

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

STAND OUT INTERVIEWS



“The secret of joy in work is contained in one word – excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it.”

Pearl Buck

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

ALL ABOUT INTERVIEWS

The interview stage is probably one of the most overwhelming stages of the selection process as you are finally face to face with people whether it is in an assessment centre situation, panel or a one on one interview. It can be filled with nervous energy, excitement and adrenalin. However, if you have prepared well, you can maximise your adrenalin for a purpose - channel it into your interview!

For the employer, hiring the right person is part of the interview process. Hiring mistakes cost organisations time and money. In fact, according to one governmental study in the United States, the cost of miss-hires of professionals was two to three times their annual salaries. It is more imperative than ever, that organisations recruit the right person for the role.

Interviews need to demonstrate validity and reliability. This means having one stand alone interview to make an assessment will probably not give the most accurate picture of the depth of your skills, abilities and attributes. What does this mean for you? Even though there are multiple selection tools used in a sometimes very long and nerve racking process you can rest assured that the process is aimed to be fair to you. This is a great opportunity for you, as the best interviewees not only prepare for general interview questions but also prepare for the different types of interviews they may be faced with.

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

The most typical type of interview techniques that organisations employ are the traditional interview, behavioural interview and situational interview techniques. The organisation may use these techniques in a phone screen setting, panel setting, sequential setting, stress setting and one-on-one setting.

Traditional Interview Techniques	Behavioural Interview Techniques	Situational Interview Techniques
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the most common techniques used for decades.• Focus on academic performance, resume, experience and personal interaction with the employer.• Often use leading questions by the employer which makes it clear for the interviewee to prepare an answer the employer is looking for.• The interviewee's skills aren't assessed using this technique, although the education, experience and qualifications are evaluated.• Common questions focus on goal setting, how you would describe yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, and why you chose this career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavioural interviewing techniques are designed to assess the interviewee's past behaviour to predict their future performance.• The focus is on situation specific information to bring to light the skills used to demonstrate the candidate has the skills and demonstrate the candidate can use these skills in a similar situation in the future.• The interview is focused on what the interviewee 'did do' in a past situation for a problem / resolution approach.• Common questions may start, "Tell me about a time where..."• Interviewee's are encouraged to use the STARR approach to answer the questions (Situation, Task, Action, Result, Reflect).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Situational interviews involve questions surrounding a case scenario which could be based on a real life, event or current situation. It may also be hypothetical.• The focus is on what the candidate 'would do' if faced with this situation.• Situational interviewing is designed to probe for job related skills especially more of the interviewee's analytical skills and how problems are handled with short notice and minimal preparation.• Common questions may start with "How would you handle..."• Interviewees are encouraged to review past work experiences, focusing on the problem resolution.

These interview techniques are used throughout an interview. The situational interview for example, is becoming increasingly more common amongst interviewers. This enhances the effectiveness of an interview from what an applicant 'did do' in a behavioural style question to what an applicant 'would do' in a hypothetical situational question.

So far we have discussed the common interview techniques used. Now we move on to the different types of interview settings where these techniques are used by organisations.

YOU ARE PRESENTING A CASE

If you give yourself time to plan and prepare early for any interview, you have the key! Think of it like a case. You need to build this case so you have a sufficient portfolio of evidence in order to present it to management.

The prescreen interview is the first interview in a range of interviews you may be facing if you are successful at each stage. Interviews are used to further confirm, clarify and probe your skills and abilities as the employer already thinks you may be able to do the job based on your application. A typical outline for interviews in the recruitment and selection process for graduate positions includes:

1. Pre-Screening Interview

Usually encompassing a phone interview or quick face-to-face interview.

2. Psychometric Testing

This can be undertaken online prior to being successful for an assessment centre or as part of the assessment centre activities.

3. Digital Interviews

The organisation will send you a link to complete the Digital Interview on-line along with a deadline for you to have this completed by.

4. Assessment Centre / Group Interviews

A diverse range of activities from presentations to group activities all assessing specific skills and attributes relevant to the position and organisation.

5. Individual Interview

There are different interview techniques and styles depending on the role you are applying for.

6. Final Interview

Involves individual interviews with primary decision makers of the organisation.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

THE PHONE INTERVIEW / PRE-SCREENING INTERVIEW

Often the first verbal contact you will have with the employer, the phone interview is used as a starting point to explore your suitability and capability for the job. It is also used as a pre-screening tool. These are often completed by the human resource department, graduate recruitment team or a third party where set questions are asked. The idea of a phone interview is to further reduce the pool of applicants. The questions are generally centred around why you are interested in the role and what you know about the organisation. Even if these questions are broad and seemingly straight forward to answer don't fall into the trap of not preparing!

Maximising your phone interview opportunity

- Organise a time with the interviewer where you will be able to be in a space where you can dedicate all your attention to the interview and there are no background noises.
- Make a list of your skills and accomplishments with examples of situations where you have used them especially looking at the job description to identify the relevant skills.
- Research the organisation, especially demonstrating how your skills and attributes fit - make notes.
- Ensure you have a copy of the application you sent, especially your resume.
- Articulate what you say, which can be more challenging over the phone than in person. Be sure to listen to the question, ask for clarification if you're not sure what the interviewer is asking and speak clearly and carefully when you respond. Avoid saying "um, er, ah" as these words are particularly noticeable over the phone.
- Body language matters! Show your enthusiasm by smiling as it will change the tone of your voice. Project a positive image throughout your interview, by also verbally expressing your enthusiasm.
- Have a glass of water ready if you have a dry throat or you feel a cough coming on.
- Have the organisation's browser open so you can refer to it for specific company information if it comes up throughout your interview. This does require some multi-tasking and may not work for everyone.
- Have some questions prepared to ask the interviewer.
- Have your calendar in front of you if you are invited to attend another interview.
- Jot down notes throughout the interview - you won't remember everything!
- Follow up! Ask for the interviewer's email address and send a thank you note.

DIGITAL INTERVIEWS

In a nutshell, digital interviewing is a better way of interviewing. It saves time for both the recruiter and the candidate. ... Digital Interviews allow prospective hires and candidates to interview whenever and wherever is convenient for them, from a PC, Mac, or smartphone! You'll have a minute or two to read and contemplate a question, then another couple minutes to answer it while a camera records you. Typically, a company will give you a time frame (something between two days and a week) to complete it on your own.

The CDC has a Mock Interview section in SCOUT which allows students to practice an on-line/digital interview, then one of our Employment Services Specialists will review for you and provide you with feedback,

- Prepare for these types of interviews the same as you would for a face to face interview.
- TIP! You can put notes on post-its and place around your screen so you can refer to these as needed
- Make sure your camera is working, positioned well and use headphones with a microphone to ensure the digital interview reviewers can hear you

THE ASSESSMENT CENTRE INTERVIEW

Assessment centres are just as much part of the interview process as a one-on-one interview! The interviewers are looking for specific behaviours in a simulated organisational environment.

Assessment centres are primarily used in the graduate recruitment process and are especially useful for organisations to see demonstrable skills where candidates (especially graduates) do not have extensive professional experience to ascertain particular skills and also to use in conjunction with other selection tools to eliminate potential bias against candidates.

THE CASE STUDY

Snapshot

- A case study may be completed individually or in a group.
- You may be given a business situation and asked to make decisions and recommendations about what should be done, and report or present your findings to management.
- The case studies can be quite descriptive and in-depth. There may be contradictory, ambiguous or even irrelevant information which you need to filter before you start developing a strategy.

Competencies Assessed

- Analytical ability and thinking logically about a problem, issues or data.
- Planning ability which includes the ability to organise the situation into manageable parts.
- Strategy development skills including proposing solutions.
- The ability to make decisions.
- Presenting skills.

Top Tips

- The subject matter here is generally not important - it may even be completely unrealistic, so you will not be tested on your knowledge, even if it's right! The employer wants to know your ability to analyse a complex problem and your thinking behind the solutions.
- Ask yourself lots of questions about the subject matter, identify issues from here and even discern the potential broader issues involved for the organisation.
- Consider facts and trends of the industry and use these as part of your strategic thinking - are there correlations?
- At some point you will need to make some decisions. You will probably not always have all the information needed to do this. However, if you are making assumptions based on certain data, say so and talk about your reasoning behind the assumptions.

THE ROLE PLAY

Snapshot

- Role plays are commonly used in assessment centres as they can be applicable to a range of roles and people from a supervisor to general management. Here, the prospective employer can see how well you exhibit the required behaviours of a role and how you relate with other people in the process.
- The scenario given for role plays will often reflect a typical day on the job which could further involve a stressful or awkward situation requiring you to think quickly to solve the problem.

Competencies Assessed

- Your ability to problem solve and manage conflict on the spot.
- Verbal communication skills.
- Decision making skills.
- Planning and adaptability.
- Mentoring and coaching.
- Customer focus.

Top Tips

- The key purpose of role plays is to see what competencies you display through your behaviour which matches the role. So doing well in this exercise means knowing as much as you can about the position so you can display these behaviours throughout your role play.
- You will more than likely be placed on the spot with a scenario. Typically you will have a small amount of time to read the brief and a certain amount of time to conduct the exchange, usually around 20 to 30 minutes. This time doesn't allow you to explore issues in depth so a little bit of planning while reading will assist greatly.
- Focus on coming to the main issue quickly as this will be a reflection of your planning and analytical abilities to the assessors.
- Keep control of the dialogue and know the conclusion you wish to reach as this will assist the line of communication and the types of questions you ask.

THE GROUP ACTIVITY

Snapshot

- Group exercises are commonly used for a number of reasons. They can kick off the assessment centre activities as they are a nice icebreaker and can settle nerves, or alternatively it can be a gruelling few hours or even days with little to no one-on-one contact with the interviewers.
- There are different types of group exercises as part of the group interview process including discussion topics, role playing, and presenting and you may be required to do any number of these.
- You may be presented with a fictitious scenario (generally survival and creative type situations) where you work together in a team to resolve the issues.
- Group activities allow the organisation to see how you behave in a team dynamic and identify dominant and loud behaviour to shy and introverted behaviour.
- It's not about solving the problem by yourself in the speediest manner, it's about teamwork

Competencies Assessed

- > Team skills
 - Listening to your team members.
 - How you communicate with your team members to come to a solution.
 - The way in which you acknowledge and remain respectful of other team members' ideas.
- > Leadership skills
 - The way in which you facilitate discussion for example, in relation to solving a problem.
 - How you encourage others to join in and share their ideas especially if you can see that they are quiet.
 - If the group goes off the track, demonstrate leadership by bringing the group back on track.
- > Problem solving skills in a collaborative manner
 - You don't have to have the 'golden ticket' of solutions, you just need to be able to explain your reasoning behind what you decide and you need to do this in a collaborative manner.
- > Interpersonal and communication skills
 - Use active body language! Make eye-contact with all members, smile and have a positive, friendly and approachable attitude.
 - Use language that is appropriate for the group setting in an assessment centre.

Top Tip

- A common trap people fall into is thinking that in order to display leadership skills effectively you need to be directing the group. This can end up in you believing your ideas are the best ones, not listening to other group members or being dismissive of their ideas by your body language. To the organisation observing it can come across as being dominant. Instead, demonstrate your leadership skills through being collaborative, involving everyone, and asking questions about other peoples' ideas and lines of thinking.
- Prepare before the day! Think about previous teams you've worked in or discussions you've had in a class situation. What types of positive behaviour did you display when faced with problems? What was the process you followed to complete projects in group assignments?
- On the day, read and go over the instructions, make notes of ideas and solutions to discuss with the group as well as your thought process behind them.
- There can be a heightened sense of anxiety in these environments as there are many things that are happening at the same time.
- The assessors are observing you, you need to be conscious about the behaviour you are exhibiting (verbal and non-verbal) and you have a scenario that needs to be resolved. There are some things to be aware of, things you wouldn't normally do but pressure and nerves may get the better of you! These may include:
 1. Talking over the top of people.
 2. Not contributing.
 3. Cutting people off mid sentence.
 4. Talking to half the group.
 5. Having a different conversation with someone next to you.
 6. Not listening. The assessor will note this! Acknowledge your team members.
 7. Presenting an idea and not following through with a line of thought.
 8. Finally, be yourself and see this as a wonderful opportunity to learn and gain experience!

THE IN-TRAY EXERCISE

Snapshot

- In-tray exercises are a simulated business activity where you assume a role of an employee who is required to go through the imaginary contents of an in-tray.
- The items in the in-tray will vary depending on the role you are applying for, for example if you are applying for a management role, items may be centred around team building, coaching, current issues facing the organisation and motivation.
- In-trays can take the shape of various formats, but a typical example is where you are given 12 to 24 in-tray items which you need to prioritise and action. This can be followed by answering a series of multiple choice questions (around 15 to 30) or an interview with an assessor where you are expected to justify your decisions.
- In addition to this, you are provided with details such as your role responsibilities, organisation information, a list of staff you report to, key employees that you interact with and a calendar for the next two to three months.

Competencies Assessed

- Ability to organise and prioritise work load.
- Analytical skills.
- Written communication skills.
- Delegation skills.
- Use of independent judgement.
- A typical outline can include: identify key issues, set priorities, anticipate problems, explore issues, suggest options, make recommendations, and provide reasons.

Top Tips

- Practice before the day! An in-tray exercise can be overwhelming as you are presented with a great deal of material you need to sort through under a strict time frame and this may mean you miss a significant hidden issue. With practice, you can see which in-tray items you find challenging and how best to respond to the issues.
- The in-tray exercise may be something completely unexpected and unrelated to the position you are applying for. The topic in this case is not the most important aspect. You will be assessed on how you handle, prioritise and organise complex information and make decisions based on this information.
- Try to place yourself in the prescribed role, rather than just completing the exercise and state the reasons behind the decisions made in a clear manner. Don't assume the assessors will know this.
- Be aware of your time frame, but do not allow it to overwhelm you. The assessors want to see how you respond to major issues more than being able to complete the whole exercise in the time prescribed.
- For more information go to www.psychometric-success.com.

THE PRESENTATION

Snapshot

- Presentations are an excellent opportunity to display your employability skills and a chance to really differentiate you from the competition.
- Here, you may be asked to prepare a short talk to present to a panel. You may be given the topic in advance so you can prepare but usually you will be asked to present on the day.
- The subject matter is not paramount here, you may be given a topic in relation to recent news or the organisation and industry or it can be something arbitrary like chocolate. The organisation is not assessing your knowledge of the topic, they will be looking at your ability to improvise and communicate in a persuasive manner.
- Leverage this opportunity! You are not in a group situation so you don't need to consider other team members and you have significant control in the way you drive the presentation. Show your enthusiasm for the position and how you can add value beyond the scope of the role throughout your presentation by the way in which you communicate and how you have planned the presentation.
- If you are given a topic to present on the day, typically you have approximately 30 minutes to prepare and 10 to 20 minutes to present.

Competencies Assessed

- Interpersonal skills, especially the ability to communicate your message in a clear and persuasive manner. Maximise this through a three step approach:
 1. Organise the material effectively
 2. Think about how you will present this information
 3. Be prepared to handle questions
- How well you cope with tight timeframes and your ability to improvise with limited time for preparation.

Top Tips

- Introduce yourself and the subject matter clearly.
- Show your enthusiasm for the subject and demonstrate your interest, this can be infectious and can capture your audience immediately, especially if they have seen many presentations throughout that day.
- Make eye contact with the audience; ensure your gaze reaches all the assessors! Don't speak to the floor, or into your notes, or to the back of the audience.
- Keep things structured logically and allocate some practice time as part of your preparation.
- Ensure all equipment and visual aids are working prior to presenting.
- Have a clock near you, where you can see the time and stick to the timeframe given.
- Prepare for questions.

THE INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE

Snapshot

- There are a variety of individual exercises, all designed to assess your skills and abilities.
- Exercises may involve a written task that challenges you to think through a problem or write about a particular topic that is related to the position.
- Interviews are a common form of individual exercise, either one on one or in a panel situation. It may also involve the 'in-tray' exercise.

Competencies Assessed

- Your ability to write quickly and logically, expressing your ideas in a clear format.
- Technical skills.
- Decision making skills.
- Comprehension of information.
- Planning and organisation skills.
- The way in which you handle complex information.

Top Tips

- You may be in a room with a group of people but undertaking the exercise individually. This can be nerve racking! Don't be put off by others who work more quickly than you or differently to you. This is based on your individual skills and abilities and how you will contribute them to this exercise. Don't use other people as a guide!
- Some organisations want to know why you have made a particular decision, so annotate items if you need to.

THE PSYCHOMETRIC TEST

Snapshot

- Psychometric testing is commonly used in conjunction with other selection tools as it gives the prospective employer insight into the way in which you handle stress, how you relate with other people, the type of work you enjoy and if you will be able to manage the demands of the position.
- There are two types of broad psychometric tests: personality and interest tests, and aptitude and ability tests.
- Personality tests measure the way in which you interact with people and are designed to quantify feelings, thoughts and behaviours. It is also significant in providing insight into your enthusiasm and motivation.
- Ability tests measure your capability to undertake activities and tasks and are designed to assess your logical reasoning. Aptitude and ability tests may include verbal ability, numeric ability, abstract reasoning, spatial reasoning, and mechanical reasoning.

Competencies Assessed

This may vary depending on the position you are applying for:

- Verbal Ability Tests are used to assess spelling, grammar, sentence completion, analogies, word groups and critical reasoning, useful for positions which require interpreting and making decisions on reading complex information and data.
- Numeric Ability Tests are used to assess arithmetic, number sequences and data interpretation.
- Abstract Reasoning Tests are used where there is a high degree of problem solving, analysing complex data, developing strategies, and performing non-routine tasks.
- Spatial Reasoning Tests are used to indicate your ability to visualise and manipulate two and three dimensional shapes and patterns common for architecture, maths and science industries.
- Mechanical Reasoning Tests are used to measure your direct knowledge of mechanical concepts such as levers, pulleys, springs, shop arithmetic and basic electric circuits.
- Personality and Interest Tests provide insight into motivation, and whether you will fit into the organisation in relation to personality and work style.

Top Tips

- Prepare before the day by undertaking some practice tests as this will have multiple benefits. It will minimise the stress and nervousness on the day and it will give you an idea of your optimum pace to answer the questions. Keep to this pace while answering the questions on the day.
- Don't panic mid way through if you realise you aren't going to finish. Some tests are designed not to be finished and you may do yourself a disservice if you deviate from your pace. However, don't spend additional time on questions you know you will struggle with. Guess the answers here and move on to the questions you are more comfortable with.
- If you do realise you will finish the test before the fixed time, don't spend additional time on the questions - stick to your optimum pace and give yourself the opportunity to come back to questions you are unsure of.
- Don't be conscious of other people around you and the pace they are travelling. There is nothing to gain from knowing if they are ahead of you and this can affect your confidence levels.
- Listen carefully to the instructions on the day and if something doesn't make sense, ask. If you are using a PC or laptop, ensure it is working.
- If you aren't sure about a question and you're running short on time, guess the answer. If time constraints aren't an issue then mark the question to come back to at the end.

THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Snapshot

- The assessment centre session may end with an individual interview where you may be asked about the day's events, and your feedback and reactions.
- It may be a five minute interview or it may be a more in depth chat about the activities you have undertaken throughout that day. It could be the first time you are talking face to face with a person from the organisation discussing the events of the day.
- The individual interview as part of the assessment centre activities is not the in depth interview you will have if you are successful for the next stage of the recruitment process.

Competencies Assessed

- You may not be assessed on core competencies or skills as much as you might be assessed on your reflections from the day and providing feedback on the experience.
- It is an opportunity for the organisation to meet you one-on-one. They may assess your verbal and non verbal body language and the way you present.

Top Tips

- Treat this like a formal interview! The introductions and questions could be quite informal, however don't make the mistake of becoming too 'comfortable' as the recruiters are assessing you constantly throughout this process.
- Be prepared for a possible one-on-one meet and greet / feedback session and think about what you might say in relation to the day's events, especially reflecting on the activities and the way in which you contributed.
- Be prepared to answer formal questions with examples of past experiences. When undertaking this, think about the particular skills that the recruiters were looking for throughout the activities. Bring this together with additional examples to cement the recruiters view. You may be able to do this especially for an activity you feel you didn't perform optimally.

THE PANEL INTERVIEW

Panel interviews are very common in the recruitment process for the following reasons:

- It reduces the possibility of bias occurring as you have multiple team members discussing the candidate's responses and contributing to a fair and valid picture.
- It is considered to be more time efficient for employers as there could be a number of different decision makers in different departments who can all interview the candidate at the same time, rather than organising several interviews.
- It gives the organisation a chance to see how well the candidate performs in a stressful environment responding to a diverse range of people.

What to expect

Panel interviews can be stressful as you are facing multiple decision makers rather than just one or two. It is almost impossible to use the interpersonal techniques for developing a relationship that you would use in a one-on-one interview.

Most panel interviews occur in the conference room of the organisation where there can be a variety of people present. It is designed to be uncomfortable and the interview in nature is more rigorous and detailed as you are facing questions from different experts. The panel is made up from a mix of relevant specialists. For example, human resources, technical experts and department and / or regional managers could make up the panel. It can vary from two to eight people.

Panel interviews are highly organised with a structured set of questions. Once the introductions have happened the group will get straight to the subject at hand. Questions will be asked that will try to draw out what type of person you are and each panel member will have a role to play. For example, human resources will be asking questions that relate to organisational fit including culture and people. Technical experts will be determining whether you have the required technical skills for the role and department managers will be asking questions in relation to your ability to perform in the job and the core attributes and skills you will bring to the position.

In closing the panel interview, you will have the opportunity to ask questions. Make sure you do!

Panel Interview success tips

- Prepare for panel interviews as you would for a one on one interview in relation to the skills the organisation is seeking and examples of where you have used them. Research the company and formulate questions to ask.
- Remember the names of the people on the panel and use them throughout the interview. Write the names down with your notes in order of where they are seated.
- Make eye contact with each individual on the panel. This can be challenging if there are many people on the panel but try to meet each person's gaze in a focused manner, especially the person who asked the question.
- You will probably feel wildly uncomfortable and 'out numbered'. Don't allow your nerves to overwhelm you as the environment has been set like this for a reason - to assess how you handle pressure. Stay positive, take measured breaths and remain calm. Remember the company wouldn't have invited you to interview if they didn't think you were a possible candidate.
- Take note of each person's concerns or specific questions which you could possibly incorporate into your thank you letter. Alternatively, you could use this to comment on at the end of the interview. This may be a differentiating factor from other candidates and demonstrates your ability to be attentive and focused.

THE STRESS INTERVIEW

All interviews by nature are stressful, however in a stress interview it is elevated to a new level. Stress interviews are commonly used in industries where your role requires you to thrive in an environment of significant pressure such as sales, customer service and public relations.

Managing pressure and high demands of a fluctuating and possibly changing environment is the core competency the interviewers want to assess. It may be through this type of interview they get to see how you react when placed under significant stress. Here are some examples of interviewer stress tactics:

- You could be kept waiting at reception for long periods of time before the interviewer greets you. This has been known to be up to one hour!
- When attempting to establish rapport or answer questions, you may be faced with long silences or cold stares.
- Interviewers may intimidate, interrupt or behave uninterested in what you say, for example saying, "I'm not sure why I am interviewing you."
- Interviewers may challenge your statements and disagree with what you say.
- Interviewers could play 'good cop, bad cop'.
- You may be asked to do something unexpected, for example, "sell me the painting on the wall" or "tell me about your best MacGyver moment?"
- The interviewer may ask the same question several times throughout the interview, pretending not to have understood your answer or that they have previously asked that question.

In all the above examples, interviewers could have painful questions with an aggressive interview attitude where miscommunication appears to be in abundance with body language leaving you think you have made a big mistake. However, rest assured it is designed to see whether you have the grit to withstand the stresses of the role.

What you may be feeling:

- Angry and affronted with what the interviewers are saying.
- Elevated levels of anxiety.
- Everything you have prepared for has just lost all meaning and clarity.
- Pressure, lack of control and flustered.
- Unable to gauge what the interviewers are looking for in their questioning.
- Your self confidence levels may be dwindling rapidly.

What you need to do:

- Unless you have been through many stress interviews and you are feeling fantastically confident, if you step into the interview without being prepared, it is too late! You have a good chance of succumbing to the tactics of the interviewers and losing control of the interview. You may not necessarily be told, 'this will be a stress interview', but act pre-emptively none the less. Contact the organisation in advance to find out who will be interviewing you, what their roles are and prepare! If you prepare, you may be pleasantly surprised if it doesn't go that way.
- Detach yourself emotionally, don't make it personal and remain calm. Make a distinction contextually as an individual who needs to assert their relevant skills as a match. Remember, the interviewer doesn't hate you. This is a test to see whether you have what it takes to succeed. Demonstrate through the way you behave, that you are able to handle pressure.
- The aim of the stress interview is to throw you off course and push various buttons to see your reactions. Remain focused on the interview and the questions (even if they baffle you) so you can maintain control without allowing yourself to feel like you have lost the interview. Use body language that hides your nerves: use folded hands on the table; make eye contact with all individuals - even if there is a person who gets up constantly to move around seeming utterly disinterested.
- The interviewers can't assess your confidence unless you show them you have it! Yes, easier said than done in these circumstances, however, again, you wouldn't be at the interview if the interviewers didn't believe you were capable of fulfilling the role. Have the confidence to show them what you can bring to the company and believe in yourself.
- Don't rush into a response to the questions asked. Clarify the questions, sometimes the interviewer is expecting you to probe further. It can also buy you some time. Focus on the quality of your response, not necessarily the right answer. If you answer the question with a story, don't lose the point.
- You may find that stress interviews are hidden under the banner of panel interviews. More often than not, you will find that on a panel interview there will be a person playing 'bad cop.' In each scenario, use your judgement and assess the situation early on. Ask yourself if this is a stress test or if this is the organisational culture of the company. This is as much an opportunity for you to see whether you are suited to the organisation and role as it is for the interviewers assessing your capabilities.

• THE SEQUENTIAL INTERVIEW

Sequential interviews are a series of individual interviews held consecutively with key decision makers in the recruitment process. It may be over the course of one day or over a period of a few months. It's a panel line up with the one on one factor. For you, this means you have the opportunity to establish rapport and find a common ground throughout the interview as well as learn more about the position and the organisation as you undertake more interviews. For the people interviewing, it means they can be asking questions relevant to their area of expertise.

Tips for Sequential Interviews

- You may be asked the same or similar questions a number of times and you need to treat each interview as a new interview. Answer each question fully, even if you feel you are repeating your response - the interviewer has not heard it!
- Don't feel like you should not provide the same example to support your response for the same question. Again, the interviewer has not heard that example. However, if you can provide diverse examples do so. You are building a great portfolio of evidence in your ability to perform in the role when all the interviewers will deliberate after the interviews as to who is most suitable.
- Establish rapport with each interviewer. Treat each interviewer with the same respect and degree of importance.
- Try to find out a little about the next interviewer before moving on. For example, "does Mr Brown feel the same way about the creative aspect as you do?". This will help to establish some common ground initially at the next interview.
- As you gain more insight into the organisation through the interviews, demonstrate that knowledge to display your familiarity with the organisation.
- Remain positive and enthusiastic throughout all interviews, even though you may be exhausted by the end!

THE VIDEO CONFERENCE INTERVIEW OR DIGITAL INTERVIEW

You may find you are invited to participate in a video interview. Organisations use video conferencing to accelerate the interview process where you may be applying for a job interstate or internationally. Here, recruiters can complete first round interviews and save on transportation costs and time required to schedule one-on-one interviews. First round interviews also give the organisation a chance to select the most suitable candidates for the next stage where you may be invited for an interview at the organisation.

Video Conferencing Success Tips

- Treat the video interview the same as a face to face interview. Dress appropriately and prepare beforehand! Although it appears to be more daunting initially as you are talking into a microphone facing a camera, you will find it is not much more different than a face to face interview. You won't be interviewed from home. The interview will be in a professional environment, either at a branch of the organisation or at a recruiter's office which has video conferencing. The same rules apply.
- When you dress for a video interview, be aware of what you choose to wear. Stick with neutral tones for suit attire as stripes and other patterns may distort with movement on the camera and be a possible distraction for the interviewers.
- Prior to the interview, ensure the organisation has everything they need from you such as your resume. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early, so that you can become comfortable with your surroundings and receive assistance from the site contact on the process. This is especially important, even if you are familiar with how the technology is operated. The contact will show you how to adjust the camera and the volume.
- Be aware of noise. The microphones are sensitive, and the shuffling of papers or tapping of a pen will be audible.
- Ensure you can see yourself in the panel on the monitor. This is important, as you can gauge where you need to be situated to maintain that frame and keep your movement to a minimum preventing an out of focus frame. It is also useful to know how the recruiters will see you so you can make some last minute touch ups if needed!
- Body language is significant here, as every movement is accentuated on the monitor and the recruiters will be reading your body language the minute the interview starts. Look at where the camera is positioned and address the interviewers here, rather than looking directly at the monitor. Speak clearly and concisely, and remember to smile!
- There may be delays in sound. If this is the case, don't immediately jump in to answer the question, allow some time to ensure the interviewer has finished speaking. When you respond, become aware of how long you are speaking and get to your point promptly.
- In the rare event of technical problems, don't panic! Calmly advise the interviewers that you are having problems, advising them of what you can / can't see or hear and let them know you will ask for assistance from the on-site contact.
- The interview process is the same for a face to face interview and you will be asked the same type of questions. This also means taking the opportunity to have questions prepared for the interviewers at the end of your interview.

You can practice digital / video interviews via Scout - mock interviews

PRACTISE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THE TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW

- Tell me about yourself.
- Where do you see yourself in five years time?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- How do you manage stress?
- How do you prioritise your workload?
- How did you choose this major? Why?
- What do you know about this organisation?
- Tell me about your team player attributes.
- How do you handle leadership?
- How do you manage conflict?
- How do you handle unplanned change?
- What are your biggest accomplishments?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Besides your education, what other areas of preparation do you have for this position?
- What is most important to you in a job?
- What challenges are you looking for in a job?
- What does 'success' mean to you?
- Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?

THE BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW

Communication

- Tell me about a time when you have had to use persuasive communication skills to convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you had to present complex information. How did you convey your message?
- How have you used your written communication skills to improve work place communication?

Team work

- When you have worked on a team project, have you ever dealt with a strong disagreement among team members or a member who didn't do their part? What happened and how did you handle it?
- Describe a team experience you found rewarding. What were the core positive team dynamics?
- Give an example of where you have worked effectively with people to accomplish an important result.

Problem solving

- Describe a time where you have facilitated a trouble shooting approach to a problem in your work place.
- Tell us about a success you've had with an especially difficult team member.
- Tell us about a time you did something completely different from the plan / assignment. Why?

Initiative

- Give us an example of a time you have developed new ideas to improve work practices.
- Tell us about a time you have gone beyond the scope of your duties to get a job done. How did you feel about doing that?
- What motivates and excites you?

Leadership

- Describe your leadership style and provide an example of where you have successfully led a group.
- In group projects, how did you go about engaging people to participate? What was the result?
- Tell us about a time where you have influenced the outcome of a decision by taking a leadership role?

Planning and organising

- How do you go about developing, setting and achieving goals?
- Tell us about a time where your plan was upset by unforeseen circumstances. What did you do?
- What have you done to be effective with your organisation and planning?

Self management

- Describe a time where you were faced with issues that tested your coping skills.
- Can you recall a time you were less than pleased with your performance. Why and what did you learn from this experience?

Learning

- How do you evaluate success?
- Tell us about a time where you have contributed to the learning environment through sharing knowledge and experiences.

Interpersonal skills

- Give an example of a time where you have had to use your assertiveness skills. What was the outcome? How did you feel?
- Tell us about the most frustrating individual you have ever worked with and how you managed to work with them.

THE SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW

Communication

- Who would you talk to and what would you say if you found out that a staff member was divulging highly confidential information to an outside party?
- You work closely with a staff member who is consistently making mistakes that are affecting customers and your own ability to complete set tasks. How do you handle this?

Teamwork

- How would you deal with a team member whom you seem to be unable to build a successful working relationship?
- There are two team members who have a long running feud with each other. In this instance, they are affecting the morale of the greater team and keeping everybody from completing the task. What would you do?

Problem solving

- When do you believe it would be appropriate to bring in the manager when handling a disgruntled customer?
- You have been assigned to handle an audit in a new department of your organisation. No one in this area has any experience of an audit. How would you go about initiating the audit?

Initiative

- What would you do if you strongly believed in a recommendation made in a meeting with management but most of your co-workers disagreed with your idea?
- You have been elected as team leader for a new project. How would you go about forming a cohesive and productive team?

Planning and organising

- You are working on a project where the priorities have suddenly changed. What do you do?
- In this role, you provide support to two managers. You are working on a large project for one manager with a deadline when the other manager approaches you with another project stating it must be completed immediately. It is not possible to complete both projects with the deadlines provided. How will you manage the conflicting demands on your time?
- You realise you are not on track to meet your key performance indicators for the quarter and you have failed to meet the KPI's for the previous two quarters. You suspect that your manager is not happy with you but hasn't approached you to date. What do you do?

Self management

- How would you go about defining a vision for your team / role and developing steps to achieve it?
- You are in a position for the government where there are constant legislative changes that dictate the way in which you carry out your tasks. How do you go about keeping up to date with all the changes as well as continue to perform in your own role?

Interpersonal skills

- You are speaking with an important international client whose second language is English. They have a strong accent and are asking a lot of questions very quickly. You have difficulty in understanding what they are saying. What do you do?
- The manager requests you to train new staff in a particular process. How do you go about planning and delivering the training?

Employers talk about the most common detrimental mistakes candidates make through a job interview. Melissa Lourenco from BNET tells us...

- 51% of recruitment managers cited dressing inappropriately as the most detrimental mistake a candidate can make in an interview.
- 49% of recruitment managers cited speaking negatively about a current or previous employer was the second biggest no-no.
- Appearing disinterested came in third at 48%.
- 44% of recruitment managers stated appearing arrogant was a fundamental interview mistake.
- Not providing well thought out responses was at 30%.
- Lastly, 29% of recruitment managers cited not asking meaningful questions impacted the interviewee's success.

HOW TO ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Answering interview questions can be challenging, however you can use the STARR model as a very general guide to provide enough detail so the interviewers aren't left feeling unsure about whether you do possess a particular skill. This is particularly the case with behavioural questions.

Situation: Provide some background information on the example, giving it some context.

Task: Outline the relevant duties, responsibilities and tasks that were related to this situation.

Action: Provide detailed examples of the actions you took in this situation, thus giving concrete details about the relevant skills the employer is seeking.

Result: Explain the outcome especially outlining the achievements and positive effects of your actions for the organisation.

Reflect: You may wish to contribute an additional reflection. It could be about what you learnt from this situation or how it made you feel.

THE PECULIAR AND THE WONDERFUL - BE READY!

In the ever changing labour market and in particular the current global arena where competition is intense, employers seek to bring the best talent on board. There has been a definitive shift from the importance placed on seeking individuals with the best technical skills to that of recruiting candidates with highly developed soft skills that lends itself to all that it means to be working in the global market place.

This 'new' workplace requires individuals who are resilient. Why? The market today is unpredictable and volatile. Organisations have moved from a hierarchical structure to a more flattened structure where there is an emphasis placed on outsourcing staff and a mix of temporary staff and the 'just in time' workforce. For you, this means being able to demonstrate you possess the employability skills to be able to integrate, be productive, creative and add value to an organisation in uncertain times.

In light of this change to a focus on soft skills, you may come across some very interesting interview questions that will challenge you. They may be entirely spontaneous and will require you to think quickly on your feet. They are the odd-ball questions!

Here, we have provided a top 25 oddball interview questions to start you thinking. The key to answering these questions lie in defining the soft skills the employer is seeking and translating this back to the interviewer through your answer.



THE TOP 25 ODDBALL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Taken from www.glassdoor.com blog

QUESTION	ASKED BY
1. What was your best MacGyver moment?	Schlumberger
2. How many tennis balls are in this room and why?	Yahoo
3. If you were a brick in a wall, which brick would you be and why?	Nestle, USA
4. How would you move Mount Fuji?	Microsoft
5. If two cars are traveling in a two lap race on a track of any length, one going 60mph and the other going 30mph, how fast will the slower car have to go to finish at the same time?	Morgan Stanley
6. Are your parents disappointed with your career aspirations?	Fisher Investments
7. Tell me how you would determine how many house painters there are in the United States?	Acquity Group
8. What should it cost to rent Central Park for commercial purposes?	Bain & Co.
9. If I put you in a sealed room with a phone that had no dial tone, how would you fix it?	Apple
10. If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?	Pacific Sunwear
11. How many hair salons are there in Japan?	Boston Consulting
12. If both a taxi and a limo were priced the exact same, which one would you choose?	Best Buy
13. How would you measure nine minutes using only a four minute and seven minute hourglass?	Bank of America
14. What are five uncommon uses of a brick, not including building, layering, or a paper-weight?	Kaplan High Education
15. What is the probability of throwing 11 and over with two dices?	American Airlines
16. What is your favourite food?	Apple
17. Say you are dead - what do you think your eulogy would say about you?	Nationwide
18. Given a dictionary of words, how do you calculate the anagrams for a new word?	Amazon
19. How many light bulbs are in this building?	Monitor Group
20. Given a square grid of numbers, considering all the numbers at the boundary as one layer and numbers just inside as another layer and so on, how would you rotate each of the layers of the numbers by a given amount?	Microsoft
21. How would you sell me eggnog in Florida in the summer?	Expedia
22. Develop an algorithm for finding the shortest distance between two words in a document. After the phone interview is over, take a few hours to develop a working example in C++ and send it to the manager?	Google
23. Given a fleet of 50 trucks, each with a full fuel tank and a range of 100 miles, how far can you deliver a payload? You can transfer the payload from truck to truck, and you can transfer fuel from truck to truck. Extend your answer for number of trucks.	Palantir
24. You are in a room with three switches which correspond to three bulbs in another room and you don't know which switch corresponds to which bulb. You can only enter the room with the bulbs once. You cannot use any external equipment (power supplies, resistors, etc.). How do you find out which bulb corresponds to which switch?	Goldman Sachs
25. If you saw someone steal a quarter. Would you report it?	Amazon

COMMON DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself?

This is a tricky open ended question where you may assume the employer wants to know all your life history. Another interviewee, a little confused but not wanting to answer the question incorrectly may venture 'what do you want to know?'

The truth is the interviewer wants a quick snapshot of who are; two to three minutes at most. If asked this question, in your mind substitute it with 'what makes me a better candidate?'

This question can be more related to a traditional technique type question where your answer can include a quick overview of education, work history and future career aspirations. You can also touch on your early years but it is not an invitation to talk about everything in the hopes that you will cover something the interviewer wants to hear.

Throughout answering this question:

- Sell your enthusiasm and motivation for the employment opportunity at the start. The employer wants to know you are genuinely interested about their opportunity and it is okay to show your enthusiasm.
- Talk about what you have done to prepare yourself to be the best possible candidate for the role.
- Provide a few examples as evidence. For example: 'I am especially excited about this human resource role as I have specialised in human resource management at university exploring... This is also supported by my strong academic performance in...'

Why should we hire you?

This is a great open ended question and a free invitation to sell your skills to the interviewer. Use this opportunity! It is one of the more obvious questions where you can boast freely about your strengths and demonstrate why and how they add value for the employer. In fact, the employer is waiting for it!

Many people are unsure how to answer this question. Answers like "Because I am a hard and loyal worker," and "Because I enjoy working with people" are lost opportunities to make a memorable mark! Instead:

- Talk about your relevant core strengths, mentioning specific accomplishments from your resume and experiences.
- State how this combination of skills makes you valuable. For example: 'My ability to prioritise tasks and manage my time effectively, especially when I was balancing university studies along with part-time employment and community involvement, make me a valuable candidate as I can ensure multiple deadlines are met and tasks are completed in a timely manner.'
- When you answer this question include your ability, experience and energy.

What do you know about our organisation?

This question is your chance to demonstrate that you are genuinely interested in the position and organisation. Why? Because if people have a natural interest in an area, such as a hobby, they are also naturally curious about it - they want to learn more so they can become good at it. Employers want to know that you are interested in their business and this is one way to find out.

This is also an opportunity to sell your enthusiasm at the same time. When answering this question think about:

- Products, services, revenues, reputation, goals, history, people and philosophy of the organisation. You can also add recent major news items such as mergers and / or acquisitions that will impact the organisation and this also shows you keep yourself up to date with what is happening globally.
- While going through the areas of most interest, provide some reasons. Don't just say 'it's one of the most prestigious organisations to work for. That is a very vague statement. Instead, talk about an article you read recently about the organisation where you were inspired by the comments made by the CEO for the future vision of the organisation and current changes occurring in a particular department that you are interested in. Further go on to state how this may align with your career goals.

How has your education prepared you for your career?

This can be a challenging question! Again, very open ended so you can answer it with as much scope as you dare! When answering this question you need to provide examples for the interviewer so they can make the connection immediately and align the required competencies to their organisation.

Here, the types of examples you can include are:

- Soft skills gained throughout study - call upon solid examples that directly translate to the workplace. If you are applying for a position in an international organisation you can talk about the group projects undertaken where you have worked with people from diverse cultures, overcoming language barriers, group conflict, different time schedules and culturally different ways of studying to gain an excellent academic grade.
- The knowledge gained from your degree, particular insight into the area of your specialisation and the types of skills that it has equipped you with - If you studied entrepreneurship and one of your projects was to create a business plan and present it to a panel, you can talk about key industry knowledge you have gained such as exposure to cash flow documents, sales forecasting or taking on a leadership role within your group.
- You may wish to mention any internship or work experience undertaken as part of your education to work in a particular field and how this has cultivated your career path to lead to this particular role.

What important trends do you see in our industry?

Unprepared interviewees beware! This is one area that you can't pass off as knowing. The only way to answer this question effectively is to research prior to the interview. You may wish to talk about a particular trend that has significant meaning for you such as economic decisions that may impact your career progression. Outline two to three trends. Here are some ideas you can adapt to your industry. Approaching it like a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) may help.

- Technology
- Economy
- Labour market trends - local, interstate, international
- Regulatory standards

Are you a team player?

Who wouldn't say 'yes' to this question? This is a tricky seemingly closed ended question, but the interviewer does not merely want to hear a 'yes' answer. They are interested in you to saying a little more, explaining how, when and where. Again, this is an opportunity to provide concrete examples so the employer knows without a doubt you are an exceptional team player.

Think about the different areas in your life so far where you have worked with a team to refine your team skills. Pick a combination of examples from university projects, team sports, employment history and community involvement which give a mix of different contexts. Pick some really tough situational experiences you have come through and identify what you have gained from the experience.

This question may be used as a lead for subsequent team related questions. If you do go on to describe a most challenging team situation, be prepared, as you may be probed further! For example, you may be asked how you felt about a particular result or outcome, or if you would do things differently next time and why.

What is your greatest weakness?

The good news is that everybody has weaknesses. The reality is that rarely do people know how to talk about them in an interview context. The age old adage of picking a weakness that is really a strength has somewhat been misused over time and therefore, not recommended by these cliché examples:

- I'm a perfectionist
- I take on too much work
- I can't think of any
- My biggest weakness is my biggest strength
- I work overtime to ensure I meet deadlines

The truth is the interviewer is seeking an honest answer and responding with one of the above examples can be deceiving. Interviewers, with hundreds of interviews behind them, have heard the same answers over and over and you can actually be disadvantaging yourself as it shows you lack insight to identify areas for improvement and how you can overcome these personal challenges.

None the less, you still need to approach answering this question in a strategic manner. Here are some tips:

Use your common sense!

- Don't mention a big weakness core to the role. Your goal is to present yourself as best as you can, without telling the interviewer multiple areas you lack skills in. For example, you are interviewing for a project manager role and you state you have difficulty in getting people to come on board with your ideas.
- Come prepared to answer a few weaknesses, but mention only one initially unless asked to provide examples of more.

You can approach answering the weakness question through the following ways:

- Provide an example where you have overcome or are currently overcoming the weakness. Here, it's all about admitting you aren't particularly strong in an area, but this is what you are doing to work towards becoming better at it. Some examples include:
 - 'I am shy in front of people and incredibly nervous when presenting to a group, so I have commenced a course in public speaking.'
 - 'I tend to be a little quiet at work, so it appears I am aloof, but once people get to know me they see me as discreet and loyal.'
 - 'In the past I have had challenges with prioritising my time. However, I have taken steps to overcome with is with a pocket planner where I place all activities and accompanying priorities. This has helped me to plan more effectively.'
- Provide an example of a weakness less crucial to the role. For example:
 - If you are being interviewed for a highly creative, big picture type of position, perhaps in strategic management, state your weakness is lack of attention to detail. This may not impact the role in a big way.

Additional tips include:

- Be positive about your weakness - present it in the best light possible by demonstrating your honesty, self awareness and desire to improve.
- Be prepared, so you can keep the answer brief and factual rather than in a state of nervousness, saying too much.
- If one of your weaknesses is genuinely one of the cliché examples, then think about changing the perception of the interviewer. For example, if you are overly meticulous with your tasks hindering your ability to complete them in a timely manner, highlight that you like to see things completed to the highest possible standard, but you are getting better at being less fussy thus working more quickly.
- If your primary weakness is lack of experience in the role, demonstrate your skills are transferable. Provide concrete examples of how your current skills can be transferred to a new context.

Tell us about a time you have failed

A very challenging question! Along with a good dose of humility, this answer requires you to know yourself and think of a time where a work related situation or any situation that could be transferable to the role didn't go as planned. Answering this type of question is challenging as it appears it's asking you to do the opposite of what the interview is about showcasing the best part of your attributes and skills.

However, within the layers of this question, there are specific skills and abilities the employer is seeking.

- The employer is seeking an honest response. They understand that everyone makes mistakes, so ensure you prepare for this question with a 'real' failure.
- The employer is interested in seeing how you took responsibility and accountability for your failure, what you learned from it and how you will prevent it from happening again.

Answering this truthfully with a real learning experience, translates to demonstrating initiative and awareness of who you are. The employer may also recognise someone who is looking to improve and this demonstrates a desire to learn.



**"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work."
- Thomas A. Edison**

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

This is your opportunity to shine. A well thought out response will make the difference, particularly relating it to the position at hand. Choose a professional accomplishment that demonstrates the core skills the organisation is seeking.

- Be sure to provide evidence. Use the STARR analogy (page 16) as a guide to enable you to do this more effectively.
- Use an accomplishment that best demonstrates a variety of attributes and skills, such as time management skills, interpersonal skills and team skills.
- If you have little professional experience refer to an accomplishment at university or in a community involvement role where you can demonstrate the core skills.

What are your salary expectations

Salary expectations may be evaluated throughout the interview and this means the employer is deciding whether they can afford you. The employer needs to know what your range is and this means you need to know what the market rate is. Don't respond with, 'What are you prepared to offer?' or 'Salary is not the most important factor for me,' as these answers will not help the employer. At worst, the employer may think they are unable to afford you and at best, they will think you haven't made the effort to look into the market rates.

Here are some tips:

- Research industry specific salary guides. Have a look at:
 - www.hays.com.au/salary-guide
- The initial question of salary expectation is a general indicator only, it is not the final negotiation so with this in mind, have a figure ready that is a \$5,000 range and competitive with the market rate.
- For example, state that 'without knowing the full package on offer, I am comfortable with something in the range of \$50,000 - \$55,000.' This will provide some flexibility for the employer if figure is too high, but they have an excellent package negating some of the loss in income.
- If you provide a figure that is too low, employers may question your experience for the role.
- If the employer is persistent in identifying a specific figure, then ask them the range they have in mind. Always ask questions.



QUESTIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER

Always come prepared with questions to ask the employer at the end of the interview. This is an excellent way to demonstrate your interest in the position and show you have taken the time to learn about the company. Don't ask questions that you can find the answers to on the organisation's website but reveal how you have used additional sources such as journal articles, newspaper articles, and company annual reports to formulate your questions.

Here is a sample of questions to ask:

- What is the next step in the recruitment process? This will give you an idea of when to possibly follow up but will also give you a timeline.
- What is one of the biggest challenges facing the organisation today?
- How are employees evaluated?
- Is there a training program for new employees?
- How would you describe this organisation's management style?
- What is the career progression for this position?
- Do you provide any professional development or mentoring?
- What would a typical day in this role entail?
- May I have your business card(s)? This will give you a point of contact to follow up but also write a thank you letter post interview.

POST INTERVIEW

Every interview is an opportunity to reflect, learn and practice for the next interview opportunity.

Reflect upon the following:

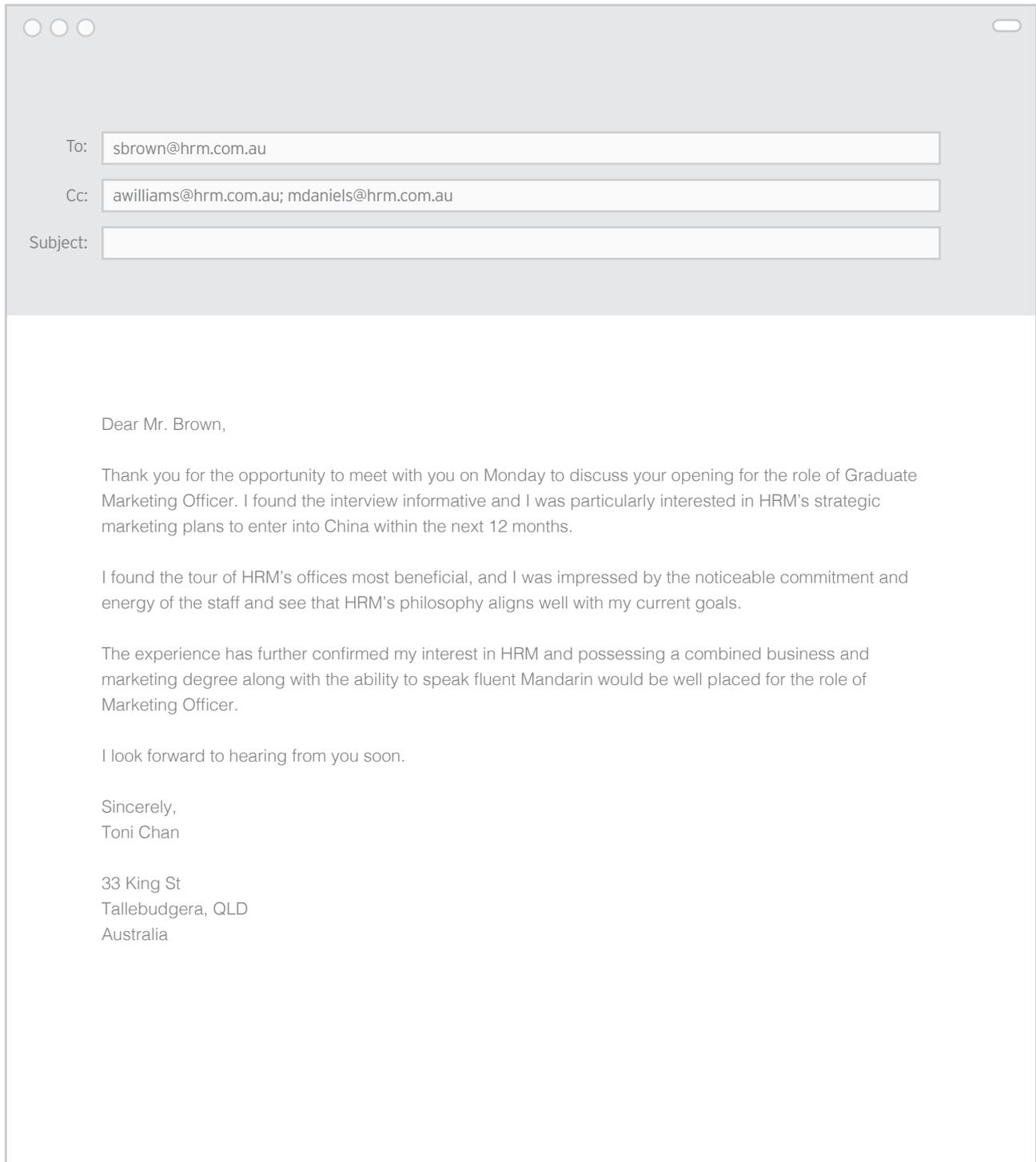
- How did you feel the interview progressed?
- Did you feel more at ease at the end of the interview with the interviewer?
- How did you highlight your key accomplishments? Did you translate them to what the organisation is seeking in their staff?
- Did your body language express your enthusiasm? Did you make eye contact with the interviewer and did you smile?
- Did you feel you made yourself stand out?
- Were there difficult questions and did you feel you answered these well?
- Do you recall points you made that interested the interviewer or prompted them to probe further?

Thank you letter

It is highly encouraged to send a thank you letter or email within 48 hours of the interview. Send it to the primary interviewer and if you have additional contact details include these representatives in your email. It is an opportunity to follow up and indicates what you particularly enjoyed about the interview. If you didn't have the opportunity to obtain a business card, send the letter in the mail.

A thank you letter also demonstrates that you understand business etiquette and it is an opportunity to highlight the positive comments you made in the interview in relation to your skills and strengths. You may also wish to mention additional points of interest the interviewer made about the organisation, current projects and the types of skills and attributes they are seeking in prospective staff.

The following is a sample thank you email.



The image shows a screenshot of an email client window. The window has a title bar with three window control buttons (minimize, maximize, close) on the left and a close button on the right. The email header is displayed in a light gray box with the following fields:

- To: sbrown@hrm.com.au
- Cc: awilliams@hrm.com.au; mdaniels@hrm.com.au
- Subject: (empty field)

The main body of the email is white and contains the following text:

Dear Mr. Brown,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on Monday to discuss your opening for the role of Graduate Marketing Officer. I found the interview informative and I was particularly interested in HRM's strategic marketing plans to enter into China within the next 12 months.

I found the tour of HRM's offices most beneficial, and I was impressed by the noticeable commitment and energy of the staff and see that HRM's philosophy aligns well with my current goals.

The experience has further confirmed my interest in HRM and possessing a combined business and marketing degree along with the ability to speak fluent Mandarin would be well placed for the role of Marketing Officer.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Toni Chan

33 King St
Tallebudgera, QLD
Australia

A NOTE ON NERVES

We have talked at length about interviews and linked it briefly to what you may expect and how you may be feeling at the different interview stages. At this point, (as you may be feeling exceptionally overwhelmed with the sheer volume of interview information and feeling ever more daunted) we would like to summarise some key tips to harness your nervous energy!

THINK ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

Identify five relevant things you want the employer to know about you by the end of the interview.

BUILD RAPPORT IN THE FIRST FIVE SECONDS

Set the tone of the interview in the introductions! First impressions count and can also help to set you at ease. When the employer comes into the waiting room and calls your name:

- Make eye contact, hold eye contact and smile.
- Walk with confidence to the interviewer.
- Extend your hand for a firm hand shake.
- Re-introduce yourself: "Hello, I'm (name) pleased to meet you."

YOU ARE INTERVIEWING TOO!

Interviewing is a two way street. The employer needs to assess whether you are a suitable fit with their organisation and you can assess whether you can see yourself working in the organisation. Think about the following before you go to an interview.

1. What impression does the interviewer make on you throughout the interview?
2. Can the interviewer be viewed as a resource to learn more about the organisation and position you are applying for?
3. While waiting, take into consideration details about the reception area. How do the staff you see communicate with each other? Does the area feel comfortable to you?
4. If you are taken on a tour, what is the pace like within the departments? How are the desks and offices situated? Is it open plan or closed offices and how does that sit with you?

SUMMARY

Prior to interview remember the four R's.

RE-EXAMINE THE POSITION DESCRIPTION

Find out as much information as you can in the position description about the duties and responsibilities, the reporting relationships, and the recruitment and selection process. Don't limit yourself to the organisation position description if it appears unclear.

RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

Prepare for the interview effectively through learning about the organisation, its vision, culture, products and services, as well as current issues the organisation is facing. Glean your information not only from the company website, but from various resources such as:

- SCOUT company profiles
- Employer information sessions on campus
- Journal articles
- Networking with alumni
- Newspaper articles
- Vault online careers library guide

Utilising a variety of resources will also assist you to formulate thoughtful questions at an interview.

REVIEW EXPERIENCES

When you review your experience, consider the below and define your skills and accomplishments that could directly transfer to the position:

1. Qualifications
2. Paid employment (related or unrelated)
3. Work experience
4. Internships
5. Volunteer experience and community involvement
6. Class projects
7. Study including area of specialisation
8. Interests and hobbies
9. On and off campus involvement
10. Professional memberships

REHEARSE

When you have analysed and reviewed the above points think about potential questions you may be asked. Use the practise list and challenge yourself with some difficult questions. Below are some ways you can rehearse. This is also encouraged to build confidence in your response.

- Make an appointment for a mock interview with the Career Development Centre where we can provide feedback on your responses as well as your body language, presentation and style. You may also wish to do this with family and friends.
- Practice in front of a mirror. Responding out loud will give you a chance to see yourself at the same time.
- You may wish to film and record your responses so you can review yourself critically after the exercise.

Now you try... Would YOU give YOU a job?

Imagine yourself as a business owner looking for staff your own age to employ. For you, what would make a good employee? What skills and attitudes would you want your staff to possess?

If you were interviewing people like your friends, what would you ask them? How would you decide who to recruit when you know they will be the face of your business at the frontline assisting to drive your business forward?

Keep in mind that when you employ staff, you will be paying them money, money that comes from your bottom line, so you need to make sure you recruit the right person the first time around to ensure the continuity of your business.

So truthfully now... would YOU give YOU a job at your business?! What skills do you need to refine further?

If the answer is YES, you just need to convince the other recruiters out there you have what it takes. If the answer is NO, start building a portfolio of evidence and close the skills gaps!

Always put yourself in the prospective employer's shoes as this will help you prepare yourself in the most effective manner.