Across all of these interview types, the most common interview method is known as behavioural-based interviewing and is a practice you need to be familiar with. This interview style is designed to examine your competency, skill compatibility and cultural fit for the position and you will be prompted to provide examples that illustrate your ability to carry out certain skills or demonstrate certain behaviour. Often questions will start with phrases such as "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of..." To answer these questions successfully, you need to prepare a list of strong and positive examples of your experience that demonstrate your relevant job skills.

To help you prepare, download our comprehensive [Interview Question Guidebook](#) for examples of common behavioural interview questions. Select questions from this guidebook which align to the stated competencies of the role you are interviewing for, then develop and practice your response.

The STAR format

The STAR format is your 'cheat sheet' to structuring effective examples and successfully answering behavioural questions. With each example try to cover off the following elements:

'S' Situation - 'What was the situation or the problem I needed to solve?' i.e., Sales reporting processes relied upon manual data input and were slow and labour intensive.

'T' Task - 'What task did I perform?' I analysed business and sales reporting requirements and assessed the different variables that affect sales results and forecasting.

'A' Action - 'What action did I take?' I developed an automated model that required minimal input and could

be applied to a variety of reporting objectives including forecasting.

'R' Result - 'What result did I achieve?' I increased forecasting accuracy by 75% and decreased sales reporting times by 10 hours per week resulting in savings of \$1,000 per week.

Building rapport

Interviews are not just about assessing your technical skills but also about determining how well you align to the company. Your interviewers need to be convinced that you can fit in, will mesh with the corporate culture and have the personal chemistry to work well with others in the company. Bottom-line: you want your interviewers to like you! Some tricks to building rapport include:

Make eye contact: People interpret eye contact as a measure of confidence and honesty. The ideal length of eye contact is about two to four seconds. Less might not be noticed; more can make the other person uncomfortable.

Smile! Smiling shows that you can be comfortable, confident and accepting, even in the most stressful situations. Smiling also encourages interviewers to smile back at you and remember you as a positive and warm personality.

Match your interviewer's style: Emulating posture, speech patterns, tempo and simple mannerisms to fit with those of the interviewer encourages a subconscious rapport. Be careful not to mimic or mock your interviewer, just subtly modulate your style where appropriate.

Use names: Where possible address the interviewer by name. It suggests you are prioritising the individual as well as the job and company profile.

TOP TIPS

- **Do** have some examples ready to effectively answer behavioural style questions.
- **Don't** go off on a tangent. Make sure you answer the question succinctly.
- **Do** ask questions. It demonstrates your interest in learning more and shows that you have given the position some real thought.
- **Do** try and build rapport with your interviewers. Remember to smile!
- **Do** relax and feel confident. You have been invited to interview because you appear to be a good match for the position, so you are already halfway there!
- **Do** close the interview by thanking the interviewers for their time and letting them know you are interested and looking forward to hearing from them.