



Head Resourcing interview guide for candidates

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The five stages to a successful interview

Stage 1 – Role & skills match

1. Review the job specification in detail especially the core competencies/requirements.
2. Create a list of your strengths and weaknesses against each deliverable.
3. Liaise with your Head Resourcing consultant on any points you are unsure on.
4. Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask the interviewer on the role.

Stage 2 – Company research

1. Visit the company's website to establish background information on the organisation. Take note of their product/service offerings.
2. Check out Linked In to see if the recruiting manager(s) have a profile so you can research their background (you may find skills/experience and interests you have in common).
3. Do they promote the company via social media? If so, check out Facebook, Twitter etc. as you may find valuable information on recent awards, new projects and more.
4. Look on search engines to find relevant press articles and recent news about them.
5. Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask the interviewer at the company.

Stage 3 – Your Social Media presence

1. Ensure your social media presence is clear from embarrassing photos, comments or remarks! Employers are turning to social media more and more to gain an insight into potential employees. Make sure you create a positive image.

Stage 4 – Preparing for different types of interview

Important note: Schedule a time with your Head Resourcing consultant to complete an interview prep call at least a couple of days before the interview. This is an opportunity to re-affirm what you have researched and also pick up other useful tips that may help you during the process.

Phone interview:

1. Establish a quiet venue, somewhere you know will be free from interruptions.
2. Will the interviewer be calling you on your mobile? If so make sure you have good reception in your chosen location.
3. Print and have your CV, company research, job specification with you in the room as a reference tool.
4. Write the person's name down on a post it note, so you have a reference of their name that you can refer to if required during the interview.
5. Ensure you have a notepad and pen to take notes as required during the interview.
6. Practice your welcome greeting – it makes a better impression saying “Hello, X speaking” rather than simply saying hello.

Face-to-face interview:

1. Print off the full location address, telephone number and contact name of the person you are meeting.
2. Do you require directions? If so, print a map or use a sat nav (making sure it has been used recently and is charged!)
3. Do you have the opportunity to do a test run? If so, do one and establish where they are and how long it takes you to get there.
4. Have you dusted down your suit and polished your shoes? First impressions count so dress to impress.
5. Pack a notepad, a pen and spare copies of your CV.
6. Set off with ample time and aim to arrive at the location around 15 minutes before the interview is due to start.
7. Switch off any mobile device or other electronics you may have before entering the building.
8. Ensure you have removed all mints or gum from your mouth before entering the building.
9. Re-confirm the person's name of who you are meeting so you can ask reception with confidence.

Stage 5 – The interview

1. Stand to greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and welcoming smile. Ensure you make good eye contact and refer to the interviewer by name.
2. Answer questions clearly and where possible link your skills and experience and how this fits into the role into your answer.
3. Don't be afraid to take a little time to compose your thoughts before answering a question, it is better to be clear on what you have to say than to waffle without thinking.
4. Make notes – it will be a good reference point, but also shows you are keen and taking on board the information that they are telling you.
5. Do not speak badly of a previous employer or boss during your interview – focus on the positives.
6. If during the interview the majority of questions you wanted to ask have been answered, still aim to ask at least one good question during the interview, even if it is re-affirming a point.
7. DO NOT ask about annual leave entitlement, salary or benefits during the interview. This will have been established before or after the interview.
8. Ask the interviewer before the interview finishes if they have any additional questions they would like to ask you.
9. Thank the interviewers for their time and be positive in doing so – even if you have decided that the role isn't for you leave them with a positive impression.
10. Call your Head Resourcing consultant immediately after leaving the interview to give them your feedback so they can liaise with the client.

Competency-based interviews

What is competency-based interviewing?

Competency-based interviews allow candidates to demonstrate their behaviours and skills by answering questions about how they have reacted to and dealt with previous work place situations. By looking at past experience a potential employer can predict future behaviour.

Candidates are asked to give an example of a situation or task that led to a certain course of action. Probing questions will then be used to determine the course of action taken, what changes were created by those actions and the effects of those actions on others. When answering, remember that the interviewer wants to know what individual rather than group achievements so avoid over-using examples of 'we'.

When answering competency style questions it is best to adopt the **STAR** model, which will allow you to structure your answer in a logical and concise manner.

- **Situation** – Describe the situation/problem you were faced with (try to keep your examples recent).
- **Task** – What did you have to do?
- **Action** – What action did you take and why? Were there any challenges/obstacles and how did you overcome them?
- **Results** – Highlight the outcomes.

Preparing for a competency-based interview

Re-read your CV

The best way to identify the competencies that the organisation is likely to require is to review the job description and discuss further with your consultant who will be able to advise you. For each core competency try to think of specific examples of when you have evidenced those behaviours but do not prepare specific answers prior to your interview as this is likely to mean that you provide answers that do not fully answer the question. You may find it helpful to run through some competency examples with your consultant or perhaps with a friend prior to your interview.

Common competencies

To help you we have listed some of the most common competencies below that companies look for. Please note that these definitions may not be identical to those of a prospective employer and are just to give you an idea of what to expect.

1. Drive for results

This competency is trying to assess personal motivation and how you approach challenges.

Example Questions:

- What achievement are you most proud of?
- Give me an example of a time when you have had to achieve a specific result.
- What opportunities have you identified and used to achieve success?
- Tell me about a time when you have 'made things happen' for yourself or your team?

2. Communication

This competency is looking for the ability to communicate effectively and to influence others to act on and support goals or objectives. Interviewers will need to establish that you understand how to adapt your communication methods depending on the situation and individuals that you are facing. Communication methods can include: one-to-one discussions (formal and informal), group presentations, telephone, email etc. Different 'audiences' may include peers, subordinates, senior management, customers, suppliers and so forth.

Example Questions:

- Can you please give a specific example of when you have had to influence a colleague to your way of thinking?
- Tell me about a particularly difficult issue you had to communicate.

3. Planning and Organising

This is looking to assess if and how you plan activities or projects. It is relevant for all roles, not just managerial positions. Often interviewers will look to identify how you fit your planning into a project.

Example Questions:

- Describe a time when you have had to plan a large piece of work.
- How would you approach ensuring that you delivered results in your role.
- It's a busy day with conflicting priorities and deadlines, what do you do?

4. Customer Focus

Individuals who display this competency understand and believe in the importance of customer focus. They listen to and understand the needs of external and internal customers. They meet and exceed customer requirements to ensure satisfaction.

Example Question:

- Can you give us an example of when you have dealt with an upset or angry customer in the past?

5. Influencing or Persuading Others

You may have strong verbal skills but can you influence another person to change their thinking or take some action – perhaps a colleague follows your advice or a client decides to buy a service or product. Things to consider are whether you the skills to persuade and involve rather than coerce and punish. Are you ethical in your dealings with people?

Example Questions:

- Tell me about a time when you were able to change someone's viewpoint significantly?
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something that you disagreed with?

6. Interpersonal and Team Skills

The desire to build and maintain relationships in and beyond the workplace is critical. Many workplaces function on the basis of project teams. Those who are highly collaborative and co-operative are most likely to thrive in this type of environment.



Example Questions:

- What skills and personal qualities have you contributed to the teams you have been part of?
- Tell me about the most difficult person you have worked with.

7. Problem Solving and Decision Making

How do you come to a decision? What information do you utilise and how do you break that down and filter it to ensure your decisions are sound and valid? Are you able to make decisions or do you rely too heavily on others.

Example Questions:

- Tell me about a difficult decision that you have made.
- Tell me about an unpopular decision you have made.

Get in touch.

If you would like to discuss competency-based interviews further, please feel free to contact us – we'd love to hear from you.

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