

Planning your next career move...

MODULE 2: The Interview - tips & advice

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THE INTERVIEW - TIPS & ADVICE

Next to public speaking, enduring a job interview can be one of the most stressful human experiences...

It is an opportunity for exchanging information and for mutual marketing, assessment and fact-finding, conducted according to certain conventions. In particular, an employer (perhaps through a recruiter) assesses your suitability for a position and you market yourself, gain information and try to assess whether you wish to work for this employer.

While it is natural to be nervous in an unfamiliar situation, work at using the interview to your advantage. Reminding yourself of the joint purpose of the interview will help shape the way you prepare for and conduct the interview. Often candidates do not prepare sufficiently; many are unable, in an interview, to focus on how what they have to offer matches or relates to what the employer requires.

In this current climate, you need to do more than simply 'turn up and answer questions' to make it past the initial interview. You must participate in the discussion - ask some intelligent questions and answer the interviewer's questions in the same way. You also need to 'sell' yourself at the interview. Self-promotion (without arrogance) is an important part of the interaction - being able to talk fluently about your relevant skills and achievements and capably outline past and potential areas of contribution will maximise your opportunity to progress to the next stage.

A constant inner question might be: "How is my conduct in the interview strengthening my claim on this position or helping me to decide whether I wish to work for this organisation?"

Interviews vary enormously, from the informal, 20 minute 'chat' to an elaborate selection process lasting a whole day. The style and emphasis depend on many factors, including the organisation's recruitment practices, the level of the role, the experience of the interviewer, whether they have used a recruitment consultancy to source potential talent and more. However, there are many features, common to all interviews, and the following tips should provide a core around which you can construct your own interview preparation.

EMPLOYER'S VIEWPOINT:

Faced with a vacancy, employers generally utilise the best skill available to discover the 'right' person to fill it. This may mean that they approach the market directly (by advertising themselves, or making approaches to people they know) or they may engage the services of a recruitment consultancy. Selectors will seek to find the person for the vacancy who, in their opinion, can grow and develop in the job to the mutual benefit of both parties.

Selection requires:

- Definition of the job and its requirements and demands
- Measurement of the candidate's capacity against those requirements

To achieve a complete and balanced assessment of candidates, skilled interviewers will work to a plan or format. We know from research, that the best predictor of future performance is past behaviour, so this plan will include finding patterns of behaviour repeating themselves whenever and wherever changes occur in the candidate's life. If such behaviour reveals itself during the course of the interview, the interviewer will begin to feel confident that the same pattern will appear if the candidate joins the organisation with the vacancy.

As part of the plan, an interviewer will endeavour to establish, measure and possibly weigh the following:

- Specific competencies required for the role
- Physical make-up: appearance, health, speech, etc
- Attainments, education, training, work achievements
- General intelligence and special aptitudes
- Interest: social, active, outdoor, practical, intellectual, etc
- Disposition: inter-personal relationships, self-reliance, dependability, etc
- Circumstances: willingness to relocate, flexibility around working hours, etc.

YOUR VIEWPOINT:

You will want to achieve certain things from the interview:

- Effective self-presentation
- Increased knowledge about the job
- Increased knowledge about the employer

While your ultimate goal for the interview is to secure a job, the immediate aim is to move forward a step in your job search. If the job appeals to you, you will want the interview to lead to a second interview, or directly to a job offer. If the position or organisation is not for you, you will want the interview to help clarify this.

PREPARATION IS PARAMOUNT:

It is essential that you plan carefully for every interview. You cannot rely on natural charm and intellect to see you through. The trained interviewer will detect poor preparation and may see it as a lack of motivation or interest.

Your carefully prepared CV will give you confidence, but your own interview plan will enhance it. The following check-list may help you to prepare for the interview, and act appropriately during and after it.

If you have an opportunity to choose the time of your interview, aim for the first or, if that has been taken, the last interview. That way you maximize the chances of "standing out" to your advantage:

- Confirm the interview place, time, day and date - in case of a mistake, as a courtesy and as another opportunity to record a good impression.
- Make sure you know how to get there. Plan your journey.
- Arrive with time to spare, so that you can be as relaxed as possible given the circumstances. Don't arrive too early though - about five minutes before your scheduled interview is an appropriate time to present yourself in Reception. If you are earlier than this, wait in the car or down the road.
- It goes without saying, if you are running late for unforeseen reasons, call and make your apologies before you are late.
- Be neatly groomed and conservatively dressed.
- When speaking with receptionists and secretaries, remember that they may later be asked by the interviewers to comment informally on the way candidates have conducted themselves outside the interview proper. Their impressions usually count for a lot in the decision making process.
- Visit the bathroom - and not just for natural reasons! Walking to and from the bathroom will often take you past working areas of the office from which you can indirectly glean a great deal about a company eg - cleanliness, atmosphere, efficiency, etc.

- Get further background information about the job, the employing organisation, its products, processes and services. Ask for a copy of the company's annual report, sales brochures, catalogues, etc. Do your own research into its products, the type of company (public, private, family owned, etc), its market performance, competitors, etc.
- Obtain a copy of the job description, if possible.
- Re-read the advertisement, application form and letters. Assess what you have to offer - relevant strengths, experience and skills, memorizing the five or six most important points. You cannot assume that the interviewers have read everything, or remembered your career details.
- Have a thumbnail sketch of yourself on the tip of your tongue when the question is asked "Tell me something about yourself... This sketch should cover what sort of person you are, your education, work experience, career goals, interests, etc. Learn this by heart. There is often a gold opportunity to "tell your story" for an uninterrupted couple of minutes near the beginning of an interview.
- Identify questions which will pose difficulties for you, and consider how to answer them. Practise your answers.
- Study some new developments in your field; a common question over which many candidates stumble relates to new developments "Where do you think the industry is heading?"
- Practice the interview with the help of someone, perhaps using a tape recorder or video camera.
- Discuss the interview with your family, especially matters affecting them, such as relocation.
- If you have a medical condition which you feel could prejudice your application, consider and practice how you would respond to questions about your health. You might reply eg - that you are perfectly happy to undergo a medical examination by the company's medical officer. It is as well to be discreet here: a good principle is that medical things should be discussed with medically qualified staff.
- Know what your last employer will say about the reason for you moving on. Many interviewees say one thing and the last employer another, which comes out in reference checking.
- Find out the names and positions of the interviewers, and as much as you can about their outlook, attitudes, and areas of business. If you are working with a Recruitment Consultancy, they will be able to provide you with this information.
- Think over what would be an acceptable range for a financial package should this be raised in a first interview. Be realistic and be prepared to negotiate within that range if you are offered the role.
- Have a meal beforehand as this will give you energy for your interview (and hopefully stop you being distracted by hunger pains!). It goes without saying, don't eat garlic, or other pungent food just prior to an interview. It is likely you will be in a small room for your interview and smelly breath is not a great personal statement!
- Find out specific facts about the organisation: where its depots, offices or stores are located; what its products and services are; what its growth has been; and what its potential growth is for the future. The following publications may be helpful:
 - The Business Who's Who of NZ
 - Kompas NZ
 - The internet is an obvious resource
- It is also helpful to know what other business units or work sections your potential employer relates to and for what purpose.
- Refresh your memory about your present/former employers. You will be expected to know at least the basic facts about the organisation you last worked for.
- Prepare some questions to ask during the interview. You might like to ask questions about:
 - Exactly what the position involves?
 - The reason the position is available?
 - Training?
 - Organisation/sector growth plans?

- Naturally the interviewer(s) is/are going to have many questions to ask you. Be prepared for:
 - Why did you choose this particular vocation?
 - What do you really want to do in life?
 - Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
 - What style of management works the best for you?
 - What interests you about our products and services?
 - Why do you want to work for this particular organisation?
 - What have you done which shows initiative in your career?
 - What is the thing you are most proud of in your career?
 - What is your major weakness?
 - What do you think determines a person's progress in a company?
 - Are you willing to travel?
 - How do you spend your spare time?
 - What type of books do you read?
 - What does teamwork mean to you?
- Above all else - smile and enjoy the experience. Smiling will help you to look engaged in the process and will help you to relax.

PREPARATION CHECKLIST - HAVE YOU...

- Obtained a job specification, person/selection criteria, job description?
- A clear understanding of the job objective and person specifications?
- Prepared questions to ask the supervisor/manager of the position?
- Talked to/visited the supervisor/manager of the position?
- Completed and posted an application, covering letter and resume?
- Collected and organised any supporting material to take to an interview?
- Contacted your referees and discussed how they will speak on your behalf?
- Possible answers?
- Assessed your own strengths and weaknesses?
- Prepared and rehearsed any presentation you may have been asked to prepare?

PRE INTERVIEW CHECKLIST:

- Spare copies of resume
- Diary or calendar
- Pen
- Cleaned and pressed interview outfit
- Originals of references, exam results, etc, and copies that you can leave with the interviewer
- Spare change for parking meters
- Examples of relevant work (designs, drawings, proposals, etc)
- Other supportive documentation (appraisals, etc)
- Map of best route to interview
- Details of interviewer's name(s) and title (s)
- Brief information about the business unit for last minute review
- Umbrella, Comb, Handkerchief, Watch

THE INTERVIEW ITSELF:

The first point to remember is that you are being interviewed because somebody wants to hire staff not because they want to embarrass you. The whole interview process is designed to assess your suitability for a position. In order to find this out, the interviewer will be evaluating qualifications, skills and intellectual qualities. He/She will also try to get an understanding of your aptitudes, stability, motivation and maturity.

The following list will assist you to make the interview as smooth and successful as possible for both you and the interviewer:

- Plan ahead and arrive on time. Late arrival for an interview is never excusable.
- Turn your cellphone off or to silent before you arrive and leave it in your pocket or handbag until you leave the building.
- Greet the interviewer(s) formally until he/she indicates otherwise.
- Shake hands firmly, looking the interviewer(s) in the eye.
- Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Once seated, sit upright, be alert, friendly and interested. Do not fidget. Be a good listener as well as a good talker - the interviewer may give important leads as to how you can promote yourself.
- Never smoke.
- Always try to relate your skills and experience to the position.
- Do not answer questions with a simple yes or no. Expand on your answers, telling those things about yourself that relate to the question and position. Having said that, keep to the point and do not over answer questions.
- Remember that you alone can sell yourself to the interviewer. Make sure that your good points are relayed in a factual and sincere manner, helping them realize the need for you in the organisation concerned. Do not be vague.
- Never lie. Bear in mind that if you get the job, discrepancies in your information may become embarrassingly apparent. Most applicants are reference-checked.
- Do not make derogatory remarks about former or present employers or companies.
- In the first interview, it is not wise to discuss salary, holidays, bonuses, retirement etc, unless this is raised by the employer. However, you can make yourself aware of this information by contacting the appropriate Personnel Unit.
- Always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job under discussion, even if you are unsure whether you want it or not. It is always better to be in a position where you can choose between several jobs rather than only none.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN BEING INTERVIEWED:

- Why is this position vacant?
- How often has it been filled in the past five to ten years?
- What have been the primary reasons for persons leaving?
- Why did the person who held this position most recently leave?
- What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this job?
- What are some of the objectives that you would like accomplished in this job?
- What is most pressing? What would you like to have done within the next two or three months?
- What are some of the longer-term objectives that you would like completed?
- What freedom would I have in determining my work objectives, deadlines, and methods of measurement?
- What kind of support does this position receive in terms of people, finances, etc?
- What are some of the more difficult problems that one would have to face in this position? How do you think these could be best handled?
- Where could a person who is successful in this position progress? Within what time frame?
- In what ways has this organisation been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
- What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
- How would my performance be measured/managed? What accounts for success in your organisation?

PANEL INTERVIEWS:

In the public service and increasingly in the private sector, interviews take place before a panel. The panel usually comprises three people, though this may vary in number from two to five. Usually at least one panel member will be a supervisor or manager from the immediate work area, and another will be an independent member from another business unit.

To ensure all applicants are assessed fairly against the same criteria, the panel will have prepared a list of questions. These questions may be weighted to reflect the importance of the criterion point being assessed. Unless you are told otherwise, all criteria in the selection criteria will have equal weighting, and applicants will need to satisfy all criteria.

Your answers are usually point scored against the expected and those of the other applications. At the end of the interviews, the applicant with the highest score is usually offered the position, provided they meet all the required criteria.

Panel interviews are not as difficult as they may seem. A few points to help you perform at your best:

- If the room set up allows it, greet each member of the panel with a handshake.
- The panel members usually have a set procedure they wish to follow. Allow them to control the direction of the interview.
- When answering a question, make the majority of your eye contact with the person who asked the question. Still give occasional eye contact to the other panel members.
- Take your time to think of your answers. What feels like an unusually long pause to you will seem like a short time to the panel. The pause will simply make you look thoughtful and considered to the panel.
- Try not to be intimidated by the panel. Although they may seem serious to you, they want you to perform as well as possible, and are unlikely to ask difficult questions just for the sake of tripping you up.
- If you are not sure what was meant by the question, ask for clarification - don't guess.
- Keep your answers focussed and to the point. If you are not sure whether you have provided sufficient information, ask the questioner for clarification.
- Remember that others on the shortlist will be feeling exactly the same way you do.
- Most panels do not ask yes/no questions. They want you to do the talking. In fact, the panel are not really doing their job unless you are doing at least 75% of the talking.
- Generally, you will be asked to summarise your claims to the position. Use this opportunity to make a final statement about why you are well suited for the position. Remember, it is only a summary, so keep it brief and to the point.
- Mentally tick off, as they arise in the interview, those five or six key reasons why you should be considered for the position. Find opportunities to raise those that have not been touched on.
- If you are confident you have answered the following, then you have done all you can:
 - Why are you interested in the job and the business unit?
 - What can you offer, and can you do the job?

THINGS TO AVOID:

The interviewer will be evaluating your negative factors as well as your positive attributes. Listed below are negative factors frequently evaluated during the course of the interview and those, which most often lead to rejection:

- Poor personal appearance
- Overbearing, over aggressive, superior or defensive behaviour
- Inability to express ideas clearly, poor poise, grammar, and diction.
- Lack of purpose or goals
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm

- Lack of confidence, excessive nervousness
- Evasiveness and making excuses for past behaviour
- Lack of tact, maturity and courtesy
- Condemnation of past employers
- Failure to look interviewer in the eye
- Limp, fishy handshake
- Persistent attitude of "What can you do for me?"
- Lack of preparation for the interview resulting in an inability to ask intelligent questions.

INTERVIEW PRESENTATION:

As research proves, we form our first impression of another person within the first few seconds of meeting them. This generally only allows for an assessment of personal presentation, so below are some tips to consider when thinking about how you will present yourself for your interview:

Inappropriate interview dress for men:	Inappropriate interview dress for women:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeans, or anything made of denim • Loose shirt neckline or top button undone • Extreme fashion fads • No jacket • Argyle or coloured socks • Too much aftershave lotion • Pants with no belt • Long hair • Bulging pockets • Socks not long enough • Ties too long or short • Earring • Rolled up shirt sleeves • Sports watch • Scuffed shoes • Half-grown beard or moustache • Ill fitting jackets and pants (look tight, long or short) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeans, or anything made of denim • Sleeveless tops and dresses • Bare shoulders • Low cut necklines • Shorts • Sequins and shiny fabrics • Pants (ski pants, leggings) • T-Shirts or Transparent fabrics • Tight blouses that gape at the front • Clingy or tight clothes • Knee Highs with skirts • Running shoes • Mini Skirts or Sundresses • Extreme fashion fads • Glamorous evening makeup • No make up • Long untied/unkept hair • Too much perfume • Oversized dangling earrings and any excessive jewellery

NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

Non verbal communication is an aspect of communication which is often overlooked. However, clearly it can be more important than verbal communication. Research has shown that we make decisions about people in the first 30 seconds of meeting them. The key point is the emphasis on the non-verbal rather than the verbal aspect of communication. Each of us has the power and ability to improve our non-verbal communication skills.

Albert Mehrabian, a Psychologist, has suggested that 55% of the impression we make on others is determined by what they SEE. This includes colouring, appearance, posture, body language, facial expression, eye contact. Everyone has the power and ability to improve our non-verbal communication skills:

Appearance:

In his book "You Are What You Wear: The Key to Business Success", William Thourlby states that when you walk into a room people make a possible 10 decisions about you based on your appearance:

• Economic level	• Fashion awareness	• Educational level
• Your success	• Trustworthiness	• Moral character
• Social position	• Social heritage	• Level of sophistication
• Your future		

Appearance is made up of three elements:

- Physical Features
- Self Image
- Clothing

Clothing is the single most important factor in what constitutes appearance. Additionally, clothing affects your physical features and your self image.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, so use that first meeting to your advantage.

BODY LANGUAGE:

With communication, it is important to have words and action work together. You can shut off verbal output, but not non-verbal output. For example, in a situation where we do not agree with what is being said but prefer to be polite, it is quite common for us to verbalise agreement while we shake (rather than nod) our head. This gives an unconscious cue to the person we are speaking to that we are not being entirely honest.

Remember, posture, gestures and facial expressions are important indicators for body language. Despite the importance of non-verbal communication, experts are not capable of spelling out precisely what each gesture means. All non-verbal behaviour must be interpreted in reference to each situation.

Crucial misunderstandings can arise from ignoring the situation, the context and culture of the people involved. Non-verbal communication has to be looked at in total to determine a general attitude and expression. Your body message will provoke a positive or negative reaction depending on the situation and person you are communicating with.

Positive body language actions include:

- Maintaining eye contact
- Occasionally nodding the head in agreement
- Smiling
- Leaning towards the speaker

Negative body language actions include:

- Looking away or turning away from the speaker when they are talking to you
- Closing your eyes
- Yawning excessively
- Slouching
- Frowning

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG...

If something goes wrong in an interview, telephone call, with your presentation, etc, it is easy to get flustered and sometimes not recover your composure in time to remedy the situation.

Try to remember that most people mishandle an interview question, have a throat tickle when on the phone, ladder their stockings, etc. at one time or another, including the person you are talking to. If you handle the situation calmly and sensibly, the person you are talking to is likely to be more, rather than less, impressed with you.

Helpful hints:

- Don't panic. You will think more clearly if you can avoid feeling panicked.
- Don't dwell on it. Acknowledge the mistake or problem to the other person, and then endeavour to move on.
- Keep breathing. Pause and take a deep breath. This will help settle your thoughts and nerves.
- Clarify. If there is a misunderstanding, it is important to clarify by repeating what you understand and checking if it is what the other person understands.
- Expect to be nervous. What you may see as a disaster, may only be viewed as a hiccup if anything at all by others.

Frequently you may find the interview questions are structured in the form of hypothetical questions. That is, they being "What would you do if...". Wherever possible reflect on a past situation where you successfully dealt with a similar issue (as we said earlier, it has been scientifically proven that past behaviour is the strongest predictor of future performance)

If you have never been in a similar situation, let the panel know and draw on your commonsense and life experience to formulate your answer. Sometimes it is most appropriate to simply state "I've never been in that situation, but I would consider all of the data, possible solutions and the consequences of my decision before taking action."

FOLLOW UP:

After a job interview, most applicants have to wait for the good or bad news. A follow-up letter or email, expressing your appreciation for the opportunity of an interview, can achieve the following things for you:

- It re-expresses your interest in the job and gives you an edge over other applicants.
- It gives you a second chance to communicate your best feature that is relevant to the job.
- It shows that you are still confident about handling the job.
- It keeps your name prominent in the recipient's mind.
- It can help to speed up action on the part of the recipient.

Most applicants neglect this opportunity. A polite expression of gratitude could decide the case in your favour, particularly if you show that you remember a significant fact from the interview. Chances are you will be one of the very few who were interviewed who are thoughtful enough to send a follow-up communication.

If, as sometimes happens, the interviewer is left with only vague impressions of dozens of applicants, the person may remember you better through this action.

Tone:

Be conscious of the tone you use in your follow up communication. Every time we speak or write, we are dealing with 'tone of voice', as well as meaning - and quite often our tone has the greater effect. The first thing to do before you write this letter is to think about who the likely receiver is and about his or her outlook. The next step is to be quite clear about why you are writing. When you have your objectives clear, a better letter will result.

Follow-up letters are often very difficult to phrase. However, you are no longer writing to a stranger. An exception to this is a follow-up letter in the case of receiving no response to your job application.

Keep some formality in your communication, but make it human as well. Ensure it reflects your own style.

FEEDBACK AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

Once the interviewer has reached a decision, they will contact you and inform you (either directly or via the Recruitment Consultant) of the outcome. Use this contact to ask for specific feedback on your strengths and weaknesses as the interviewer saw them. Also take the opportunity to ask for feedback on your application and how the interviewer reacted to it.

Gaining this feedback is important even if you are successful. As you progress in your career, there will be other interviews, and gaining feedback now can help you identify areas in which you may need to develop and may be able to recommend a training/development agenda.

Being unsuccessful at interview generally means the interviewer considered another applicant to be more suitable. It is vital for you to gain feedback from them if you can. With this feedback you can then improve your approach to the next interview. They may also help you to identify specific areas in which you need to develop and may be able to recommend a training/development agenda.

If the interviewer is not able to give you extensive feedback at this point, ask to make an appointment to speak with them as soon as possible. However, do remember that they are likely to be busy people, who still have responsibility for overseeing a recruitment process and possibly an induction programme for the role though.

Feedback after the interview can help you:

- Understand how you present at an interview
- Know what interviewers are looking for
- Develop a clearer picture of your strengths and weaknesses
- Know the impact of your covering letter and resume
- Construct an appropriate training and development plan to assist in your career management
- Be better prepared for your next interview!

It is often difficult to receive personal feedback. Praise often causes us embarrassment, while criticism can make us defensive or even argumentative. And remember, feedback is generally as difficult to give as it is to receive. Negative feedback is rarely delivered with the intention of personal attack (although sometimes it can feel this way). Sift, sort and filter for what is useful to you in your development.

If you are unclear about a particular point of feedback, ask the person to explain it.

BEHAVIOURAL EVENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

As part of a structured interview you are likely to be asked Behavioural Questions to test specific competencies required for the role. These are the questions that start with:

- "Tell me about a time when..."
- Give me an example of a situation where..."
- "Describe a situation at work where..."

The interviewer will be looking for you to answer this question with a specific example from your past work history. A good way to frame your answer is to use the ST/AR formula.

Firstly describe the **Situation** or **Task** you were faced with, then describe the **Action** you took in this situation and finally, describe the **Result** or outcome.

In these questions, the interviewer will be assessing your competency in particular areas. For example, if they were trying to assess your Planning and Prioritising skills, they may ask a question like, Tell me about a time when you have several urgent and important tasks to complete that had conflicting deadlines.

They will be looking for context of the situation, then what steps you took to manage your workload, how you decided what was most important, perhaps who else you needed to communicate with, what happened to each deadline and what impact this pressure had on you. They will also want to know the final outcome.

When asked a behavioural question, there are a number of steps you go through, which you may or may not be conscious of:

- First, you hear the question
- Then you access your memory bank (looking for examples). Usually you will look up or away whilst you are doing this.
- Once you have accessed your memory, you may have identified more than one example, so in your mind, you will run through each scenario to see which one paints you in the most favourable light.
- Once you have selected the example you are going to use, you then play the whole thing through in your mind before you resume eye contact and answer the question.
- This can be almost instant or it may take a little while (up to 30 seconds). This is normal. Don't be scared to ask the interviewer to repeat the question if you are not sure of what they are looking for.

The key to providing good answers to behavioural questions is to:

- Be specific - talk about one specific time
- Ensure your response is always in past tense - ie what you did, not what you would do. The interviewer is looking for past behaviour as an indicator of future performance. They are not looking for a hypothetical answer.
- Be honest! If you try to fabricate an answer to a behavioural question, a skilled interviewer will catch you out in their probing or follow up questions.

MOST COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Tell me about yourself.

- Prepare yourself an 'elevator pitch'. That is a brief (no more than two minutes) overview of who you are, what your background is and something personal about yourself (ie hobbies or interests outside of work) to give a balanced view.
- Be on guard against the interviewer who gives you free rein.
- Answer should relate to job opening.
- What can you do for your employer?

2. What do you know about our organisation?

- Give your interviewer an indication that you have done some research. Eg, I've looked at your website/talked with xxx who works in the organisation and have identified xxx (something relevant about the business) ...etc. They already know about their organisation, so no point in regurgitating the information verbatim to them.
- Also, state that you are keen to hear any other relevant and appropriate information that perhaps is not so readily available in the public domain.

3. What would you do for us? What can you do for us that someone else can't?

- Relate past experiences which represent success in solving problems which may be similar to those of prospective employer.

4. Why should we hire you?

- Capitalise on your strengths and your personal attributes that set you apart from others. Make sure these related to the organisation and/or the role. This is not the time to bring up any quirky personal traits!

5. What do you look for in a job?

6. Please give me your definition (the position for which you are being interviewed).

7. How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?

- Let them know that you appreciate there will a learning curve, but that you can point to examples from your previous roles where you have come up to speed quickly. Be prepared to give some examples if you are asked.

8. How long would you stay with us?

- This is a touch question as you can appear too ambitious to take a chance on, or infact not ambitious enough if you are not looking beyond the immediate next step.
- A possible way around this would be to say - I imagine that whilst I am still challenged and we are both happy with the contribution I am making I will be committed to the role/organisation.

9. You may be over qualified or too experienced for the position we have to offer.

- Emphasise interest in long-term association.
- Employer will get faster return on investment because you have more experience than required.

10. Are you or could you become a good supervisor/manager/leader?

11. What do you see as the most difficult task in being a supervisor/manager/leader?

- Try to think of examples of where you have successfully led or managed others that shows your potential in this area. If you have had formal supervisory/management responsibilities, you may be able to call on examples of when you have had to show someone how to perform a new task, or you have led a project team, etc

12. Why are you leaving your present job?

- Give a "group" answer (ie. our office is closing, etc).
- Think about your reasons for leaving before your interview and stick to one response ...don't change answers during the interview! Remember your referees may be asked to recall your reasons for leaving as well, so be honest with this or you may get caught out.
- If it is simply for 'more challenge', expand on this. It could mean different things to different people.

13. Describe what you feel to be an ideal working environment.

- This is a place where you can bring in some of the "satisfiers" and "ideal job preferences" - but don't make it sound too sublime or impractical. Otherwise, they may conclude that you are not ready for the realities of the present company. Downplay the dissatisfiers.

14. How would you evaluate your present firm?

- If is an excellent company which has given me a lot of good experience and opportunities to perform.

15. Have you helped increase sales? Profits? How?

- This is your chance to describe in some detail a business accomplishment that is relevant to the proposed new job. Feel free to dwell on this.

16. How much financial responsibility have you had to account for?

- You can answer this in terms of your budget or head count or the size of the project or sales that you directed.

19. Did you supervise people on your last job?

- Be specific - and feel free to refer to those over which you had influence such as a task force or a matrix organisation.

20. Do you like working with figures more than words?

- Answer honestly

21. What do your co-workers think of you?

- Be as positive as you can, but remember to be honest, too. They can check your references easily.

22. In your current or last position, what are or were your five most significant accomplishments? In your career so far?

- Be prepared to talk confidently about your achievements. Make sure you are clear on the part you played in achieving the outcomes in case you are questioned on this.
- Emphasise the positive and don't carry on at length about the negatives.

24. Why haven't you found a new position before now?

- If you have taken time out to identify the next steps in your career, or you have travelled, gone back to studying for a short period of time, etc, it is fine to be honest about this. It shows balance and careful consideration of your future prospects.
- If you have been looking for work for a while, you could reply... 'I really want to make the right choice on my next role and have been careful not to accept the 'first thing that comes along'. This has taken both care and time.

25. What do you think of your boss?

- Describe the working relationship you had with them. ie how much day to day contact you had with them what they knew about your work, how you found them to work with. Stay factual and avoid negative personal remarks about them. They may be one of your referees, so make sure you describe your relationship accurately.

26. Would you describe a few situations in which your work was criticised?

- Be specific and brief; avoid getting emotional or defensive about it.

27. If I spoke with your previous boss, what would he or she say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

- Be honest about this one, but do not emphasise the negative. Recount some of the good things you did for him/her.
- If a reference check was conducted with this person, would they say the same things???

28. Can you work under pressure, deadlines etc.?

- I can handle it. It is a way of life in the business world.
- Be prepared to give examples to back up this claim.

29. Do you think you are better suited to staff work or line work?

- I can handle either one, and my preference depends a lot on the specific job, the boss I would be working for, and the challenges in the position.

30. In your present position, what problems have you identified that had previously been overlooked?

- Give one or two examples, but remember to be humble about it.

31. If you had your choice of jobs and companies where would you go?

- Talk about the job at hand and what is attractive in the company that is interviewing you.

32. Why aren't you earning more at your age?

- Don't be defensive about this one. Explain that you are hoping to rectify the situation through this career change.

33. What do you feel this position should pay?

- You may want to answer this with a question, such as, "What is the typical salary range for similar jobs in your company?" If there is no range in the company, give the range that you had in mind. But qualify it by saying you hope to learn more about the job responsibilities and scope.

34. How much do you expect if we offer this position to you?

- The market value of the job may be the key answer. My understanding is that a job like the one you're describing may be in the range of \$ to \$.
- Always give a range that you would be prepared to negotiate within, depending on how closely the opportunity ticks all of your boxes for your next role. Be realistic as this could be a deal breaker if you overestimate and put yourself out of the running. Be prepared to trade things off to get what is really important to you (eg if they offer training, but are paying slightly less than you wanted at first, you might consider this).

35. Any objectives to psychological testing?

- These are not as scary as they sound.
- If they are inviting you to testing stage, then you are being seriously considered as a candidate.

36. Why do you want to work for us?

- Do some research before your interview, so that you know what appeals to you about the organisation, people, culture, products, etc, so that you can talk about where this is a potential match from your perspective.

37. What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?

- Don't feel obliged to reveal details of your other negotiations. If you have other irons in the fire, refer to your campaign in a general way; but concentrate mainly on the job at hand.
- Sometimes having other things on the go, can put you into a more competitive situation if they are also keen on you. Be honest about this so you don't blow your chances.

38. What was the last book you read? Movie you saw? Sporting event you attended?

- Be honest. If possible, mention some of the things you read in order to keep yourself up to date in your professional field. However, it is okay to show balanced interests by your recreational reading as well.

39. How would you describe your own personality?

- Think about this in advance. Mention 2 or 3 of your useful traits.
- Choose realistic traits that would paint you in good light and be prepared to back them up with examples if asked.

40. What are your goals?

- Relate your answer to the company, rather than give a very broad, general answer. Keep your ambitions on a realistic track.

43. What are your strong points?

- Present at least three - preferably in a way that relates them to the potential job opening.

44. What are your weak points?

- Don't say you have none, give only one. Turn negative into a positive answer like, "I'm sometimes impatient and do the work myself when we are late".

45. How long would you expect to stay with our company?

- As long as we both feel that there is a challenging work that I can do.

46. What sort of relationship do you have with associates, both at the same level and above and below you?

- This is a very important question, and you can well afford to take your time and answer it in steps.
- When talking about your relationships with subordinates, be prepared to state your philosophy of handling them, particularly when they have performance problems.
- With regard to bosses, indicate your keen interest in understanding your boss' expectations. You may also want to talk about how you would go about keeping your boss informed.

47. What are some of your outside activities or recreations?

- Hopefully, your answer can show that you lead a balanced life. But avoid throwing in so many outside activities that it casts some doubt on how much time you will have for the job. Remember, too, that your hobbies and recreations can be quite revealing to your own personality.

48. Are you continuing your education?

- If you are not actually attending or planning to attend formal classes, be ready to explain what sort of outside reading or attendance at professional seminars you undertake in order to keep yourself fresh in your chosen field.