

## **Interviews can be more predictable than you think!**

Getting a new job can be stressful but with a systematic approach to planning you can really increase your chances of success. Alongside the more obvious attention you must give to the details of an interview, what to wear on the day and ensuring you arrive on time, etc, time and effort should also be given to preparing mentally for the interview.

This means acknowledging that you are likely to be one of several candidates with similar skills and experiences. It is also well worth remembering that many employers use a scoring system at interview, which means that each candidate is asked identical questions and then scored against the employers expected answer for that question.

Your objective therefore is to score the highest, which may only mean stating one or two more points within each answer than the other candidates.

A good way of achieving this is to consider what questions you are likely to be asked – this is much easier than you think. For instance, interviewers will often ask you to ‘outline your career history’ or ‘summarise your career to date’ as a means of relaxing you.

If you prepare in advance for this you can ensure that your answer includes the most important elements of your career and particularly those that are most relevant for the job you are applying for. In addition, because you start the interview well you will gain in confidence and are more likely to settle quickly into the remaining interview.

Likewise if you look closely at the job description or summary and the essential criteria of the job you have applied for, you will be able to put yourself in the place of the interviewer. This will allow you to think about the types of questions they are likely to ask that will highlight that you have the particular skills or experience they are looking for.

These are most likely to be the behavioural type skills such as those associated with managing people, communicating or using your own initiative.

Make a list of the sorts of questions you are likely to be asked and then write down your answer, including a good example of when you demonstrated this skill either in a previous job or in a vocational situation.

What you will find is that the same sort of answer can be applied to several different questions. This is important because at interview you are unlikely to be asked the questions exactly as you have prepared them, but you will be able to adapt your prepared answers to a number of different questions.

Another worthwhile point to remember when you are developing your specimen answers (particularly to scenario type questions) is to apply any of the well documented management planning cycles; for instance PDSA. For example if you were asked how you would deal with an incident between two staff members you could apply PDSA as such;

- Plan: Think about your approach with each staff member and what you would need to ask each of them to establish the facts about the incident.
- Do: Meet with the staff members and ascertain the facts.
- Study: Consider the information received take senior or specialist advice.
- Act: Implement any action plan necessary to prevent a recurrence.

Equally you can use this same approach if you were planning to describe how you would go about implementing a new project or change to a work practice.

Once you have been through the job description and written yourself a list of questions and specimen answers that include personal examples, start to get used to asking yourself the questions. It is really important that you talk out loud – ask the question and then answer it - this way you get used to projecting yourself well and speaking at an appropriate speed.

Whilst this feels slightly bizarre, it really does work and can be done in places such as the car, bath or shower as well as in more formal practice sessions.

Once in the interview you will find that as soon as you start to speak you do so easily and with confidence. You will generally find that a large proportion of the questions you have planned for are asked in one form or another.

Overall remember that it is often the smallest gap between the successful applicant and the other candidates and that attention to detailed preparation ahead of the interview will give you the greatest chance to come out on top.