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1. PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Congratulations! You have secured an interview. This document aims to help you through the interview process in order to achieve the desired outcome - a job offer. It is important to stay focused throughout the entire process with a view to getting to the next stage every time. The following information might seem like simple logic, but they are very important factors to your success.

1.1 RESEARCH

The prospective employer's **web site** provides valuable information. It is worthwhile reviewing their **annual report** or any **media reports** they have published on their web site. Being able to speak about the organisation in a knowledgeable manner demonstrates your genuine interest in them as your future employer. You can also expand your perspective on the organisation by reading independent reports in news and trade journals.

Whilst it is important to have a thorough understanding of the company as a whole, it is also important to understand your potential role within it. Therefore, you should do some research into the position and formulate some ideas around why you think you would be suited to the role, as well as why it is of interest to you. Some useful sources of information include **job description**, speaking with your consultant at **Concilium Finance**, and of course speaking to any friends or colleagues that you know in a similar job.

There is also some additional **literature** that will be relevant depending on the role that you are focussed on.

1.2 PRESENTATION

The first contact you have with someone can formulate a lasting impression. This means the simplest things such as wearing your smartest suit...right down to polished shoes. A professional manner must be maintained at all times, and keep in mind that the cultural fit will also be considered – more detail is provided in section 3.5.

1.3 PUNCTUALITY

It is imperative that you know the exact time and location of the interview, and always allow for any potential travel delays. It is also advisable to keep the contact number of your Concilium Finance Consultant with you in the event that you encounter any issues.

2. THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The interview process is typically held over three rounds and is usually with one or two team members. This will enable a number of different team members to meet you, and for you to meet them. The following is an example of what you might expect along the way, however, this can vary depending on the organisation.

2.1 FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW

The first round interview is often an initial screening interview. This gives the employer the chance to gauge not only your suitability for the person, but also your personality and cultural fit for the team. During this interview you are likely to run through your resume. You may also encounter some technical and competency based questions. This initial interview also offers a chance to get to know each other's personalities. You should always ensure that you are prepared with some questions to ask your interviewer (Refer to section 3.6).

2.2 SECOND ROUND INTERVIEW

The second round interview will ordinarily be with a different member of the team in which you will potentially work. Again, you should expect a mixture of technical and competency based interviews, but it is usually slightly more challenging compared with the First Round Interview.

2.3 THIRD ROUND INTERVIEW

The third interview will most likely be the last, and is usually conducted by Human Resources and possibly a Senior Manager. By this point it has probably already been determined that your skills and competencies are a suitable fit for the job vacancy. This interview is more likely to focus on your fit to the organisation based on other certain competencies, personality and cultural fit. At this point, the interview will mostly be competency based, so you will be asked to draw on relevant scenarios from your work experience to date. This can be more difficult than you think – refer to Appendix A for details.

3. WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE INTERVIEW

3.1 SELLING YOURSELF

In order to maintain a focus throughout the interview you should concentrate on your top strengths. This will also make it easier for them to remember you. Before you attend, identify your key strengths and match them up with the requirements in the job specification. If you are able, you should find ways of drawing on these during the interview.

Remember that your prospective employer is interested in meeting with you to learn more about you as a person. In preparation, take the time to sit down and think about some of the major achievements that you have made in both your personal and professional life. This exercise will also facilitate your ability to respond with meaningful scenarios to use for competency based questions. Look at yourself as a person in employment – how do you see yourself, what have you done, what ambitions do you have. Using examples to support your statements always helps.

3.2 YOUR INTEREST IN THE JOB AND ORGANISATION

Apart from selling yourself, it is really important to sell the reasons why you have an interest in the organisation and the role. This will be easier to do if you can focus on your skills and interests and extract the elements from the role and the organisation that match. In order to do this, it is very important to have conducted your research.

3.3 TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

Technical questions will be very dependent on the role that you are interviewing for. For example, if you are interviewing for a Product Control role you may be asked how to price an asset swap or other relevant investment product. If you are interviewing for a Financial Accounting role, you might be asked to demonstrate your understanding of UK GAAP or US GAAP.

3.4 COMPETENCY BASED QUESTIONS

A comprehensive list of questions is outlined in Appendix A.

3.5 CULTURAL FIT

Another important factor that is a consideration for both you and your potential employer is whether there is a suitable fit between the team/organisation, and the type of person that you are. This is for the benefit of both you and the organisation – just think how much more you will enjoy working with a company with whom you have similar ideals and beliefs. Therefore, it is important for you to be yourself as much as possible. Whilst you want to impress upon them your professionalism, you should also relax enough so that your natural personality will shine through.

3.6 YOUR QUESTIONS

Don't forget that the interview process goes both ways. It is an opportunity for you to interview your prospective employer to determine if the role is something that you can see yourself doing, and to ascertain if the organisation is a 'fit' for you. Some relevant questions to prepare prior to the interview include:

- What will this role involve?
- How has this position become vacant?
- How does this role fit into the team / organisation?
- What key performance indicators are used?
- What are the reporting relationships in this role?
- What are the future career opportunities?
- What training opportunities are there?
- Will this position involve travelling?
- What is the objective of this organisation/department/team?
- What sort of person does well here?
- Which of my skills are required to do this job?
- How does the culture of this team, this organisation compare to others?
- How will this role satisfy my drives for success/progression/travel?
- What is it about this department and organisation that you (the interviewer) enjoy?

3.7 AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview you should contact your Concilium Finance Consultant and provide them with your feedback. It is possible that the consultant will not be able to get feedback from the client without speaking to you first. Whether the final feedback you receive is positive or negative, it should always be viewed as a learning experience that can be put into practice in the future.

APPENDIX A – COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

Competency interviews are based on the idea that past behaviour is the predictor of future behaviour. The interviewer will want specific examples of when and how you demonstrated particular behaviours. Prior to interview each position is assessed for the skills/competencies and characteristics that relate to job success. Interview questions are then developed to probe into the areas.

The word competency is widely used in business and personnel psychology and refers to the behaviours that are necessary to achieve the objectives of an organisation, a competency is also something you can measure and lists of competencies form a common language for describing how people perform in a different situation.

Every job can be described in terms of key competencies. This means that they can be used for all forms of assessment, including appraisals, training needs, analysis and of course selection.

- **Individual Competencies** – your personal attributes: flexibility, decisiveness, tenacity, independence, risk taking, personal integrity.
- **Managerial Competencies** – taking charge of other people: leadership, empowerment, strategic planning, corporate sensitivity, management control
- **Analytical Competencies** – the elements of decision making: innovation, analytical skills, numerical problem solving, detail consciousness
- **Interpersonal Competencies** – dealing with other people: communication, impact persuasiveness, personal awareness, teamwork, openness
- **Motivational Competencies** – the things that drive you: resilience, energy, motivation, achievement orientation, initiative, quality focus.

To prepare for this type of interview, first review the job specification carefully and identify the skills and traits likely to be assessed. Next identify the situations and experiences that you will refer to in the interview to demonstrate these skills and traits.

Use the **STAR** model to structure your answers:

- **Situation** – describe a situation or problem that you have encountered
- **Task** – describe a task that the situation required or ideas for resolving the problem
- **Action** – describe the action you took, obstacles that you had to overcome
- **Results** – highlight the outcomes achieved

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

All competency interview questions will ask you to give an example of a certain situation, what was the situation, why it happened, what you did, how was the situation resolved.

Influencing or Persuading Others

- Tell me about a time when you were able to change someone's viewpoint significantly.
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something that you disagreed with.
- See this pen I'm holding – sell it to me.
- Tell me about a person or event that has been influential in your personal development.

Interpersonal and Team skills

- What experience have you had working on a team?
- What skills and personal qualities have you contributed to the teams you have been part of?
- Tell me about a time you used tact and diplomacy
- Tell me about the last time you had a disagreement with someone
- Tell me about the most difficult person you have worked with
- What have you disliked in your last jobs?
- What kinds of people do you enjoy working with?
- What kind of people frustrate you?
- What qualities do you admire most in others?

Communication Skills

- Tell me about a time when you were successful in getting crucial information from another person.
- Tell me about a time when someone misunderstood what you were trying to communicate to them.
- Tell me about a current event you have been following in the press.
- What do you think are the three most important things about communication?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with people from a culture unlike your own. What did you do to overcome any perceived barriers to communication?

Personal Adaptability, Energy and Resilience

- Tell me about a time when your work or an idea was criticised.
- Tell me about a time when you felt under pressure.
- Tell me about a time you felt frustrated by your work.
- What do you do for enjoyment in your leisure time?
- What makes you laugh?
- Describe something creative you have done.
- What has been your most satisfying/disappointing experience?

Self-management, Self-motivation and self knowledge

- Tell me about a time when you acted over and above the expectations of your role.
- What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
- Tell me something about yourself
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a close friend who knows you well would describe you?
- How would you describe your management style?
- How do you think an enemy would describe you?
- What are the two most significant accomplishments in your career so far?
- What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What does success mean for you?
- In the past year what have been dissatisfied about in your performance?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- Which is more important to you, the money or the role?
- How has your university experience prepared you for a role in this field?
- How do your skills relate to our needs?
- What are your interests outside of work?
- Tell me about a major problem you have encountered and how you dealt with it
- What have you learnt from your mistakes?

- How do you cope with routine work?

Administrative skills

- Tell me how you organise your work and schedule your time
- Tell me about computer software packages you are familiar with and your experience of your using them
- Tell me about an experience of managing a budget.

Problem Solving and Decision Making

- Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.
- Tell me about an unpopular decision you have made.
- What significant problems have you faced in the last year?
- How do you work under pressure?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision. What were the circumstances and what did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you had conflicting priorities and what you did to resolve them.
- What kind of problems do you handle best?

Conflict Management Ethics

- Tell me about a significant crisis you have faced.
- Tell me about a difficult customer or a customer complaint that you have dealt with.
- How do you resolve conflict in the groups or teams you have membership of?
- How would you resolve a dispute?
- What would you do if your colleagues were complaining to you about the organisation?

Personal and Career Objectives

- What are your short and long term goals?
- When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What are the most important things you are seeking in a career?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What salary are you looking for?
- What person do you admire most and why?
- Why do you want this position?

Knowledge of the Organisation and Role

- Why did you apply for this position?
- How would you measure your success or failure in this job?
- What skills and personal qualities are essential for success in this role?
- How do you plan to keep up with developments in this field?
- What would you like to know about this organisation?
- Why should I hire you?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Can you work well to deadlines and under pressure?
- If you were offered this role what would you expect to achieve in the first year?

Work Experience

- Tell me about the best job you have ever had.
- What did you enjoy the most/least about your last job?
- Have you ever been the leader of a team, what did you like and dislike about the role?

Academic Experience

- Tell me about your academic programme at work.
- Describe your most rewarding academic experience.
- Do you think your grades are an accurate reflection of your academic ability?

Ability Competence and Achievement

- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction, why?
- Describe a time when you led or motivated others?
- What do you feel qualifies you for this position?

Stress Questions

- How do you react to criticism?
- Describe a time you failed.
- What causes you to lose your temper?
- Have you ever been sacked?
- Why should I hire you?
- How long would you expect to remain with this organisation?
- What salary are you expecting?