

Interviews

I had lunch recently with the HR Director of a well known Irish company to share her views on the importance of interviews in the modern selection process. We discussed the impact the downturn is having on the type of questions candidates are being asked at interview. We both agreed that in these tougher times companies want to see evidence of skills more in tune with the new economic reality – and that applicants need to approach the interview with a keen understanding of the business as a whole.

In preparing for an interview, applicants need to ask themselves the question “what qualities would I be looking for, if I owned this business?”understanding the needs of an employer, is the first step to ensuring that you deliver strong, convincing answers, and ultimately secure a job offer.

What *are* the qualities sought by employers in a tightening market place?

Although not an exclusive list, the following rank high on every employer’s wish list:

Adaptability – as budgets shrink, employees will be asked to take on tasks which may fall outside their immediate scope of responsibility. The reality is that many companies are now in “survival mode” and people are being asked to work longer hours - sometimes for less money. Of course, for the ambitious applicant this may provide opportunities to fast track their career development!

Business savvy – regardless of your discipline, you need to be able to demonstrate that you understand how the business turns a profit and the importance of the bottom line. Even if you work in a highly creative arena, you will increase your marketability if you can demonstrate an ability to work within a budget, meet deadlines and strive to achieve efficiencies.

“Can do” attitude – your focus during the interview should be on how you can immediately add value to the company. Senior management knows that they need a workforce who pull together as a team in order to survive the recession – the sum of the parts being greater than the whole. At an interview, you need to demonstrate your team playing ability and illustrate how you work in achieving common goals.

When preparing for any interview, it is important that you can draw on specific examples to illustrate that you are coming to the table with these qualities.....it is all very well saying that you have strong commercial skills..... prove it! A well prepared candidate will weave these qualities into their answers, even if not asked the specific questions. Remember, your focus during the interview should always be on what you can bring to the company, not what they will give you.

In our next article we will look at some of the most popular asked questions and give guidelines on how to best answer them.