

Second Interviews

In our previous article we discussed the main reasons why people fail to secure a job offer and suggested focusing on three main areas to heighten chances of success.

In this article we will concentrate on guiding you through the second interview process. As with the first interview, preparation is the key to success. There are some subtle differences, however, between the first and second interview and it is worth highlighting these to help you in your preparation.

How to prepare for second interview

The best starting point is to review the questions that were asked in the first interview. Note the questions or situations that caused you difficulty and rehearse them to improve your answers. It is also worthwhile selecting new examples of accomplishments, strengths, and other qualities that you will need to draw upon during the course of the interview.

Remember, you will have gained important information from the employer during the first interview about the qualities they are seeking in the successful candidate. You must use this information to impress upon the interviewers that you are the right person for this job.

Structure of second interview

Second interviews can vary considerably in style. It is imperative to find out who you will be meeting, their job titles and what form the interview will take. In small to medium sized companies, it is not uncommon to meet the same people at both interviews. In Multinational Companies, where the structure tends to be more formal, you often meet human resources in the first interview and the hiring manager in the following interview. Formats may vary - you may be invited to a panel interview, a series of back to back interviews or sometimes you may be asked to give a presentation.

What questions will I be asked?

At the first interview, selection is often based on who is most qualified to do the job. The focus in the second interview shifts to who will best fit the company culture. Behavioural type questions are a popular way of ascertaining this information. Behavioural questions are based on the assumption that past performance will be an indication of future performance. An example of such a question would be; "Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled implementing it?". This will typically be followed by questions such as: "What resistance did you meet with? How did you overcome this resistance? What was the outcome? What did you learn from this experience?" In contrast to the first interview where you may have been able to gloss over answers, this time around you will be probed in much more detail.

Don't be surprised if at your second meeting, you are asked similar questions to the first interview. In this situation, try to ensure that you keep your answers fresh – bear in mind that new people may be in attendance at the second interview and will be hearing the answers for the first time. Keep your energy and enthusiasm levels up, and use fresh examples to illustrate your strengths.

Questions to ask at end of interview

At the end of the interview you will be invited to ask questions. This is also a great opportunity for you to get a better feel for the company, and gives you the necessary information to decide if you would accept the role if offered.

Examples of questions include:

- What major challenges will I be facing in my first six months in the role?
- What would you consider to be exceptional performance from someone in this position in the first 90 days?
- Is this a new position or am I replacing somebody? Can I ask why the employee in this position is leaving?
- What will be the measurements of my success in this position?

You don't need to wait until the end of an interview to ask questions. For senior appointments in particular, it can be worthwhile asking questions throughout – this helps reshape the interview to a meeting between colleagues, rather than a one-sided inquisition.

How to close the interview

End the interview on a positive note. Let the interviewer know how interested you are in the position and how your background is ideal for the position. It is always a good idea to clarify the next stage in the process and to determine when you should expect a decision. A bolder approach is to ask the interviewer if they have any reservations about your experience – this then gives you an opportunity to alleviate any concerns that they may have before the interview is closed.

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of [Interview Techniques](http://www.interviewtechniques.ie), a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with Recruit Ireland and the Sunday Business Post.

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