

## PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

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*Remember the five “P’s” – Proper Preparation Prevents a Poor Performance!*

### Preparation

Make sure that you’ve received a copy of the job description and that you’ve read this and fully understand what the role entails. Find out as much as you can about the company, including their structure, products and services from their website.

It’s always a good idea to ask what style of interview you should prepare for. We’ve provided some tips below on how to get ready for the most common interview type, but there’re other interview styles that may be used so if you’re unsure, just ask!

### Competency-Based Interviews – The STAR Technique

Competency-based (also called ‘behavioural event’) interviews are based on the premise that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. They require you to draw on previous experience to demonstrate your competence in a particular area.

To prepare for the interview you should refer to the competencies set out in the job description. This will assist you in referring to actual examples and relevant situations. Don’t be afraid to prepare notes and take them along with you to the interview. You can find examples of common behavioural based interview questions [here](#).

To ensure you provide the interview panel with the information they’re seeking, structure your answers into a ‘story’ using the STAR format, as follows:

#### **STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Results):**

**S:** Set the scene and describe the wider context for your answer (*what was the situation?*)

**T:** Discuss the tasks, deliverables, expectations and/or your responsibilities in the situation you’re describing (*what was required of you?*)

**A:** It is important to tell the interviewers both what you did and how you did it. This gives you the opportunity to demonstrate the approaches you took and the behaviours you used, which are what make you a unique candidate. It allows you to demonstrate in a powerful manner that you personally were responsible and took ownership for activities and outcomes (*what was the course of action you took?*)

**R:** Finally, detail the outcomes of your actions: what went well, what went wrong and what you would do differently next time (*what was the result?*)

Be careful to avoid saying “we” – the interviewer wants to know what actions you took so that they can determine how you would react in a similar situation in the future.

Before you go to your interview, using the STAR method, prepare a couple of examples that you can draw on with regards to each of the competencies in the job description. Remember that one example may be used for a number of competencies. The more recent the examples you use, the better.

## **Planning and Time Management**

Make sure you're clear on where to go and at what time. Ensure that you allow yourself sufficient time to get to the interview.

Know how much travel time you need to allow for and aim to arrive at reception about five minutes prior to your interview. Parking can often be difficult, so if you're driving allow extra time to find a parking space.

Ensure you know who to ask for at reception and who will be on the interview panel. The interview will usually take a maximum of one and a half hours, allowing time for questions afterwards. There are likely to be at least two interviewers.

## **First Impressions**

An interview is a formal means to assess your suitability for a job and creating a good first impression is vital. The way you present yourself at interview is just as important as the way you answer the questions asked of you. It's imperative that your appearance is as professional as the organisation that you wish to work for.

When greeting the interview panel, ensure a firm handshake and appropriate eye contact.

## **Questions to ask the interviewer**

Always prepare questions that you would like to ask the interviewer, either about the role or the company, as you'll likely be asked at the end of the interview whether you have any questions.

Types of question you may wish to ask may include:

- What is the biggest challenge facing somebody coming into this role?
- Why does the vacancy exist?
- What is the team like?
- Why do you like working for this company?

## **In Summary:**

- Prepare thoroughly for the interview
- Plan what you're going to wear the day before
- Ensure that you know where you're going and allow sufficient time to get to the interview
- Make sure you have read and understand the job description
- Ensure you greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and make good eye contact
- Don't interrupt the interviewer at any time
- Back up your answers with examples
- Be positive about past employers
- Ask questions about the position and company
- Understand your strengths and weaknesses, you'll be asked questions around them
- Do not be over confident or aggressive
- Your answers must come across in the interview as factual and sincere
- Make the interviewer aware of your qualities and what you can offer to the company
- Don't answer questions with closed answers i.e. "yes" or "no"
- Never lie – always answer questions truthfully, frankly and in a concise manner
- Smile throughout the interview
- Thank the interviewer for meeting with you
- After the interview please call your McLaren Associates Consultant immediately with your detailed feedback.

**GOOD LUCK!**