

Job Interviews: Top Tips For Interviewers and Candidates



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Job interviews are challenging. Most interviewers and candidates don't do it that frequently. As a result it's difficult to become really good at it.

Organisations want to be sure that they are appointing the best person to the role. They want to make sure that they are fair and objective when interviewing.

Every candidate wants to be the person that gets the job. They want the opportunity to make sure that the job is right for them. They want to feel that they have been given the opportunity to demonstrate that they are the right person for the job.

In theory this is simple. In practice it's a lot more difficult.

This document provides top tips for both interviewers and candidates that will increase the chances of a positive outcome for all parties.



Top Tips For Interviewers

Interviewing and selecting a candidate is a big decision for you, the team and financially. It's a big responsibility too.

So how do you make it a success?

Invest Time Before You Advertise

Successfully interviewing and appointing the right candidate starts way ahead of the day of the job interview itself.

It's really easy to fall into the trap of pulling out the current job description, doing a quick advert and arranging for the job to be advertised.

A much better approach is to set up a meeting with those who are going to be involved in the appointment ahead of advertising the role.

In that meeting take time to discuss the following:

1. How relevant the current job description is.
2. How relevant the current person specification is.
3. The current team composition, strengths and gaps.
4. The needs of internal clients and how these might be changing.
5. How the job role is changing or evolving.
6. The profile of the ideal candidate.
7. The content of the advert so that you attract your ideal candidates.
8. The criteria that you will use to decide which candidates you will invite to interview.
9. Any additional elements that you will include in the interview process for example, a presentation, excel test or role plays.

Pre-Interview Planning

Next it's time to think about planning the interview.

You might be tempted to skip this stage.

The reason why you shouldn't is that you and others who are interviewing with you are likely to be busy people.

Making the time to do your pre-interview planning will help you make the interview run well and present the interviewers and the organisation positively.

When doing your pre-interview planning consider the following:

1. The different roles each interviewer will take. Experience shows that it is best for the most senior person to deal with the opening and closing stages; the line manager to focus on the technical elements; and a third person (from HR, a general manager, or a clinician) to focus on the non-technical elements.
2. The questions that you will ask candidates that will help you determine who is the right person for the role.
3. How any follow up questions will be handled.
4. The scoring criteria that you will use for each question and any weighted scoring that you are going to use.
5. Who will respond to questions that the candidate raises.
6. The scoring criteria that you will use for other elements of the selection process such as a presentation or role play.
7. How the interview will be carried out. Will it be done online or face to face or combination of both.
8. Whether it will be a single stage or multi-stage interview process.
9. Liaise with HR to ensure that any candidates with particular needs relating to disabilities etc. are treated fairly and equitably.

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Top Tips For Interviewers

Conducting The Interview

The day of the interview has arrived.

What should you do to make it a success?

1. Do a brief pre-meet to recap on what you discussed at the planning stage.
2. Test the technology if it's an online or remote job interview.
3. Allocate a few minutes to build rapport at the start and help the candidate relax.
4. Explain how the interview will be structured to the candidate.
5. Ask one question at a time.
6. Actively listen to the candidate responses.
7. Get someone else on the interview panel to record the candidates' answers.
8. Ask questions that focus on helping the candidates to shine in the job interview.
9. Remain open minded and be alert to jumping to conclusions about a candidate too quickly. Some candidates get into their stride quicker than others.
10. Allow plenty of time for the candidate to ask questions.
11. Explain the next steps at the end of the interview.

After The Interview

During the interview, you want to be focusing on the candidate rather than evaluating answers.

This should be done after the interviews have been completed.

Discuss each candidate in turn focusing on:

1. Agreeing their score for each question and in total.
2. Particular strengths that the candidate has.
3. Gaps that might well impact on their ability to do as well as they could in the role.
4. Will the candidate allow us to continue to develop our team and organisation?
5. If appointable and why.
6. If not appointable and why.

Do a brief summary of each candidate that you can use to provide feedback if requested.

Decide who you want to appoint and ideally the next best person for the role in the event that your first choice either turns down the offer or already has accepted another offer.

Make the offer quickly, initially verbally and then formally in writing.

Let the unsuccessful candidates know as soon as you have a confirmed acceptance from your preferred candidate.

Giving Feedback To Candidates

Feedback is really important to candidates, particularly if they haven't been successful.

When looking at the feedback that you have for each candidate, consider the following:

1. Is it specific?

In other words does it highlight specific areas where the candidate did well and those areas where the candidate fell short compared to others.

For example:

We were particularly impressed with your answers in relation to the technical aspects of the job. We were particularly impressed by how you described the work you do on variance analysis at month end.

Your answers to competency based questions where we asked you to describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult client, were lacking detail which meant your score was lower than other candidates.

2. Is it actionable?

Good candidates want to improve for the future. Make sure that the feedback is on areas that the candidate can take action on.

For example:

When answering competency based questions it's important to make sure that you summarise the situation, task and result but go into more detail when describing the actions you took.

When describing a technical term make sure that you give an example to back up your description to get maximum points.

3. Is it balanced?

A small percentage of candidates do exceptionally well. Most will do well in some areas and not in others. As a result make sure that your feedback is balanced and focused on both strengths and areas where the candidate could be more effective.

When delivering feedback always be professional. Remember that when interviewing candidates you are representing your organisation. Leaving a positive impression of your organisation with the candidate is important.

Top Tips For Candidates

If you are invited to interview you are a major step closer to getting offered the role.

There is however still a lot to do in order to increase your chances of converting the job interview into a job offer.

Prepare Like A Pro

There's a saying that

"Proper Preparation Prevents Pretty Poor Performance"

In a job interview about 80-90% of your success comes down to what you do ahead of the job interview itself.

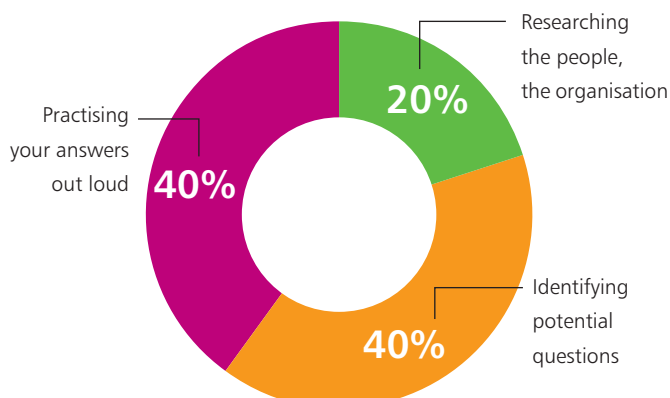
Polls in workshops, webinars and events over the years, have revealed a really worrying statistic.

Only a small proportion of between 15-20% spend enough time on their preparation.

80-85% of candidates don't do anything approaching enough to do their best on the day of the interview.

How To Prepare Like A Pro

1. Spend at least 10 hours on your preparation ahead of the job interview.
2. 20% of your time should be spent on researching the people, the organisation, reviewing performance reports and other information out in the public domain.
3. 40% of your time should be spent on identifying potential questions, writing out answers to questions and coming up with examples. To do this you will need to forensically review the job description and person specification.
4. 40% is spent practising your answers out loud. Consider recording yourself on audio and video. Ideally arrange to do a mock interview with someone who can help you improve your answers and give you helpful feedback.



Make Sure You Identify Enough Potential Questions

Candidates will usually identify some potential questions that they might be asked.

What I've found is they don't always identify enough of them.

Often they will think about 5-10 questions they might be asked.

Aim for at least 30 potential questions.

Understand That Different Types Of Questions Require Different Types Of Answers

Types of questions fall into the following key categories:

1. What type questions.

2. How type questions.

3. Why type questions.

4. Competency based questions.

What type questions are typically used to see what you would do in a particular situation or context.

Alternatively they could be used to determine motivations, frustrations, strengths, weaknesses, career aspirations, development needs.

A variation could be a 'what is' type question when they ask you describe a particular technical term or concept.

How type questions are typically used when the interviewers want to understand how you would approach a specific task.

Why type questions are generally asked when they want to give you the opportunity to sell yourself. For example, why are you the ideal candidate.

Competency based questions are used to get real life examples from you. They usually start with the words 'Tell me about a time', 'Describe a time' or 'Give me an example of'

Top Tips For Candidates

Master The STAR Technique

The STAR technique is something that many candidates understand but struggle to apply.

It's the classic way of answering competency based questions.

You start with a brief description of the situation (the **S**).

You summarise the task or outcomes to be achieved (the **T**).

You explain in some detail the actions you took (the **A**).

You summarise the result(s) you achieved (the **R**).

The only way to master this is by structuring your answers in this way and then practising them over and over again.

Make Sure You Answer The Opening Question Well

It's typically quite a general question along the following lines.

- Tell me about your career
- Tell me about your experience
- Tell me about yourself

The aim is to get you talking and relaxed.

What the interviewer wants you to do is highlight your experience or elements of your career that are particularly relevant to the role you are being interviewed for.

Alternatively they want to get more insight into you as a person and how you as person match the profile of their ideal person.

The mistake candidates often make is trying to cram everything into their answer.

Avoid doing this and focus on keeping your answer succinct.

Answer The Question Asked

While you may have rehearsed certain questions ahead of the job interview, you have to answer the question asked.

Listen to the question carefully.

If you get a question that's a bit ambiguous, don't be afraid to ask for clarification or check that you have understood what the person interviewing is asking.

Maximise The Points You Score

Explaining, describing and giving an example will help you to maximise the points you score on individual questions.

Be An Equal

Candidates can sometimes go in with a mindset that all the trump cards are in the hands of the interviewer.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The hiring organisation has a need. You potentially could be the person to meet that need.

The interview is essentially a more structured meeting to see if there's a match between what you can offer and what the hiring organisation needs.

Sell Yourself

It's not always the best candidate who gets the job but the person who sells themselves best on the day.

Don't be reluctant to talk about achievements, contributions or where you really made a difference.

It might feel a little awkward doing this.

At the same time you don't want to lose out because someone else sold themselves in the interview and you didn't.

Examples are a great way of selling yourself authentically.

Keep The Job Interview In Perspective

You probably really want the job. At the same time you don't want to heap so much stress and strain on yourself and let nerves take over.

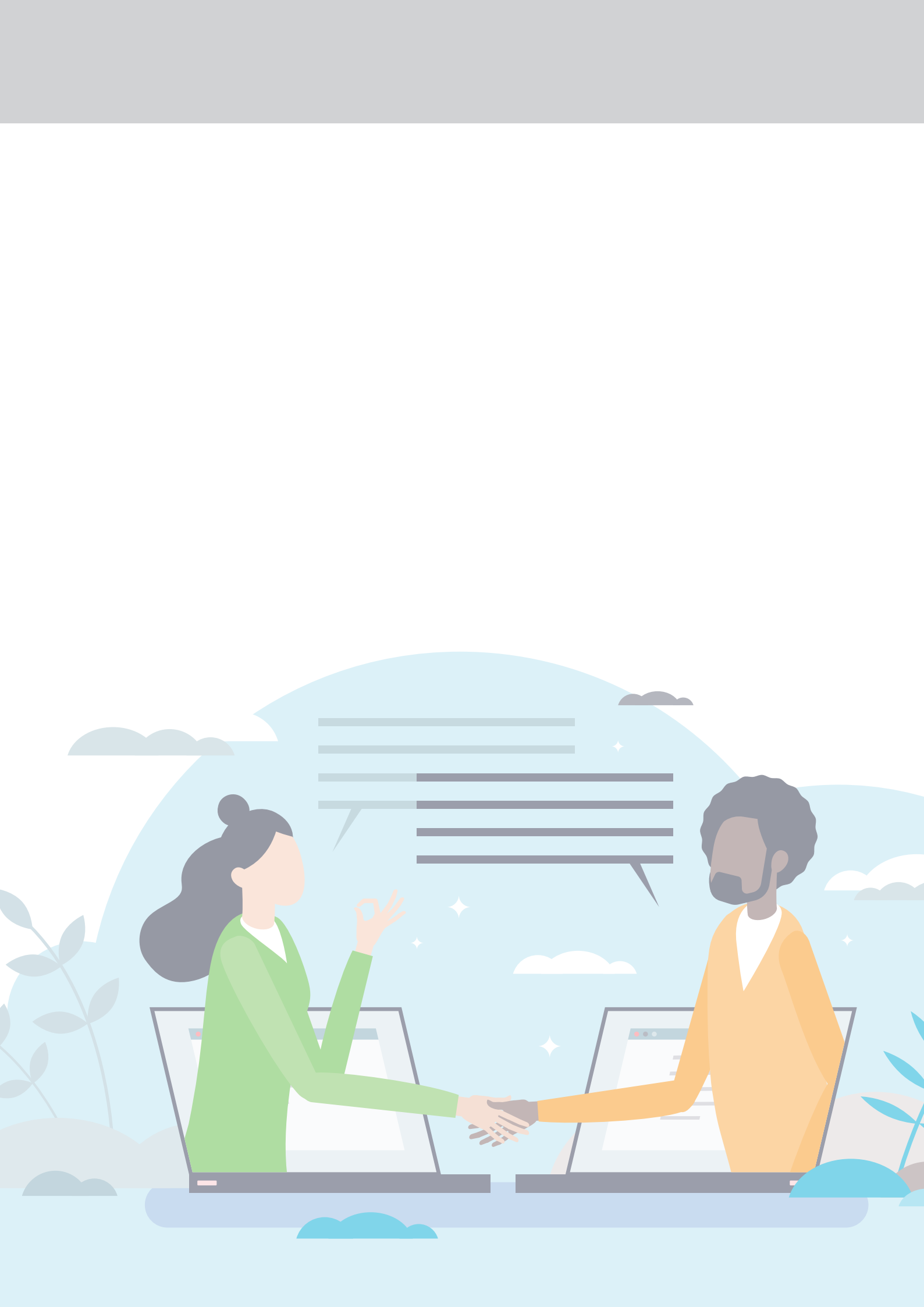
It's vitally important to keep the job interview in perspective.

It's not a life or death situation.

The worst that can happen is that you don't get offered the job (which happens to everyone from time to time).

If you are unsuccessful there will be opportunities in the future.

Don't be reluctant to talk about achievements, contributions or where you really made a difference.



The NHS Skills Development Network operates across NHS organisations in England. Its remit is to provide the infrastructure for improving leadership and professional development skills, raising standards and sharing best practice through economy-wide learning.

The Skills Development Network uses a dedicated website, www.skillsdevelopmentnetwork.com, to publicise and support its work. The website is the primary source of information for all staff in providing resources for personal and organisational development.

Skills Development activities include but are not limited to:

- Professional Education and Qualifications
- Lifelong Learning and Continuing Professional Development
- Talent Management
- Career Development
- Widening and Improving Technical Skills
- Achieving Excellence
- Partnership Working
- Sharing Best Practice
- Networking
- Accreditation

Other Top Tips available include:

- Stress Management
- Communicating Financial Information Effectively
- Team Building
- Relationship Building
- Influencing
- Increasing Productivity
- Dealing with Change
- Negotiation in Healthcare
- Managing Personal Resilience
- Data Visualisation
- Writing a Business Case
- Conducting an Effective Training Session

For more information visit www.skillsdevelopmentnetwork.com

This document has been written by Duncan Brodie of Goals and Achievements. Duncan is a CIMA Fellow and former NHS Finance Director.

You can access more career success resources at his website:

<https://goalsandachievements.com/> and on his

YouTube Channel [www.youtube.com/channel/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCW08bWhLwCHOeAV9H1XiVqw)

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