

OUTSTANDING INTERVIEW



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ON TUTORIAL | *In this tutorial, we cover the following topics:*

- ☞ *What is the purpose of an interview and what kind of interviews exist?*
- ☞ *What questions could you get at interview?*
- ☞ *How to prepare and be outstanding at the interview?*



Question for discussion:

Did you ever participate in job interviews? Did you get the job? Why?

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW?

Interview is an important part of recruitment process. They're an opportunity for employers and job seekers to learn about one another before making any job offers or employment commitments. Every employer wants the same in the interview: to see a motivated and well-prepared candidate, who will be dedicated to work, who has positive working attitudes, demonstrates work habits, and who is familiar with the position and the company, and leaves a good overall impression.

The interview offers the employer an opportunity to:

- ☞ Find out what you have done in the past, how relevant your past work experience is to the job, and what your attitude towards previous work
- ☞ See your business and communication culture that you will demonstrate at the meeting
- ☞ Test your reactions/behavior in ad hoc situations
- ☞ Based on this, judge your competencies and skills in finding the way and responding
- ☞ See how do you react in stressful situations
- ☞ Conduct part of the interview is a foreign language, and test your foreign language competencies (mostly referred to English language)
- ☞ Judge how motivated you are for respective position
- ☞ Judge how appropriate profile you are for respective position.

At the same time, the interview is also an opportunity for the candidate to:

- ☞ Highlight his(her) key skills, achievements and qualifications, and explains their relevance to the respective position
- ☞ Justify and minimize potential negatives (eg, employment gaps, inconsistent work history, etc.)
- ☞ Demonstrate his(her) business, personal and communication culture, and presentation skills
- ☞ Show that (s)he has well prepared and is familiar with the ToR and the company profile
- ☞ Demonstrates his(her) competencies and skills through answering situational questions
- ☞ Ask everything (s)he's interested about the position and employer
- ☞ Ensure that it is a job (s)he wants and that suits his(her) expectations

DIFFERENT FORMS OF INTERVIEWS

One may participate in different forms of interviews. Most common are the following:



- **SCREENING**
- **INDIVIDUAL**
- **PANEL**
- **GROUP**
- **TELEPHONE**
- **WITH LUNCH**

SCREENING INTERVIEW | This form is usually brief pre-selection kind of interview, focusing on making sure the applicant meets the basic criteria. Screening interviews lead to shortlisting of candidates that would be invited to more thorough interviews.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW | Individual or *One-on-one* interviews are most common. They involve one interviewer and one candidate. These interviews are easier for recruiters, as they focus only on one candidate (unlike group interviews where recruiters have to focus on more candidates at the same time). It also may be less stressful for candidates (in comparison with panel or group interviews), as there is only one person who poses questions and there is no criss-cross discussion. There is also no pressure of competitions sitting in the same room (as in group interviews).

PANEL INTERVIEW | A form of interview involving more than one interviewer. This is more challenging form for candidates as they have to persuade multiple number of people that they are the candidates. The panelists may ask the questions alternately, without order. They also may ask questions in rounds, one at the time. Different panelists may be responsible for different topics,

ask all topic-related questions and judge the candidate in the respective topic. Panel interviews are more detailed and longer, as there are more panelists and more questions, and candidates should be in a good psychophysical form. Patience and persistence are candidates' friends. Recommendation is that candidates focus on the interviewer who is asking you a question but make eye contact with all the rest.

GROUP INTERVIEW | This form of interview refers to multiple number of candidates participating at the same time in an interview. There could be one or more interviewers. It is a good practice that interviewers present the company and vacancy at the beginning of the interview. They may request from the candidates to participate in some kind of group activity, through which, they will test and judge their skills and capabilities such as skills of finding the way out, adaptability skills, team work skills, etc. This is a good way to see who is leader and who is not. These interviews are very competitive, they demand from candidates to be quick, proactive, to have an imperative of competing, and to be well prepared and focus on specific task.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW | This form of interview can be used to screen applicants, minimize interview costs, or bridge a distance gap. However, with no face-to-face and eye contact, telephone interviews can be challenging. In telephone interviews, strong self-confidence, good listening and communication skills, and persuasive answers on situational questions, will help us be better candidates.

INTERVIEW WITH LUNCH | This is a form of immediate interview with no formal ties. It is usually organized for high profile candidates applying for executive positions. They can be more challenging because candidates have to manage eating and drinking while talking. This is the reason why foods that are messy or difficult to eat should be avoided.



Question for discussion:

Do you have any experience with any form of job interview? What did you like and what didn't you like at that interview?

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS TO EXPECT AT THE INTERVIEW?

All questions at interview we may cluster in 4 categories:



GENERAL QUESTIONS | General interview questions allow interviewers to learn more about you and to find out more about facts from our CV or cover letter. General questions may include the following:

- What are your qualities?
- What are your flaws?
- How do you see your carrier over next 5 years?
- Why do you think you are a good candidate fort this position?
- Why should we hire you and not somebody else?
- Why do you think we are good employer for you?

BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS | Behavioural interview questions are based on the idea that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. By learning how the candidate handled past situations, employers get a sense of how (s)he might handle similar situations if working for them. Often questions of this kind are the following:

- Give us an example of a work situation in which you were proud of your performance. What made you feel proud?
- Tell us about a time you had a conflict at work. What did you do to resolve it?
- Tell us about a time when you had to make difficult decision. What steps did you take and what was the outcome?
- Tell us about a time when you had to do something dishonest. How did you do?

The STAR is one of the tactics the candidate may use in figuring out answers to behavioural questions. The title of this tactics are is acronym made of first letters of the following words:

- **Situation** • **Task** • **Action** • **Result**

The STAR tactics refers to short development of case and identification of the task, and more detailed explanation of intervention (action and results).

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS | Questions of this kind are great opportunities for candidate to highlight his(her) problem-solving skills. These situations are usually hypothetical, but may be real work situations that successful candidate will have to deal with. Good practice in answering these questions, is to link our answers to similar situations we have already dealt with in the past.

Examples of situational questions:

- Angry client is interrupting your conversation with another client. What are you going to do?
- You get to manage a project involving your best friend. At some point, your friend get into conflict with very important project partner, and the partner requests that your friend be removed from the project, or he would withdraw from further participation in the project and partnership with your company. What are you going to do?
- Your company has to sack one employee because of insufficient revenues. You get request from general manager to analyze two employees who you supervise, and on the basis of that analyzes to make suggestion ho to sack out of these two persons. What are you going to do?

STRESS QUESTIONS | Stress interviews are used when an interviewer wants to see how candidate handles stressful situations. Interviewers may create stress by asking questions designed to unsettle candidate, creating moral dilemma, using an aggressive tone of voice, appearing distracted, bored, or uninterested, and similar.

Example of stress questions:

- How do you handle stressful situations?
- Your friend by mistake gave you some documents from which you discovered that (s)he has cheated the tax authorities about his(her) revenues. (s)he is not aware of your discovery. What are you going to do?
- You are going to important business meeting which is expected to bring an important contract to your company. Client has very little time, you musn't be late and unprepared, or the client will go to your competitor. On the way, you come across pregnant lady with contractions, and she urges you to help her to urgently get to hospital. What are you going too do?

HOW TO PREPARE AND BE OUTSTANDING AT AN INTERVIEW



"One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."

Arthur Ashe

As Arthur Ashe, famous American tennis champion said, *key to success is self-confidence, and key to self-confidence is preparation*. But how to prepare so that we make an outstanding appearance at an interview for job? Let's consider several tips that we have prepared.

Think of your elevator statement



Your interview may begin with a request like "tell me about yourself." An *elevator statement* can help the candidate to make a great first impression. Elevator statement (or *elevator pitch*) is short (about 30 seconds) and concise statement aimed to effectively and interestingly present the product, company or person and his(her/its) value. The title was created to reflect the practice of random meeting between two persons (out of which one is important person) in an elevator, during which (duration of about 30 seconds of elevator drive), whereby one person is trying to present the case to important person and get his(her)

attention. The goal of such approach is to spark interest of an important person in hearing more about case presented in an elevator statement.

Elevator statement is a concise, carefully planned and well-trained statement that effectively captures the listener's attention. It should contain between 150 and 225 words. It should include 3 main aspects:

- a) information about yourself and your key quality(s)
- b) about your motivation to apply for respective position
- c) why me?

Example of a **non-effective** elevator statement:



"Good afternoon, my name is Marko Stojanovic, I graduated from the School of Geoeconomics and I am a graduated economist. I have been working as a project manager for many years and so far, I have managed more than 20 projects, including: Project 1, Project 2, Project 3, Project 4 and so on. I am familiar with the fact that you have opened the position of project manager and I would like to apply. I am very interested in this position and I think that I would fit well. Please have me in mind. "

Example of an **effective** elevator statement:

"Good afternoon, my name is Marko Stojanović, I've been a long-time project manager with a record of more than 20 successfully completed projects with demanding donors. In my organization, I managed the key and most complex projects with success. Your organization has opened the position of project manager, and I will be applying with great interest, because I would like to work with the best and learn from the best, and with me, you can get a dedicated, diligent and persistent project manager whose experience would add value to your organization."



Task:

Develop your elevator statement in case you meet somebody important related to your dream job.

Use story-telling

"Someone constantly talking is not necessarily communicating."

Charlie Kaufman

"Story telling" or narration method could be very useful in achieving an outstanding appearance at a job interview. The story should be prepared in advance and 3 levels of information should be presented in the story:

1. the issue
2. what I did about it
3. the outcome of my action

Example: I'm applying for the position of project manager of a three-year project involving several partners from several countries. The implementation rules are strict, the donor is strict and the partners are not committed enough to the project. Employer is seeking for a person who can "put the project in order".

In order to convince the interviewer that I am the right person for this position, I have devised a story based on true event that would present my relevant experiences and recommend me for that position. I just need to wait patiently for the right moment during the interview to introduce the story. The story reads like this:

The issue

"I've had a similar situation in a two-year EU-funded project with partners from six countries. The partners were not dedicated enough, the project was ambitious with a large number of activities and results to achieve, and with first result, we saw it is not going well, and we need to change approach.

What I did

After I saw that the first result would not meet expectations, I urgently called my manager and pointed to the risks and potential damage that we would suffer as a lead partner if other partners continue with this approach. I suggested to my manager to call directors of the partner organizations and summon the immediate meeting of the project director. My manager understood the seriousness of the situation and called an urgent meeting of the

project directors, and raised the issue of poor contribution of the partners, the insufficient commitment and risk that we all are exposed to. He suggested that partners change staff members working on the project and to involve staff members with more interest.

The outcome

The directors accepted suggestions made by my manager. With involvement of new people in the project, the dynamics significantly accelerated the atmosphere in project improved. In the end, we implemented all the activities in time and achieved all the ambitious results, and the donor has praised our project as one of 3 best projects in generation."



Task:

Develop your own story to tell at interview.

Prepare for questions

You will answer the questions at interview. Prepare yourself, think how to answer if you get a frequently asked question such as: "How do you see yourself 5 years?" "What are your flaws?", "Why do you think you are the best candidate?" and similar. Don't be unprepared. Employers doesn't like to see an unprepared candidate at interview.

What if I get any discriminatory question?

In many countries it is not allowed to pose discriminatory questions at the job interview. The discriminatory questions are those questions inquiring personal traits of candidates, which do not affect ones performance at work. Most often these are questions like marital status, age, ethnic origin, faith, sexual orientation, etc. Regardless of illegal nature of these questions, you may still get them at the interview, as (in)direct questions. In that case, the candidate may do one of the following:

- a) Answer directly
- b) Refuse to answer the question
- c) Answer indirectly

Candidate may answer indirectly to certain but not to all the questions. It depends on what is intention of the question. If intention is to eliminate candidates with certain personal traits, than this intention refers to conscious discrimination, and there is no room for indirect question. For example: *“Are you married and do you plan to have children?”* or *“What religion do you belong to?”* However, if the reason for asking discriminatory question is to inquire whether certain personal trait might prevent candidate in performing the duty, indirect answer may be sufficient to satisfy the curiosity of recruiter. For example, a candidate is applying for position of barmen in LGBTQ club, and at job interview recruiter ask him(her) about his(her) sexual orientation, justifying the question with the fact that LGBTQ people come to the club, and it is expected from the staff members to respect their orientation, and not to have prejudices. A candidate who doesn't want to answer the question directly, may answer in the following way: *“I do respect everybody's choice whatever that choice is, I do not have any prejudice towards LGBTQ people, and at work, I have professionally approach to guests and clients. I know my job is to serve guests and not to inquire their sexual orientation.”* With this answer, candidate did not reveal his(her) sexual orientation, but did respond to recruiters expectations for treating the guests with respect.

Should I ask about the salary?

“The greatest mistake one can make is to be continually fearing not to make one.”

Elbert Hubbard

Ask for salary and working conditions, but at the end. If employer doesn't say anything during the interview, wait patiently the final phase, when employer will ask you whether you have any questions for him(her), and then ask. Employer may ask you about your expectations about salary. Do have an answer to this.

Questions for employer

In the final phase of the interview, employer will ask whether you have any questions for him(her). Prepare and ask questions. This is your opportunity to find out more about the vacancy and employer, and to show that you are highly interested in that position. Some of the questions that may be universally useful are the following:

- a) Why is this position vacant?
- b) What would a typical day/week look like for this job?
- c) How does this company support employee training/professional development?

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