



## Interview Preparation

### Interview tips for your first job

Creating a great first impression is important for you to be in the running for your first job or course placement. This information sheet provides you with some tips, preparation and guidelines on interview etiquette.

### Preparation

#### Basic tips

- Ensure you have a firm handshake
- Make sure you smile at the interviewer
- Introduce yourself
- Don't be late
- Make eye contact
- Dress to impress
- Be polite
- Say thank you!

#### Preparing for the interview

Do your research:

- Make sure you understand who the company is that you are applying for a job with. Websites and media releases are a great way to do this – learn what their business is about and whether there are any current projects on the go that are particularly important to them. Look for the following:
  - What is their core business?
  - Does their website give you any insights into the type of company they are (e.g. size, success, key focuses)?
  - Are there any media releases about them on the internet?
  - What makes them stand out?
  - Are there any key points that you think you can discuss with them during the interview stage?
- Know someone that already works there? Even better. Call them to see what other information they can give you about the company. Maybe they can even put a good word in for you. And remember to thank them afterward!

- See if you can get a job description from the company or the recruitment agency you are working with. This should help you tailor your interview answers to the job that you are applying for.
- Do some research on salary rates. Comparing salary rates with similar jobs, looking on salary websites or asking people in the industry should give you an idea of what to expect.

Practice. Be prepared for the following questions:

- Tell me a bit about yourself
- Why are you interested in this job/course
- Why should we hire you?
- Why are you a good fit for this role?
- What are your career plans?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?

### **Behavioural questions**

When employers ask you for examples or instances about your work history or background we call these behavioural questions. The interviewer is looking for a specific example that you can tell them to show how you actively demonstrate a particular skill or ability. Examples of behavioural questions include:

- Give me an example of when you had to work in a team with others.
- Who is the most difficult person you have had to work with and why?
- Tell me about a time where you had to go the extra mile to give good customer service.
- Tell me about the most difficult decision you have had to make in the past year.
- What is your greatest achievement to date?

### **How should I answer the questions?**

There is a standard format we use to answer interview questions, called the STAR format. This helps set up the way you should structure your answers.

**Situation/Task:** You need to think of a situation or task that you needed to perform in either a work environment or similar

**Action:** You then need to think of the action you took to resolve this

**Result:** And finally what the result was (try and make this a good result)

## **Example:**

### **Situation**

I was at my job as a customer services representative answering phone calls during a very busy call period. I received a call from an angry customer.

### **Task**

It is very important that we maintained a high level of customer service at all times. This can be very challenging when we have lots of customers phoning through at once at customers start to get angry. However I ensured I was polite and helped address the customer's issue.

### **Action**

I managed to maintain my calm and talk through the issues that the customer was having. We were able to identify three key things that would help solve the customer's problems.

### **Result**

By remaining calm, I was able to identify what the customer needed help with and successfully rectify these problems for her. This shows I was able to provide an exemplary level of customer service in a difficult situation.

Some tips for your interview answers:

- Think of examples that are relevant to the type of work your employer is involved with.
- When talking about your career plans, ensure you don't get ahead of yourself. Your employer is going to want you to be in the role you are interested in for a little while at least.
- It is okay to use examples from non work activities. This is your first job, so you won't be expected to have a whole list of job experiences. You just need to make sure these show you have transferable skills.
- Make sure you sound positive! Employer's will be interested in people that sound easy to get along with, hardworking and that don't complain.

**Some ways to practice:**

- In front of the mirror (yes seriously)
- Ask a friend or family member to listen to you
- Seek the services of a career coach

**Do you have any questions for the employer?**

Yes! Any employer is going to want to know that you are interested in them. Asking questions is a great way to do this. Stay focused on the job and company in the first interview.

**Not sure what to ask? Try some of the following:**

- What kinds of projects do you have coming up in the next 6 months?
- What is the culture of the organisation like?
- What is the team here like?
- Can you explain my key performance indicators?
- What are the development opportunities in the organisation?

**Additional Tips:**

Don't inquire about salary, or your package in the first interview. The employer may bring this up and this is your queue to discuss the package being offered. Be prepared to negotiate.

Ensure you send a thank you email or note to the employer to thank them for their time.

If you haven't heard from the employer you can contact them. You might want to expect the worse, but it is okay to call them to see where they are with their selection process. Just don't do this 5 times a day. Employers are busy running their business, so hiring a new staff member can take time. While you should be patient, a follow up call is a good way to find out whether you are still in their short list.

Good luck with your interview and remember that preparation and practice is key to performing well on the day!

