



**Expert Interview Preparation**

## Researching Companies

Before going to your interview, ensure you prepare yourself by gathering as much information as you can about the Company. There are a variety of sources that you can access freely including the internet, databases, newspapers and information supplied by the recruitment company.

In particular, the internet will give you a wealth of information about the company and the industry in which the company operates. Most industries also have trade publications which can give you a further insight into the industries trends, future growth and development.

### Research Suggestions:

- Call the company and request sales literature, annual reports and brochures
- Visit the company website, spending time looking at financial information and gaining a good understanding of the company, their goals and mission statement.
- Some Company websites provide a press area or recent news section. This will give you articles from the media and insightful information about the company. It will provide you with topical subjects to talk about at interview which will show you are commercially focussed and interested in the Company.
- If the company website does not have a press area, access information online through search engines such as Google or MSN. Alternatively log on to media sites, such as Reuters or The Financial Times website and run a search on the company.

### Interview Questions

There are some common interview questions and you should prepare your answers and structure them for the position you have applied for. The key thing to remember when responding to interview questions is to keep your answers brief and to the point. If you are faced with a difficult question, make sure you stay calm, don't get defensive, and take a moment to think about your response before you answer.

The answers below are only suggestions. Endeavour to personalise your response as much as possible.

### **Question: Tell me about yourself.**

**Answer:** Identify your main skills/attributes and memorise them. Describe your qualifications, career history and range of skills, emphasising those that are most relevant to the job on offer.

### **Question: What have been your achievements in your career to date?**

**Answer:** Firstly you must think about the way you structure your answer. Probably the best method is through a process called **STAR** (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult). The situation for example is the need for implementing a new reporting system, the task is to implement it within a specific timeframe and budget, the action is the part you played in the implementation i.e. team make up and your key responsibilities. Finally, the result is discussing the key successes of the project and what you did.

### **Question: What is the most challenging situation you have had to face and how did you tackle it?**

**Answer:** The purpose of this question is to find out what your definition of challenging is and whether you can show a logical approach to problem solving. In order to show yourself in a positive light, select a challenging work situation which was not caused by you and which can be quickly explained in a few sentences. Explain how you defined the problem, what the options were, why you selected the one you did and what the outcome was. Always end on a positive note.

### **Question: What do you dislike about your present job?**

**Answer:** You need to be careful with this answer as you do not want to appear to be negative about your current employer. Areas that you may want to focus on could be a lack of career progression that could be as a result of the business having stagnant growth. The key to the answer is always to remain positive and never get personal.

## **Question: What are your strengths?**

**Answer:** This is one of the most common questions asked at interview. The key to answering this question is to focus on three or four main strengths giving examples of why you believe this to be the case. No-one wants to hear a shopping list of strengths, however targeted strengths geared towards the job role with supporting evidence provides the perfect answer.

## **Question: What is your main weakness?**

**Answer:** Do not say you have none, as this can be viewed either as arrogance or that you are not self aware. There are two ways of approaching this question; the first is to use a weakness such as a lack of experience on your part in an area that is not vital for the job. The second option is to describe a personal or professional weakness that could also be considered to be a strength and the steps you have taken to combat it.

## **Question: Why are you looking to leave your current employer?**

**Answer:** This needs to be as positive answer as possible, for example career progression/new challenge backed up by particular points in your career that you want to develop that relate to the position you are applying for.

## **Question: What interests you about our Company/role?**

**Answer:** Read the Company's website and look at recent news concerning the Company that make it attractive to join i.e. the profitability of the business may have grown exponentially in recent years, or they may have plans to expand over the next few months. Learning more about the product/service and what they buy/sell will show an interest in them. Regarding the role, read through the job specification and identify areas of interest so that you can make reference to them at interview.

## **Question: Where do you see yourself in Five years?**

**Answer:** This question is very much a focus question. Employers want to see people with a plan for the future that closely resembles the role they are recruiting for. The best way to answer the question is to break it down into timeframes. For example within the first two years of the role you would like to get yourself in a position whereby you know the Company and the role inside out which may enable you to progress to the next career level with them after this period. The following period could then focus on you further growth and development with the business.

## **Question: If we were to offer you the job would you accept?**

**Answer:** The answer to this question should always be YES unless there is something regarding the Company or position that is irreconcilable. The question is sometimes used to gauge your ability to make decisions quickly and decisively as is required in the work place on occasion. The other obvious reason is to identify your level of interest.

Interview questions will vary from Company to Company, however, hopefully these questions will give you a good template on which to work and prepare for your interview. Other useful sources for questions can easily be found on the internet which will provide you with a non-exhaustive list.