

## Interview Support

Below is a comprehensive guide to preparing for an interview. The more preparation you do, the better equipped you'll be to answer any question thrown at you - you may also be surprised at how much it suppresses them dreaded interview nerves.

### Know your CV

Knowing your CV is an extremely important part of the interview process. The interviewer will have read your CV and may have noted points of interest in relation to the position they are looking to recruit.

- Go through your CV in detail and make sure you are equipped to answer questions about the experience you've stated you have. If you can't answer questions about the points you have written, it may give the impression you don't actually have that experience.
- Whilst you may not think your experience 10 years ago is relevant to the job you're applying for, the interviewer might think differently. So don't just focus on your current job, know your whole CV.
- Make sure all your dates are correct, it's surprising how often this can trip someone up in an interview purely from having the wrong dates on their CV.
- Always prepare some examples of situations in your working life that didn't go so well or where you faced adversity. This is a common interview question, not one to trip you up, but one to assess how you handle these situations. Make sure you have a clear outcome of how you rectified the situation that highlights key attributes a hirer might look for in an employee (e.g. resilience, determination, tenacity, resourcefulness etc.).

### Job Description and Supporting Documents

Take the time to fully understand the job you are applying for using all the information available to you. Usually that will be the Job Advert, Job Description and sometimes a Person Specification. All these documents may not be available, but it's worth asking whether they are to be sure you have everything.

- Go through all the points on the documents and note down any relatable experience you have that matches. Do this with example situations in mind, giving examples where possible is the best way to validate your experience to the interviewer.
- If you don't have experience for some of the points, don't worry - you won't always have everything. In this instance you may want to: research that particular area to give you an insight of what would be expected; think of a time where you have performed a similar task; have example situations which highlight your ability to adapt to new environment and learn new tasks/duties quickly. However you choose to answer these questions, always answer showing your enthusiasm to learn.
- If the organisation has taken the time to create detailed supporting documents, take the time to know them.

### Research the Organisation

It goes without saying you will need to research the organisation, below are a few pointers into the research you may wish to do:

- **Company Website** - this is the best place to learn about the organisation. What do they do? Do they have company values? If so can you relate to any of them. Who are their customers? What markets do they operate in?
- **Company LinkedIn page** - this may offer additional 'real time' information not available on their website, such as recent news articles or awards. Look through their posts and understand how they engage with their followers.
- **Company Accounts** - particularly when applying for a finance role it's always advisable to look through the company accounts available on Companies House. Make sense of them and be able to talk about them freely.

Whilst doing your research note down any genuine questions you have. There is usually a time in all interviews where you have the opportunity to ask questions. Having genuine questions stemmed from your research is a great way to show the research you have done, whilst also showing your interest. To discuss the type of questions that may be relevant, feel free to contact a member of the Trostan Dene team.

### Competency Questions

Some interviews may include competency questions, otherwise known as behavioural questions. This style of questioning is to assess a particular competency that the role may require i.e. good communication, teamwork, leadership, innovation...the list can go on! Without knowing exactly what behaviours will be tested, think logically about the role requirements and the behaviours that you believe the successful applicant will need, and prepare accordingly. As discussed above, don't forget to use the information available to you; it might even outline some for you. These questions need to be answered adopting a story-telling approach with real life examples. If you've not heard of the 'STAR' technique, now might be a good time to learn. There is a brief description of how to use the STAR technique below:

1. **Situation** - set the scene of the story by giving context and the background of the situation.
2. **Task** - describe your exact role or responsibility in that task. Remember to be clear about what **you** were responsible for, not always referencing the experience in a collective/team sense.
3. **Action** - then explain how you handled the situation or conquered the problem. Be as detailed as possible avoiding company-specific acronyms.
4. **Result** - close the story by stating the positive outcome of your actions and what lessons you learned. If possible, quantify the results and show the effects of your actions.

**Example Questions:**

- Tell me a time where you have resolved conflict in the workplace.
- Describe a situation where you have shown leadership.
- Give me an example where you have shown resilience.

## Common Interview Questions

If you search 'common interview questions' you will be presented with an endless list of potential questions. Whilst you can't prepare for every eventuality, it might be worth reading up on some and thinking about how you might answer them. There are 10 common interview questions detailed below:

- Talk me through your CV
- Tell me about yourself
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Where do you want to be in 5 years' time?
- Why do you want this job?
- What can you bring to the company?
- What are your strengths?
- What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Why do you want to leave your current role?

Notice that they are all Open questions prompting a more detailed response, so try to avoid one word or abrupt/short answers. How you answer questions is also an indication of your communication skills, which will be important regardless of the role.

## General Interview Tips

- If you are offered a glass of water, accept one. Not only will this help the dry mouth people often get when nervous, you can also use this when asked a question that you want time to prepare for. Take a sip when asked a question, gather your thoughts and form your answer before replying.
- Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat the question or clarify exactly what it is they're asking. It's better you understand what they are asking than answering with an unrelated answer.
- Be personable and find some common ground where you can. Use the walk to the interview room to talk to the interviewer, this can often settle some nerves prior to the interview starting.
- Make sure you have the correct address, then plan the route to the interview in advance and give time for any delays on the day.
- Remember, words spoken only represents 7-10% of communication. 85% of interpersonal communications are nonverbal, so think about your body language. Don't fold your arms, smile, portray warmth and if you have certain habits when you're nervous, think of ways to combat them.
- Don't speak badly of your current or previous employers, it creates negative feelings in the interview. Think of ways to avoid this whilst remaining truthful. Focus on motivations around personal ambition or indeed the attractiveness of the particular vacancy.
- Try to relax and remember this is also an opportunity for you to also assess whether they are the right company for you.
- The more preparation you do the better. Whilst this document may seem like a daunting amount of work to do prior to an interview, there is no truer phrase than the 5 'P's. **Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.**
- Use your manners and smile – never underestimate the power of these attributes.

**Whether your upcoming interview has been secured through Trostan Dene or not, we wish you the best of luck!**