



GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW

A Guide To Preparing For Interview

Making Your Interview Count



Job interviews can be stressful and overwhelming.

Feeling nervous is natural when you want to do as well as you possibly can or you're just an interview away from securing your dream job.

It may help to alleviate your fears if you look at interviews from a different perspective.

They are not exams to pass or fail, but a chance to learn more about the job and employer, ask questions and gather the information that will help you decide if this is a place where you would like to work and if this is the right job for you.

Preparation and practice will help to grow your confidence and set you up for a successful interview.

Let's dive into it...

01 FUNDAMENTALS

JUST BE

YOURSELF

YOURSELF

YOURSELF

Attitude

At the interview stage of a job application process you're on a shortlist of candidates who have similar skills and experience to your own.

A really powerful way to set yourself apart is to show your personality, your attitude towards work, and try to maintain a positive mindset. The interviewer is not looking for a robot that can complete a set of programmed tasks but someone who is genuinely enthusiastic about working for their company and adding value in the job.

If you worry that by being yourself the employer won't "get you" remember that the point of an interview is to determine if you fit the employer's requirements, and if the job fits yours.

If you're not yourself at interview, you may end up securing a role where the real you isn't a fit, meaning you'll be back interviewing for other jobs before you know it.

Ask For Help

It's estimated that 93% of communication occurs through nonverbal behaviour and tone of voice, with only 7% through the use of words. How you behave and your facial expressions can speak volumes.

Conventional interview guidance includes making good eye contact and offering a firm handshake. These contribute to a good first impression but they are neurotypical standards that are difficult for neurodivergent people to maintain.

Don't be afraid to advise the employer if you need additional support or if a disability means that you don't conform to conventional stereotypes. Progressive, inclusive employers are working to reduce bias and appeal to the widest pool of talent possible. Advising them that you need some support or consideration will improve the interview experience immensely.

Time, Location & Format

Make sure you confirm the exact time and location of the interview. Determine if it is in person or via video and be clear on the format too – for instance, the number of people who will be interviewing you and whether there is anything you need to prepare, like an assessment or presentation, as part of the process.

RECRUITER TIP

Ask for guidance on the length of the interview as it's important to allow plenty of time so you don't have to leave early to meet other commitments.

Contact Details

Knowing who will be at the interview can eliminate some of the anxiety that comes with meeting people for the first time, it also gives you the chance to review their LinkedIn profile as part of your background research. Along with name and position their contact details are useful to have, allowing you to contact them directly if an emergency means you're running late for the interview.

Trial Run

Don't make assumptions about parking or the time it will take to reach your destination. A trial run will make sure you know where you are going.

If the interview is via video make sure your tech is set up correctly by running a test call with a friend, we get into more detail on this in [section 7](#) of this document.

CV & Stories

You may be asked to talk through your CV so it's important that you know it inside out and can clearly explain your responsibilities, tasks, projects, what you achieved and how you contributed.

Although you don't know what questions the interviewer will ask, we've compiled a list of **commonly asked questions** for you to practice. As you work through these, draw upon relevant life experiences as well as work ones, sharing stories that reflect your uniqueness – these will make you more memorable.

Dress Code

What “professional” looks like has changed dramatically from the business suit stereotype. While it is important that you are comfortable, our advice is to dress for the job you want. From your research, you'll have a feel for the culture of the company and how people dress generally, step it up a notch as it's important that it looks like you've made an effort.

RECRUITER TIP

It's better to be over-dressed than under-dressed.

**BAD VIBES
DON'T GO
WITH
MY OUTFIT**





Documentation

Your TMM Recruitment consultant will confirm the documents you need to take with you to the interview but these may include:

- 1 A copy of the job description and your CV.** These are both really useful documents to reference during the interview.
- 2 Certificates or ID** in case the employer doesn't have a copy of these already.
- 3 Personal and professional references.**
- 4 Portfolio of your work** to showcase your abilities, this is particularly relevant in creative professions.

Your Questions

Remember that the interview is a two-way process: it's important you have enough information to decide if this job is a good fit for you. Asking relevant questions also demonstrates initiative and shows you are serious about learning more about the company and the job. Jump to [section 6](#) for guidance on asking good interview questions.

Taking out a notepad with prepared questions always looks SO good at the start of an interview, it will also come in handy for capturing information and writing notes during the interview.

Research

Have a good knowledge of the company and the job. Your TMM Recruitment consultant will provide you with information but personal effort will enhance your credibility and reinforce your interest in the job. There's guidance for conducting thorough research in the next section.

02 RESEARCH

Doing your homework on the company is essential. It will reflect badly if the interviewer suspects you haven't bothered to understand what the business is all about and you'll be seriously limiting your ability to talk sincerely about why you want the job. While conducting your research have in mind the information that's useful to know:

- *What the company does and what sets it apart.*
- *Values, mission, and culture.*
- *Industry type and its place in the market.*
- *Size of the organisation: turnover, headcount, services, and products.*
- *Whether it's part of a larger group or an independent firm.*
- *Where the operations are based.*
- *History, future plans, and growth potential.*
- *What the role involves, where it sits in the organisation or team, and why the work matters.*
- *Has the company been in the news lately? General news and business news.*



1 Your Recruitment Consultant

One of your most valuable information sources is your TMM Recruitment consultant. They speak directly with the employer and will have information about the job that you won't find anywhere else – pick their brains!

2 Company Websites

A great place to start your research is a company's website. Look out for About Us, News, and Team pages to learn about the history, current activities, and people in the business.

There may be really useful presentations and videos which go into more detail about products and services. From the design and content of the website you'll get a feel for the culture and values of the business, its approach to diversity and inclusion, and its ESG credentials.

3 Google

Other search engines are available! Company websites are carefully curated, for a more thorough investigation you need to look for information from news, social media and review sites such as Glassdoor.

4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a mine of information. It's worth your while looking on other social media sites but LinkedIn should be your primary source as in addition to the employer's company page you'll be able to review employee and leadership team profiles and read what interests them through comments and posts.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with looking at the profiles of your interviewers. LinkedIn is also a great way to discover if you know anyone who works for the hiring company, or if you have any mutual connections with the interview panel.

5 Job Description

Your research is not just about gathering information but for identifying blanks in your understanding. The interview is the ideal time to ask questions which clarify anything that's missing or unclear about the job description.

6 Friends & Acquaintances

We mentioned that LinkedIn can be a source of mutual connections but you may have friends or people in your personal network who already work at the company who could be a great source of advice.

03 PRACTICE

Some interview questions can be anticipated, and with a general idea of what may be asked you can draft your responses and practice them beforehand. You'll find some of the most **frequently asked questions** here.

Our candidates often tell us that their biggest worry about interviews is being asked a question that they can't answer because their mind has gone blank.

If this happens, keep calm and ask for a moment to think about it - alternatively, you can say that you'd like to come back to that question later in the interview.

RECRUITER TIP

Practicing with a friend is useful because they may know information about you that you forget to consider or incorporate in your answers.

Practicing also helps you get into the mindset of the interviewer. Put yourself in their shoes and think "If I was the interviewer, what would I really want to know?" It's surprising how many times something new comes to your mind to share.



TAKE TAKE A DEEP BREATH

It's not just what you say that matters, it's how you say it.

Take a deep breath. It will clear your thoughts, improve your posture and slow down how quickly you speak.

Look happy to be interviewed and remain positive. Smile. It really is a powerful ice-breaker and helps to put everyone at ease.

It may seem obvious but we see this all the time – remember to ***switch your phone to silent*** and don't chew gum!

Don't talk over the interviewer, stray off on a tangent or try to be amusing because there's nothing worse than a bad joke falling flat.

By the end of the interview, if you feel ***your strengths*** and what you will bring to the job haven't been well conveyed simply say, "There's one more thing I'd like you to know" and then concisely present the facts.

Always ***ask at least one question*** at the end of the interview, it really does demonstrate interest in the job and organisation.

Thank the interviewer at the end of your meeting.

04 QUESTION TYPES

During an interview, you'll probably be faced with different styles of questions. These tend to fall into these categories.

BEHAVIOURAL SITUATIONAL CURVEBALL COMPETENCY

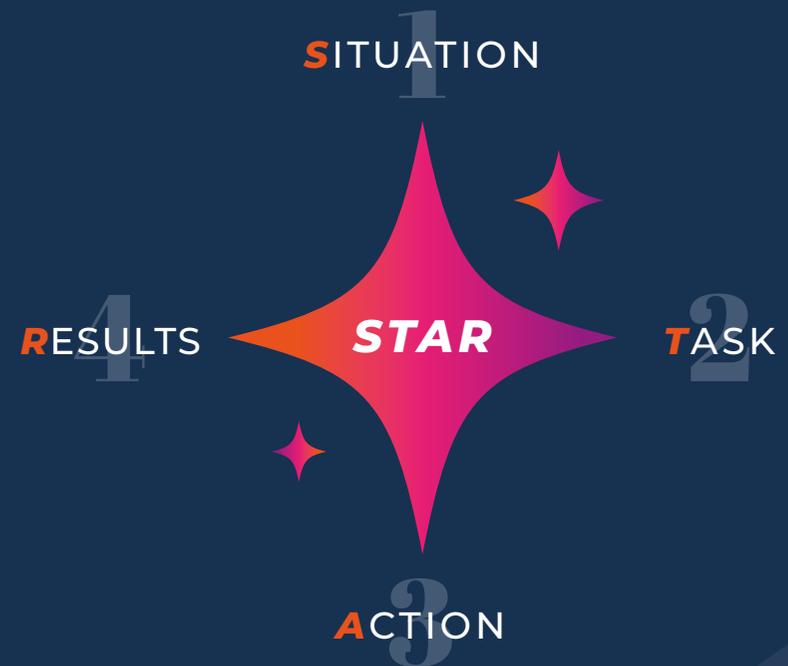
By understanding what the purpose of each question style is you'll be better prepared to stay calm and provide a comprehensive answer.

Behavioural and **competency** interview questions are based on the concept that past experiences will predict future action and performance.

The objective of behavioural questions is to reveal whether you'll add value by the way you think, respond and behave, while competency questions focus on whether you have the required level of aptitude, skill, and competence to fulfill the duties of the job.

Star Technique

We recommend the STAR technique for answering behavioural and competency questions. You'll recognise these types of questions because they usually start along the lines of "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of how you..."



Your personal stories make you memorable so share details that are interesting and engaging.

Highlight specific words and phrases in the job description and person specification that describe the skills, knowledge, and experience that the employer is looking for, and then reflect on experiences you've had that required these specific skills and behaviours.

For example, if "must be able to work under pressure" is a requirement then chances are you'll be asked a behavioural question like "How do you handle meeting tight deadlines?"

SITUATION

Set the scene around a specific problem, challenge or situation.

TASK

Describe how the situation relates to you and your remit.

ACTION

Explain the actions you took.

RESULTS

Discuss the outcome of the actions.

RECRUITER TIP

There's more about guidance for great responses to behaviour style questions in [this blog post](#).

Situational questions are slightly different in that they are based on a hypothetical situation that could arise in your job. The purpose of these questions is to see how well you "think on your feet", use initiative, and problem solve.

The final category we've called **Curveball**, you know, those questions that have nothing to do with your job, behaviour, values, or work ethic but keep getting asked in interviews anyway!

Try to use these obscure questions to your advantage by providing an explanation for your answer that actually shares some relevant information such as your creativity, logical thinking, or personal preferences.



**TO GIVE YOU A FEEL
FOR THE DIFFERENT
QUESTION STYLES
HERE'S AN EXAMPLE
OF EACH ONE...**

Behavioural

Tell me about a time you disagreed with your line manager and how you reached a resolution.

Competency

Share with me an occasion when you successfully resolved a customer complaint.

Situational

If a colleague is struggling with a piece of work that impacts your whole team, what do you do?

Curveball

If you were a chocolate biscuit, which biscuit would you be?

We know the different styles can seem similar. Don't worry over this, instead focus on:

Analysing the job description for **keywords** that reveal what the employer is looking for.

Use the **STAR technique** to prepare several scenario answers.

Being you. This is particularly important for the behavioural style questions – if you're pretending to be someone other than yourself the answers you give really won't reflect how you'll react when you're doing the job.

05 INTERVIEW FAQs

When drafting your practice answers assume that the interviewer is not familiar with your CV. It's the unfortunate truth that they may only have had a few minutes to review it so it's important that you highlight achievements that they could miss.

Draft responses that go above and beyond an average answer. Remember this is your opportunity to shine so practice conversational answers which provide detail and context.

Due to a lack of work experience, school leavers and graduates often worry how best to highlight and articulate their skills in an application or interview situation. Attributes such as managing your time, a good work ethic, the right attitude, positive energy, and a willingness to learn are all traits that employers are looking for.

We've collated some of the most frequently asked interview questions for you.



WHAT
YOU SAY
MATTERS

What do you know about our company?

The research you've done will be invaluable when answering this question. Refer to your notes if it gives you confidence that you'll get the facts right. The interview isn't a test of your memory, but it is a test of your interest in the job and your desire to help the company succeed.

What's your current job?

Explain what your typical week involves, how you help others / contribute to business success, what your responsibilities are, and current priorities.

What's the best part of your job?

By answering what you most enjoy about your current job the interviewer will gain some insight to what makes you happy or gives you a feeling of satisfaction and purpose.

What's the biggest challenge you overcame at your previous / current job?

Outline a situation / project, explain what the challenge was and why it was a problem for the company, then go on to share how you contributed to solving the problem and what the outcome was.

What immediate contributions can you make?

By referring to the job description and your CV you can highlight the skills and experience you've gained that will enable you to tackle aspects of the job immediately. To answer this question comprehensively you could ask the interviewer to explain challenges or problems the company / department is facing and explain how you could work to be part of the solution.

What's your most rewarding experience?

Consider what you've done, or been a part of, that made you feel good. It may be specific to your work or a business-related activity such as volunteering, learning new skills, or working as part of a team. This answer could also be unrelated to work and allow you the opportunity to share something personally significant.

Why do you want to work with us?

Share why the company or job is attractive to you, not only will it show you've done your research but it will reveal your personal drivers too.

What motivates you?

To mention a personal motivator is fine, but focus primarily on your professional motivators - for example, developing your expertise, nurturing younger professionals, leading a team or solving a client problem.

Tell me about yourself.

Don't repeat information such as your age or where you live – that's really dull. Share something that's not on your CV such as your family, a hidden talent, a current passion, a personal achievement, what makes you happy, or a significant milestone.



How To Answer 'Tell Me About Yourself' During A Job Interview

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

What are your greatest strengths / weaknesses?

This is a very common question. Relate your strengths or superpowers to the characteristics that are required in the job description. Don't labour a weakness, either turn it into a positive by explaining what you are doing to improve or honestly describe the work that you are not well suited to because your strengths lie in other areas. This could highlight to an employer where you'd be best suited in a team where people with complementary skills work together most efficiently.

Why do you want to leave your current job?

It would be very unprofessional to talk about what you perceive to be your current employer's shortcomings. Focus on the career development opportunities you are looking for that you hope to find with the new employer.

How would you describe yourself?

Great sources of adjectives that describe you are trusted family members, friends, and colleagues. Providing some explanation for your choices will really enhance your answer.

RECRUITER TIP

If you've completed a psychometric assessment then this is your go-to report for a comprehensive description of your personality.

What qualities could you bring to our business?

This is similar to “Why should we hire you?” and it relates to personal attributes, skills, and knowledge. Think about how your strengths and skills will benefit the business and how your personal attributes and perspectives will add to or enhance the culture. Park your modesty at the door and blow your professional trumpet!

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Nobody knows, but that's probably not what the interviewer wants to hear. If there are personal achievements you hope to have attained by then – share them. Show your commitment to hard work, professional development, and helping the organisation succeed with answers that relate to developing your skills, becoming super proficient in your role, passing qualifications, becoming a topic specialist, solving a company problem, or taking on additional responsibilities.

What style of management do you prefer?

Perhaps you like a close working relationship where your manager checks in frequently, alternatively your preference could be to work autonomously, knowing you can go to your manager for support when you need it. If you have been asked to complete a psychometric assessment then insights on your working style will be revealed in the report along with a recommended list of questions for the interviewer to ask that delve a little deeper into your attitude and behaviours.

Talk me through this gap in your CV.

There are so many reasons for a gap in your working life from caring for others, redundancy, ill health, travel... the list goes on. Don't keep the interviewer guessing. Be honest and provide a short explanation.

What's your proudest career achievement?

This could relate to any professional achievement, whether financial, commercial or individual. Whatever you choose, be able to explain why it made you feel proud.

06 QUESTIONS TO ASK

Listen carefully during your interview because it will reflect positively if you ask one or two questions leading on from something the interviewer has said. Conversely, it can be disheartening for an interviewer if you ask one of your prepared questions about something they've already clarified.

The questions you ask should have a purpose:

- Ensure you have enough information to really understand the job content.
- Help you determine if this job is right for you.
- Show your interest or knowledge of the business, not just the job.
- Demonstrate your commitment to helping the company succeed.



SHOW YOUR INTEREST OR KNOWLEDGE OF THE BUSINESS, NOT JUST THE JOB

Choose open-ended questions where the interviewer will have to give a description or explanation to sufficiently respond.

Be aware that the interviewer may be a recruiter who is not familiar with the job detail and may be unable to answer specific questions that are better suited to a line manager. This is one of the reasons why it's actually better to be interviewed by more than one person – however daunting that may appear at the outset.

These suggestions will help you write your own list of specific questions:

- How would you describe the work environment and culture?
- Describe the team I'll be working with.
- How will I meet everyone in the team?
- What are the objectives for this role?
- What are the team's biggest strengths and challenges?
- How will my performance be measured?
- I've read about the company's history but how has it changed in the last few years?
- What are the opportunities for training and progression?
- What makes this company better than your competitors?
- How does the company make sure that remote and hybrid employees are given the same opportunities?
- What is the next step in the interviewing process?
- When can I expect to hear from you?

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

There's a couple of different video interview styles to know about.

One-Way Interviews

Used for the early stage screening of applicants, one-way interviews require you to record your answers to 3 or 4 interview questions. Usually, you'll have the option to review and re-record your answers before hitting the submit button.

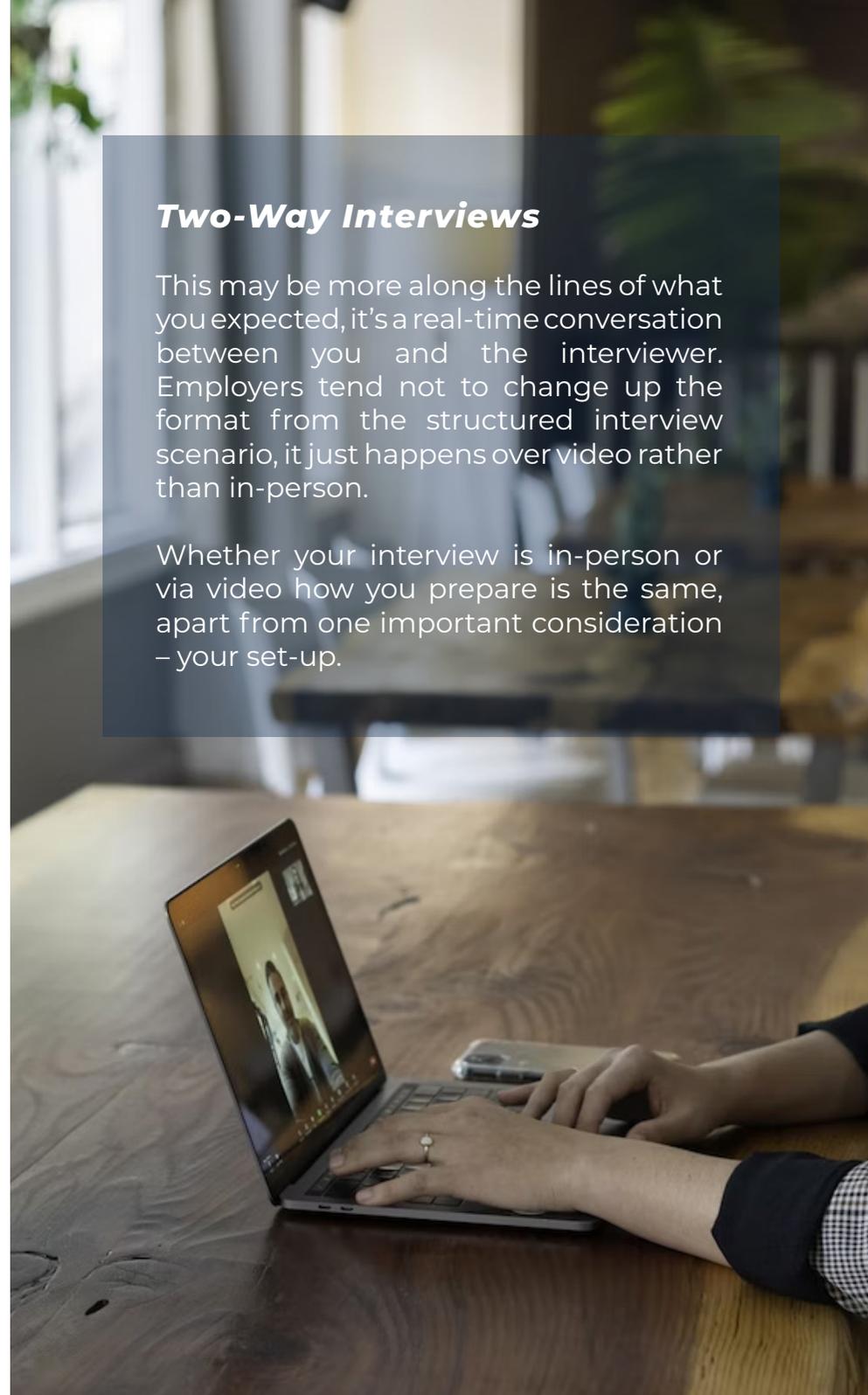
This method of screening has grown in popularity. It's very convenient for hiring managers because the videos can be viewed at any time, and shared with line managers and other relevant team members.

They're also great for job seekers as there's a chance to practice your responses and eliminate travel hassles. Unfortunately, you can't ask questions in this format.

Two-Way Interviews

This may be more along the lines of what you expected, it's a real-time conversation between you and the interviewer. Employers tend not to change up the format from the structured interview scenario, it just happens over video rather than in-person.

Whether your interview is in-person or via video how you prepare is the same, apart from one important consideration – your set-up.



Basic steps to ensure you're good to go:

- 1** You'll probably receive the joining instructions, links and passwords via email. Keep an eye on your spam folder, as you know important emails have an annoying habit of ending up in there! Keep this information handy as you don't want to be scrambling around minutes before the interview start time.
- 2** Good internet connection.
- 3** Devices fully charged, mic and camera switched on and tested.
- 4** Check the camera is at eye-level. Even on a good hair day you don't want only the top of your head to be on screen.
- 5** Bear in mind that the interviewer will be looking at whatever is around you. It would be a mistake to sabotage your interview by not tidying up beforehand. Keep the background as simple as possible so not to be distracting. The virtual background in Zoom may be a fun feature but it can often make your head look separated from your body!
- 6** Choose a quiet room and ensure everyone in your household knows that you are interviewing for a job and cannot be disturbed. Put pets in another room.
- 7** Don't sit in the dark. Light on your face is most flattering, so sitting in front of a window is ideal.
- 8** Switch off all other devices so you are not distracted by pinging notifications or calls.
- 9** Record yourself answering some practice questions, the play-back will illustrate anything in your set-up that needs to be adjusted.
- 10** If you are new to Microsoft Teams or Zoom video meetings this **blog post** explains how to login.

RECRUITER TIP

Test your set-up with a friend or TMM Recruitment consultant well before the interview date. Login to the interview early and while waiting for it to start take a deep breath and get in a calm headspace.

CALM

IS A

SUPER

POWER

08 PRESENTATIONS

For certain jobs, particularly senior positions, you may be asked to give a presentation so the interviewers can gauge your communication skills as well as your ability to present ideas. Presentations are such a daunting prospect for some people that they withdraw from the application process. This is a wasted opportunity because presentations are actually a chance for you to shine.

Giving a presentation means you can:

- Demonstrate expertise and ideas that you might not get the chance to share in a traditional question and answer format.
- Practice, practice, and then practice some more so that you know the content inside out and can deliver it with confidence (even if you might not feel that way inside) and ensure you stay within the time limit.
- Show how serious you are about this job. Creating a good presentation takes time and commitment – as we mentioned above, not everyone's willing to do this.

Now you know why being asked to present is a good thing, we recommend that you:

- Clarify the brief well in advance of the interview if there are things they are not sure about, and it's worth double checking too if the interviewer expects to receive your presentation in advance of the interview.
- Find out who you will be presenting to so that you can pitch your presentation at the right level. Try to talk to your audience, rather than at your notes, and at the end, it's a nice touch to invite questions.
- Follow the presentation brief carefully and don't veer off in a direction that you fancy.
- Counter death by Powerpoint boredom by choosing from the free presentation templates in design software Canva.com and to max your engagement try sticking to Guy Kawasaki's 10/20/30 rule: 10 slides, 20 minutes, with a font size no smaller than 30 point. If your presentation slot is longer than 20 minutes, acknowledge this and dedicate the rest of the time to good conversation and answering questions.
- Test the tech.
- Take along prompt cards just in case your memory lets you down.



Follow a simple format

Oneslide for introduction and oneslide for conclusions with the others dedicated to your pitch. Create content that reinforces and illustrates the points you are making. By combining images, graphs, photos, and infographics with a few bullet points you'll capture and retain the attention of your audience more effectively.

0 **PANEL** INTERVIEWS

In panel interviews you'll be faced with several people at the same time, each person tends to specialise in different areas and often includes a representative from HR. This person may ask more general questions leaving specialised questions to line managers. By having a number of people there you'll probably be able to have all your questions answered – the general company questions and the specific role content ones.

Let's be honest about this – some people on the panel will be better at interviewing than others! Being interviewed by more than one person can lead to a better experience for you because the conversation is free-flowing and dynamic.

If you're not the best at remembering names don't name-drop during the interview, if Susan is asking the questions and you call her Sharon in your response it might not go down too well.

TALK
TALK
WITH
EVERY
ONE
ONE



1

PRE-EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENTS

Pre-employment assessments are used by employers to reduce bias in the selection process and gather objective data on traits and skills according to job-related criteria.

In high-volume recruitment, they can be used to filter out unqualified candidates, reducing the time required for interviews.

Aptitude Tests

Aptitude tests are linked to productivity, performance, and the likelihood of success in a specific role because they measure the ability to complete job-related tasks as well as logical, abstract, verbal, and numerical reasoning skills.

For example, if you are applying for a copywriter job you may be assessed on your ability to write engaging content on a specific topic as well as your editing skills and grammar.

Psychometric Assessments

Psychometric assessments determine personal characteristics, personality traits, behaviour, and communication styles. They're useful for gaining insight on strengths and preferences, how someone will react under pressure and how best to manage an individual based on their working style. This is important for determining how well someone could work within a team and how to maximise their performance.

RECRUITER TIP

Our preferred choice of psychometric assessment is **Personal Profile Analysis**, a simple, 8-minute online assessment.



1 SECOND INTERVIEWS

Second round interviews show that your performance at the first interview has been impressive – but there is still a way to go.

Usually more challenging than first interviews, with in-depth, open-ended questioning, they do give you the opportunity to obtain more detail regarding the role, salary, and benefits and a final chance to clarify any concerns you may have.

It can be during the second interview that you have the chance to meet the people you will be working with.

CLARIFY
THE
DETAILS

TAKE CONTROL OF THE CONVERSATION



How To Answer Questions About Salary

WATCH VIDEO

1 TALKING ABOUT SALARY

During the interview process, you will be asked “What are your salary expectations?”

Be realistic. Your TMM Recruitment consultant can advise you on rates of pay and will also know what the client employer has in mind.

If you’re managing your own job search do your research so that you don’t damage your credibility by sharing a naïve number during the interview.

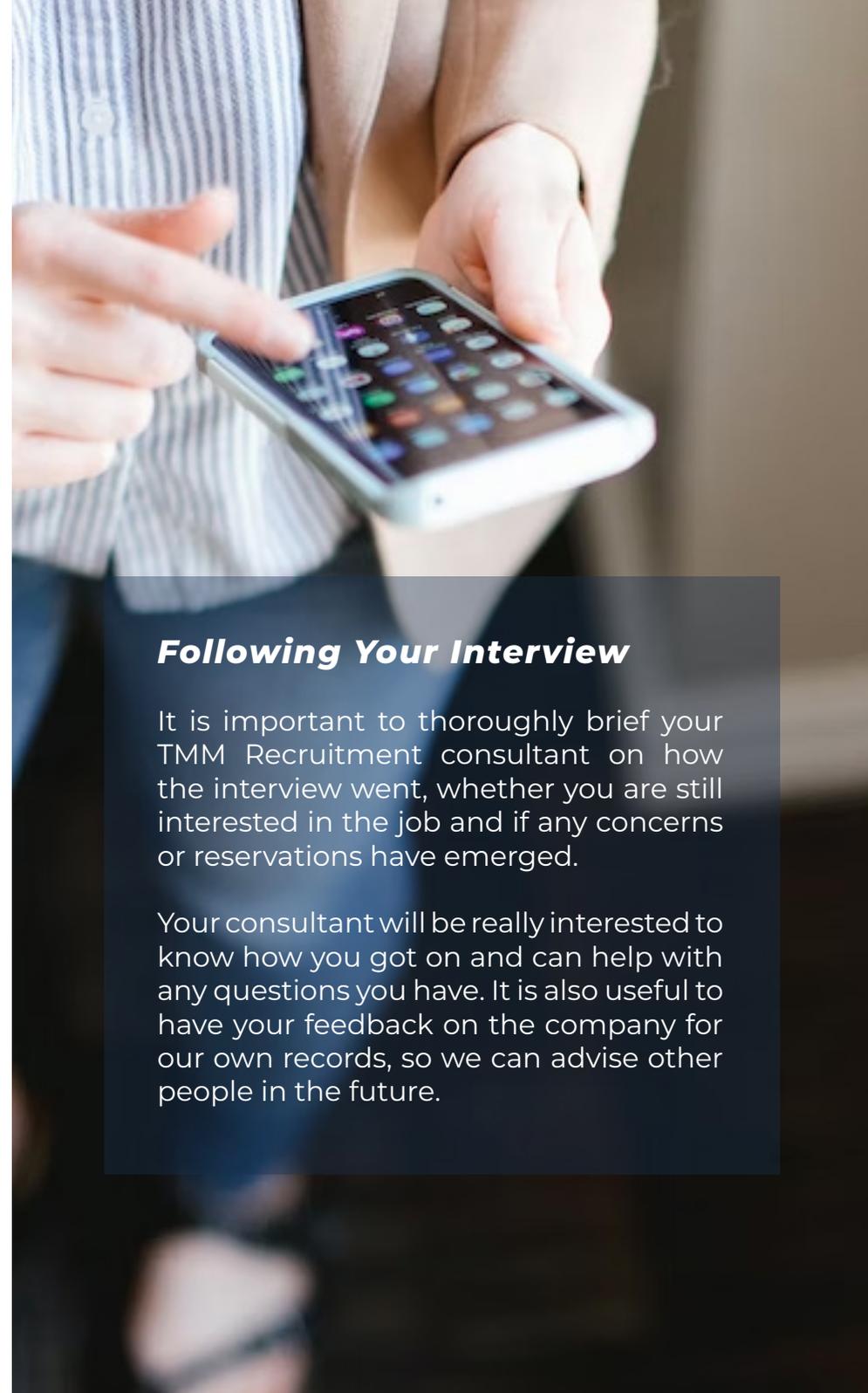
The safest approach is to confirm that you’ll give due consideration to a competitive offer.

15 FEEDBACK & FOLLOW UP

It's good manners to thank the people who interviewed you at the end of the meeting. It wouldn't be too much to also send a thank you follow-up email, using this opportunity to add anything you forgot to mention during the structured interview.

You will be anxious to know the outcome of your interview and unfortunately, employers can take longer than you'd like to provide their feedback. Consistent follow-up, perhaps 5 – 7 days apart for 2 - 3 weeks is reasonable.

After that, it's probably best to assume that a company that cannot prioritise its recruitment communications isn't the type of employer you want to work for. Focus your energies elsewhere.



Following Your Interview

It is important to thoroughly brief your TMM Recruitment consultant on how the interview went, whether you are still interested in the job and if any concerns or reservations have emerged.

Your consultant will be really interested to know how you got on and can help with any questions you have. It is also useful to have your feedback on the company for our own records, so we can advise other people in the future.

BE SURE
IT'S
RIGHT
FOR YOU

14 THE JOB OFFER

Once you have it in writing, take time to consider the job offer carefully. There is no need to respond immediately so talk it through with your TMM Recruitment consultant as employers will not be receptive to requests to change terms and conditions once you are in the role.

If necessary, your consultant will negotiate on your behalf. If you are managing your own dialogue with employers we'd recommend a measured tone with communications in writing -

“I’m delighted to be offered the position of [insert role] but request a review of...”



15 JOB HUNTING SUCCESS

A final note from us to remind you that job hunting is a rigorous process that requires stamina and patience. Don't be too tough on yourself and take heart that every interview is a learning opportunity.

To be invited for interview means that your CV and application have already made a good impression and your TMM Recruitment consultant will have briefed the employer on your individual qualities and ambitions too.

Prepare as thoroughly as you can, be yourself and the right employer will be lucky to hire you!

Good Luck!

If you have any questions, get in touch.

01224 327 000

hello@tmmrecruitment.com

tmmrecruitment.com