

Knowledge capsule

THE JOB INTERVIEW

Context

A job interview is often the decisive moment in the selection process. This means that your chances of success are higher if you understand in detail what interviews are for, what form they might take, and what organisations are looking for when they hold interviews. It also helps to reduce anxiety when faced with these uncertain situations.

The job interview is more than just a conversation about your training and experience. It is a tool you can use to sell yourself which puts an emotional mechanism into operation and where social skills and personal aptitudes play a key role. Showing that you are capable of communicating, handling conflicts, team working and leadership are some of the skills that are valued during a job interview.

The Job Interview: an essential test during the selection process

What is a job interview and what is its purpose? A job interview is a tool used by organisations as a means of evaluating candidates during the staff selection process. It consists of a formal, in-depth conversation that has a dual objective:

For the person looking to fill the position: the interview is a way of evaluating to what extent the profile of the applicant meets the requirements of the vacant position; confirming whether the person applying for the position wants and is capable of fulfilling the vacant position; and anticipating how they will perform.

For the person applying for the position: the interview is a way of evaluating to what extent the characteristics and conditions of the position meet their work-related needs and expectations; conveying their competence to do the job; and demonstrating that they want and are capable of fulfilling the position.

What types of interview are conducted? There are different types of interview, depending on the number of interviewers and the number of candidates, the method used, and the focus of the interview.

- Job interview based on the number of interviewees and candidates:

- ✓ **Individual interview** - involves one interviewer and one candidate. This is the most common form of interview.
- ✓ **Multiple or panel interview** - involves more than one interviewer and one candidate. This type of interview is frequently used in large companies or for positions where there is contact with different departments or work areas.
- ✓ **Group interview** - involves a number of candidates and there may be one or more interviewers. This type of interview is normally used in large companies and serves as the first filtering stage. It enables an initial evaluation of all the candidates. It is then followed by an individual or multiple interview.

- Job interview based on method used:

- ✓ **Direct or directed interview:** Specific interview with close questions such as: “What training have you had?” or “How many years of professional experience do you have?”. The candidate is expected to respond with specific answers.
- ✓ **Free interview:** An interview with a few open questions, such as “Tell me about yourself”, “What do you think you can bring to our company?” or “Why are you interested in this job?” The candidate is expected to give clear and structured answers, where fluid communication is essential.
- ✓ **Mixed interview:** The more frequent type of interview where open and closed questions are combined.

- Job interview based on focus of the interview:

- ✓ **CV-based interview.** Interview in which the interviewer uses questions to talk to the candidate in order to review their training and career. Involves comparing and expanding the information the candidate has included in their CV, thus making it easier for the interviewer to make a final decision as they are able to choose the most suitable candidate for the job.
- ✓ **Competency-based interview.** This type of interview focuses on identifying candidates' competencies. Key competencies are the personal characteristics that differentiate people with superior results in their job. They are demonstrated through conduct that can be observed and evaluated. This type of interview usually involves asking about real-life situations that occurred in the past; in some companies, hypothetical situations are also put forward. In both cases the aim is to find out as much information as possible about the competencies that the candidate has used when resolving such situations and thus be able to identify their skill base and assess how well they match the profile for the position to be filled.

What competencies come into play during a job interview? In addition to specific competencies that an interviewer is aiming to assess during a competency-based interview for a specific job, in any type of interview, a range of the candidate's competencies that deserve special attention are brought out. These are:

- ✓ **Self-Awareness:** A proper evaluation of yourself as a person - knowing yourself better, your potential and how well your skill set matches the job you are going for - will help reduce anxiety, insecurity and uncertainty during a job interview.
- ✓ **Self-confidence:** If you convey confidence having gone through the process of self awareness, it means that your communication will be more fluid; you will demonstrate that you have self-control and that you know yourself; and are able to judge yourself correctly, both in terms of your strengths and weaknesses.
- ✓ **Self-control:** Keeping your emotions under control and avoiding negative reactions to unexpected or unknown situations - such as nervousness - is one of the main difficulties that you will encounter during a job interview. If you try to control your non-verbal communication (compulsive movements, playing with objects, touching your hair and so on) then you will convey a more secure image.

- ✓ **Communication:** Practising active listening guarantees positive results during a job interview. Obviously, it is an opportunity for you to talk, but it is much more useful to use it as an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to listen to your interviewer in an interested way. If you talk too much, you come across as inappropriate or inconsistent.
- ✓ **Empathy:** One of the consequences of active listening is empathy - ie being aware of the needs of the other person, putting yourself in their shoes. This will help you achieve the objectives defined by the interviewer as well as providing a more fluid exchange of information.

What are the main recommendations when going for a job interview? There are three key moments during a job interview: before the interview, during the interview, and when you leave. Often, success in getting a job lies in preparing for these phases. Some basic advice for tackling an interview with more chance of success include the following:

Before the interview...

- Read up information about the company and its industry (company website, yearbooks, industry and competitor reports, people who are known, etc). You will demonstrate greater interest and have a better discussion during the interview. You will also have more resources to help you understand what personal image you need to project: conservative, modern, creative, etc.
- Try to find out what role the person doing the interview holds within the organisation. You will have the opportunity to work out the type of questions that you will be asked during the interview depending on whether the person is an HR manager (more inclined towards psychological questions), is a manager in your potential area (more inclined towards professional or technical matters), is a general manager (more interested in organisational matters).
- Study potential questions that they might ask you, and try out possible responses. This will make you feel more confident.
- You need to be clear about your professional objective.
- Go over your CV to make sure that you are clear about your past training and career.
- Reflect on your competencies, both personal and professional. Try to do an audit of which knowledge, skills and aptitude best fits the profile required by the company.

During the interview...

- Remember that you need to pay attention throughout all the phases of the interview: welcome, introductory conversation, conversation about the job, clarifying any queries, and close.
- Practice active listening at all times.
- Be optimistic in your responses; even when you are talking about weaknesses or deficiencies, demonstrate your intention to improve and learn.
- Give your answers naturally and confidently and never respond with just a "yes" or "no".
- Talk naturally and be polite.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication: shake hands firmly, position your body and hands, look confidently in the other person's eyes without invading their space, smile to demonstrate positivity.
- Demonstrate interest in the job to be filled and ask questions about the company and how it works, the tasks to be fulfilled, teamwork and so on. Leave salary-related questions to the end of the interview.
- Highlight the positive aspects about the companies where you have worked, never the negative points.

After the interview...

- Say goodbye to everyone in the company who dealt with you.
- Analyse the strong and weak points of the interview.
- If you get offered the job, remember that:
 - You can have a couple of days to think about it before saying yes.
 - You can ask for a written pre-contract - especially if you are leaving one job for another.

At Porta22, the centre for professional development, we offer a range of useful tools and advice to help you prepare for the job interview: articles, books, documents, multimedia applications and workshops. You can also find out what competencies are required for more than 800 new occupations.

The multimedia application "The Job Interview" gives you the chance to study and put into practice the key skills you need during a job interview.

Why is body language important during a job interview? When we communicate, in addition to the words we use, we also communicate non-verbally through our body language - such as glances, gestures and posture. A job interview consists of a formal conversation between two or more people for the purpose of fulfilling information needs, so it is essential to control your non-verbal communication as well as the words you use; this helps to strengthen the way you present yourself. Non-verbal messages are picked up by other people, albeit unconsciously, and determine the communication relationship between them. They often contradict what we are saying in words.

During an interview, therefore, it is important to bear in mind the following:

- How you use your eyes. Look at the interviewer's eyes without invading their space. This will convey an image of transparency, trust and confidence in yourself.
- The position of the body. Avoid closed postures (arms and legs crossed) and try to use more open gestures to demonstrate that you are relaxed (hands visible and upright body position).
- Head movements. Nod frequently without overdoing it. Demonstrate a high level of attention and understanding of what you are being told.
- The hands. You can use your hands to support what you are saying at specific moments. However it is not advisable to move your hands to play with objects such as pens, keys etc. Nor should you move them excessively as this will convey a sense of nervousness or impatience.

Conclusions

- Preparing for a job interview is essential to increase your chance of success during the selection process. Understanding the different types of interview and the range of techniques and objectives for each one helps you to interview more successfully.
- During a job interview, apart from the type of job and the type of interview, a number of the candidate's specific competencies will emerge. These are: self-knowledge, self-confidence, self-control, communication and empathy. For this reason, special attention should be paid to these areas; the interview offers the opportunity to demonstrate them efficiently.
- Understanding the stages of the job interview is helpful in understanding that the company's evaluation does not take place solely during the interview, but also before and after.

- Making sure that our words are backed up by the right non-verbal communication conveys a good image to the interviewer.

Key concepts

Selection Process: Set of activities used to learn about, evaluate and decide upon which applicant is most suited for the job. For this process to be successful means aligning as far as possible the needs and expectations of the candidates with the needs and expectations of the recruiting organisation. The selection process covers a number of phases: recruitment, receiving applications, pre-selection, selection tests, selection and evaluation interview, and decision.

Competencies: Competencies cover a range of observable behaviours including: knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that need to be applied to a job in order for it to be done with the right level of effectiveness. It is not therefore sufficient simply to have the understanding needed to do a job (knowledge); the successful applicant must also be capable of applying this knowledge (knowing how to do it) and have the right attitude to do it (wanting to do it).

Process of Self-Understanding: An individual exercise that involves reflecting on your technical competencies (academic training, professional career, language skills and so on); personality (personal characteristics, professional and life objectives, level of motivation, self-confidence, adaptability, relationships with other people in one's personal and professional lives etc); and ability to adapt to change (ability to integrate and work in teams, progress within a new company etc).

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Webography

Expansión & Empleo. Useful link.

http://www.expansionyempleo.com/mercado_laboral/buscar_empleo.html

A website offering very useful online articles relating to interviews, CVs, covering letters, and in

general all the job-hunting tools you need.

List of competencies when evaluating candidates and employees Digital article

<http://www.gestiopolis.com/canales/derrhh/articulos/47/compevaluar.htm>

Article containing definitions of 34 competencies. Those that are most regularly used during the selection process have been chosen.

What are companies looking for? Digital article.

<http://azcarreras.com/carrera/tucarrera02.asp>

If you care about your professional profile and you want to be competitive, don't miss this article. You will see that qualifications alone are not sufficient.

Trabajos.com. Useful link.

<http://www.trabajos.com/informacion>

Website offering information and practical advice to succeed at job interviews. Also includes information to help you throughout the selection process in general (CV, covering letter, psycho-technical tests).

Group Dynamics. Digital article.

<http://azcarreras.com/seleccion/seleccion03.asp>

There are many types of group dynamics. But what are they? These are verbal discussion techniques where participants' behaviour and competencies can be observed.

Webography for Human Capital

We offer a number of options within the Human Capital website to help you build on the information relating to job interviews.

[*Tools > Job interview*](#)

[*Tools > Other job-hunting resources*](#)

[*Person > Key competencies*](#)

Use the SEARCH FACILITY for a more complete list of resources: books, articles and useful links. It's very easy - simply open up SEARCH and enter a keyword.