

## **Preparation for Interview**

Preparation is Key!

*Abraham Lincoln once said "Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four hours sharpening the axe".*

The team at h2 Recruit collectively have over 25 years experience placing quality sales people into their dream job. In that time we have learnt a thing or two about interviews and how to approach them, as well as knowing in detail what our clients like and don't like. With that in mind, to maximize your performance at interview, h2 have developed this comprehensive document using sound theory and real-life practical experiences. It will provide you with a detailed list of steps to follow to ensure you make an unforgettable first impression, but with the substance and depth to ensure you get the job.

### **h2 Pre-Interview Check-list**

- Research the company – e.g. ([www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk)).
- Print relevant information off the corporate website and highlight key areas of interest.
- Map and directions for meeting – e.g. ([www.streetmap.co.uk](http://www.streetmap.co.uk)).
- Understand the meeting format – e.g. telephone, one-on-one, panel, presentation, assessment day, psychometric test etc.

### **Do you want to make an extra special effort???**

- First impressions count – always make sure your personal presentation is impeccable. From your suit and shoes, to your eye contact or handshake, no one wants a sales person who doesn't look the part. Remember you will be the face of the company, so act that way.
- Request a company brochure to be sent out to you prior to the meeting, better still make contact with the sales department and do some fact finding about their products, services and markets. Take this in with you.
- Compile your sales information and any supporting documents into a concise handout – e.g. sales targets, list of key achievements/deals won, summary of client database.
- Identify direct competitors.

## Process of Interview

**Introduction:** The decision maker will almost always ask for a brief run down about your background. Prepare and practice a short summary of your background, highlighting any key areas of interest / achievement you think the company will be interested in.



**Fact Find:** Using the information and questions you have researched and prepared from the company website, fact find about the company and their sales team. Find out where they are positioned in the market place and exactly what kind of candidate they are ideally looking for. Make sure you take notes!



**Sell Yourself:** By now the decision maker will have told you exactly where the company is going and what kind of sales person they are looking for. Use this valuable information to sell yourself into the role focusing on the areas the decision maker has highlighted. If you have any sales information (awards, print outs, copies of large orders, client lists etc) that backs up your claims, now is the time to present them to the decision maker.



**Summarize, stating your interest in the role:** Summarize, stating why you would be right for the role, let him/her know why you want the role and why you think you will succeed using all the information the decision maker has given you.



### **Close:**

Decision makers always refer back to whether or not a potential candidate tried to close them or not. Asking for the sale is make or break time in any sales presentation and an interview is no different. I'm sure you have a preferred method of closing a potential decision maker which you could use at this point, if you don't you could always ask 'if there is any reason why you wouldn't give the sales position with ABC and Co?'.

## Introduction/ Tricky Questions

*Not only will you need to make sure that you have a brief overview of your background and experience, you will more than likely be asked some of the questions below early on:*

**What Are Your Weaknesses?** This is the most dreaded question of all. Handle it by [minimizing your weakness](#) and emphasizing your strengths.

**Why Should We Hire You?** [Summarise your experiences](#):

**Why Do You Want to Work Here?** The interviewer is listening for an [answer](#) that indicates you've given this some thought and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening.

**What Are Your Goals?** Sometimes it's best to talk about [short-term and intermediate goals](#) rather than locking yourself into the distant future.

**Why Did You Leave (Or Why Are You Leaving) Your Job?** If you're unemployed, state your reason for leaving in a positive context:

**What Can You Do for Us That Other Candidates Can't?** What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits. Summarize concisely:

**What Are Three Positive Things Your Last Boss Would Say About You?** It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes.

**What Salary Are You Seeking?** It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first.

## **Fact Find**

### *Top Ten Questions To Ask at Interview*

1. Why is this position open?
2. What key skills and experience are you looking for in the role?
3. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
4. What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in this job?
5. What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position?
6. What type of support does this position receive in terms of people, finances. etc?
7. What advancement opportunities are available for the person who is successful in this position, and within what time frame?
8. In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
9. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
10. What accounts for success within the company?

## Sell Yourself / Work Sheet

All strong candidates will prepare for an interview by researching company websites, brochures and competitor websites. Don't diminish your chances of securing a sought after sales career by letting other candidates have the edge on you! Completing this work sheet will help you understand the requirements of the company you are interviewing for and where you will be able to add value to the organisation.

### **Product/Service Portfolio**

I understand ABC Ltd. provides (This is your chance to demonstrate your understanding of the product/service portfolio and that you will need minimal training to get started in this role):

*Candidate Match:*

1. I have extensive experience in the sales of (give specific examples of deals won, sales figures etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I have had sales training in (give details of when and which training courses) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I understand the main competitors in this market sell (give details of competitors you have encountered in the market and how you have had success where they failed) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I understand the point of difference of ABC Ltd's portfolio is (give details based on your research of this company's unique selling points vs. your understanding of competitors' solutions) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Target Markets

I understand ABC Co. focuses on targeting X markets and X decision makers within this space (This is your chance to demonstrate your intimate knowledge of the industries and level of decision maker you will be targeting in this role):

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*Candidate Match:*

1. I have extensive sales experience within (give details of the corresponding markets you have targeted and had success in) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I regularly deal with decision makers ranging from (give details of level of decision maker you deal with, e.g. Financial Director to Purchasing Manager, and any current contacts or organisations you have identified to prospect) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Candidate Match:*

1. Let me tell you what to expect if you were to hire me (give details of your personality, work ethic and how you would add value to the company's culture)
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## Summarize & Closing

1. **Qualifying Interest in the Opportunity** – “John, before we wrap up, I would like to state my interest in the position. In fact when I was called by (h2 CONSULTANT) I was quite excited at the prospect of working for (COMPANY). But, after meeting with you today and gaining greater insight into the position, I’m giving this precedence over my other opportunities.
2. **Discussing the Next Steps in the Process** – “In moving forward, I would like you to explain your process from here?”

At this stage, you should listen and take note of the time frame the company discusses.

3. **Discussing Concerns or Issues** – “Great!!!! John, before we discuss our next move, I’d like to know if you have any concerns or issues which will prevent us from taking the next step?”

*If the answer is “NO”, move on to step 4.*

If the answer is “YES”, do not register any shock and to counter the objection by asking “Could you share them with me?” (Listen attentively and allow the decision maker to voice his/her concerns). Once the decision maker has explained his issues, cushion this objection, overcome it and move on. This must be done using tangible examples of history, which meet the company’s requirement(s). Once you overcome each objection, qualify any other concerns.

### Example:

- a. *Decision Maker* – “I think our organisation may be a bit small for you”
- b. *Candidate* – “Thanks for sharing that with me John and I understand why you may have that concern. However, when I joined my current organisation, I came from a company that was quite small. In fact, my current employer had a concern I may not be able to adjust to a larger company culture. I do enjoy working in both environments but enjoy the smaller culture because of the recognition you receive for your successes. I did make the adjustment smoothly in my last move and know I will do the same with this one. Is there anything else that may be concerning you?”

Once the company explains they have no further concerns, explain to the candidate we move onto step 4.

4. **Closing!!!!** – “Great. As I explained John, I do have several opportunities in the pipeline that are moving along quite quickly at the moment. You mentioned that second interviews were occurring next week. I have a reasonably tight schedule next week. Are you aiming for the beginning of the

week or the end of the week? ‘*The end of the week*’..... “Great!!! Thursday or Friday? ‘*Friday*’..... “OK. I have a 2<sup>nd</sup> interview on Friday at 12pm. Is the morning better for you or is the afternoon more suitable? ‘*Morning*’..... “Great!! Would 9am or 10.30am suit you better?”

*Have your diary open and in front of them during step 4, turning to the relevant weeks and appearing like they are ready to write down the date of next interview.*

1. John I’m very impressed with what I’ve seen today. I’m confident that I can do this job as I have ..... (Summarise why you are a match) ‘When can I start’?
2. John I’d love to work for ABC & Co. I’m very impressed by what the company is doing/heading - I want to be part of it! When can I start?
3. John, I understand you are looking for someone who can ..... (Feed him a summary of his needs). Well I believe I’m your man I have ..... and .....
4. If on second/last interview, express that you have had time too think about this along with other positions, & have come to the conclusion that this is where I belong.

After the interview make sure you know where you stand. You must have conviction in your voice. Your statements must be genuine & sincere .The delivery should be natural (almost casual) yet passionate & direct.

### **After the Interview**

Once you are finished make sure to call your consultant ASAP. The sooner you call them the quicker you get feedback.