

In a survey of more than 2000 hiring managers, 33% claimed to know whether or not they would hire someone within 90 seconds

Statistics show that:

- 7% of the impact gained from an interview is based upon what we actually say
- 38% is from our voice grammar and overall confidence
- 55% is from the way we dress, act and how we walk through the door



Top 5 common questions:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Why did you leave your last job?
3. What do you know about our company?
4. Why do you want to work for us?
5. Tell me about your experience at 'X'

Dress Code:

70% of employers claim they don't want applications to be overly fashionable
65% of hiring managers say clothes can be the deciding factor between two similar candidates

Simple mistakes to avoid at interview:

- Over-explaining why you lost your last job
- Lacking humor, warmth or personality
- Inadequate research about a potential employer
- Concentrating too much on what you want
- Not showing enough interest or enthusiasm
- Trying to be all things to all people
- Failing to set yourself apart from other candidates



Principal Peoples Interview Guidance Notes

Preparation

Preparation is essential to remaining calm under pressure and giving yourself a level of confidence from knowing you are as well as prepared for your interview as you can be.

Ensure to read through all the documentation provided by your Principal People Consultant.

Give yourself plenty of time to arrive to the location on the day, planning your route well in advance. Ask about parking availability with your consultant before you go. Know the exact place and time of the meeting, the interviewer's full name and job title and research all interviewers on LinkedIn.

Research the company through the internet to learn relevant facts such as annual sales revenue, principal lines of business and locations, ensuring you widen your research beyond the company's website.

Look your professional best. Wear business attire in neutral colours and be conservative in your use of fragrance, cosmetics, and jewellery. Re-read your CV before the interview and bring several copies to the meeting, storing all paperwork and notes in a smart folder.

The Interview

Aim to arrive on-site for interview approximately 10-15 minutes before the start of your interview. Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and an enthusiastic smile. Wait until you're offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright, look alert and interested at all times, listen carefully and respond positively, always keeping your answers clear and concise.

Ahead of your interview, ensure that you have gained a robust understanding of the position from your Principal People representative. Use this information to focus your responses to questions on aspects of your background, skills and accomplishments which relate to the position. Be sincere, while focusing on communicating your specific professional achievements.

Where possible, use facts and statistics to add substance to your answers. For example – if you have reduced loss time injuries by 25% within one year; use this tangible accomplishment when discussing your key achievements.

Examples of Frequently Asked Interview Questions:

Tell me about yourself

- Be prepared to respond to this question by creating a "sound bite" or "elevator pitch" that describes your professional background and strongest skills in only a few sentences, as well as sharing a little detail about you outside of work. Ideally you will be able to answer this within one minute and ideally in no more than two.
- Write down your elevator pitch / sound bite and practice this with your Principal People representative

What interests you about our company?

- This question seems straightforward, but it can sometimes be difficult to answer if you haven't thought about how you will word it beforehand. There are two important factors to include in your answer. The first is to use your knowledge of the company to show your sincere interest. Secondly, include something specific about the role you're applying for and why this also appeals to you. It is important you clearly demonstrate your interest and alignment with both the company and the role itself.

Strengths and weaknesses

Use this sometimes-difficult question as an opportunity to highlight your self-awareness and professionalism. If you are asked this question with both strengths and weakness at the same time, it may be useful to answer the weakness part first, so that you can end your answer on a positive note, providing an example of your main strength.

Weakness:

Be honest with yourself and then choose an area of development you are happy to share...we all have them! Once you have chosen, start to build your script from there. Ensure to answer in the past tense, offer detail on the actions you've put in place to demonstrate your growth over time. It may be useful to provide a specific example and we recommend answering using the wording of "area of development" rather than weakness.

Strength:

As mentioned above, if you can, offer your area of development first and your answer to your strengths second. Strengths can also be a challenging question to answer and there is a lot of value in using your time to prepare for this question beforehand. It can be a fine line trying to find the balance between humility and the necessary confidence.

When selecting your examples of a strength, ensure they support the job description and where possible clearly highlight your fit for the role, setting you apart as a top candidate. Be specific in your response, not listing multiple vague answers but choosing one to two key areas where you can comfortably provide relevant examples.

In your preparation for this challenging question, aim to turn your weaknesses into a positive by demonstrating your ability to overcome challenges, and your strengths into your suitability and fit for the role.

How to structure your answers: STAR TECHNIQUE**Use the STAR technique for behavioural / competency 'type' interview questions**

Answering behavioural based interview questions requires a structured approach, where delivery and detail count for everything. We have recorded improvements in excess of 50% regarding the success rate of candidates using this technique at interview.

STAR stands for:

- **S**ituation
- **T**ask
- **A**ction
- **R**esult

How to shine with STAR

The trick to making the STAR technique work is to weave your answers to behavioural and competency interview questions into concise stories with a beginning, middle and end - starting with a brief introduction outlining the situation.

So, in answer to a question asking you (for example) to describe a time you dealt with pressure in a work situation, you might say...

Situation - I was managing a team of three H&S Advisors preparing an audit for our ISO 45001 certification for one of our main clients. We were confident we'd complete the project to schedule but then two team members fell sick and were unable to work.

You can now move onto the task section of your answer which should outline the job you faced, setting out the goals and the objectives for your team and the company.

Task - The team was suddenly under serious pressure to meet a deadline on which a substantial budget had already been invested and we were now required to achieve this with severely depleted personnel.

The most detailed part of your answer will be the action, where you describe how you dealt with the task. Here you will detail your use of available resources, the personal and relevant skills you brought to the table and your direct involvement.

Action - I was up-to-speed with all aspects of the project and confident in my operational skills through prior experience. I motivated the team I had left by arranging incentives and sourced additional temporary assistance from others in the wider business and where necessary invested extra time to ensure all new temporary team members were up to speed and fully briefed on the task.

The action part of your answer should leave your interviewer in no doubt as to what it was you did, how you did it and why you did it.

You will now need to wrap up your answer by outlining the result of your actions. This is where you get to demonstrate the benefits those actions had for the company / team and for your own development.

Result - Under my operational leadership, the team completed the recertification successfully and on time. The client was so pleased with how we had pulled resource together quickly and achieved certification, they renewed their contract for another 2 years and referred two sister companies our services.

Use STAR to keep your audience enthralled

As with all good storytelling, brevity and clarity are key to answering interview questions. Try to deliver your STAR answers in well under three minutes and always keep it positive, upbeat and free from heavy jargon.

At all stages of the STAR technique, you should strive to present your answer in such a way as to highlight your relevant skills and suitability to the role on offer, by preparing examples with a strong relevance to the interviewers "key criteria" for the role.

Rehearsals are key – Your Principal People representative will be happy for you to share your examples with them during your scheduled preparation call.

We highly recommend that you prepare five STAR stories, based on achievements relevant to the key selection criteria the role requires. Think how you can present your answers and achievements to suit different questions. For example, the scenario used above could be used to prove your teamwork and project management proficiencies as well as your ability to handle pressure.

Ideally you should aim to fit your five most significant career achievements to date within the required job competencies. Don't be too literal with your answers, use the interview process and key selection criteria as an opportunity to profile your successes.

Questions:

We frequently hear from clients that the questions candidates ask at interview are often more important than the answers they give. As a candidate it is useful to understand that the questions you ask during your interview are insightful for the interviewer and give them an understanding of your genuine motivations and drivers towards their company and the position you are interviewing for. When preparing what questions you plan to ask during your interview, ensure they are well aligned with your key criteria and where possible, that they will increase your chance of success by promoting a positive dialogue.

It is also key to remember that interviews are a two-way process, and this is your opportunity to determine whether the organisation and role are the right next step on your career journey.

Questions to Impress

There is a point towards the end of most, if not every, interview where the interviewer will ask 'Do you have any questions?' We recommend having 10 questions prepared, it can be expected that most of these will likely have already been covered throughout the course of the interview.

If you are serious about working for the company and have done your research, then there are bound to be questions you have about the role, company etc.

One or two high-quality questions can hugely support your interview performance, increasing your standing. It is not uncommon for the questions which candidates ask at interview to be equally as important (if not more important) than the answers they give.

Plan the type of questions you are going to ask and neatly write or type these questions into your preparation notes. The questions you ask, give an insight to your genuine motivations towards the role and company and can be very insightful for the interviewer.

This part of the interview is a great opportunity to seek clarification on any points or find out more details about the role or the company. As mentioned, an interview is a two-way street; it is as much about you assessing whether you want to work for the company as it is the company assessing whether you would be right for the role.

Questions to avoid

There are certain questions to avoid as these may give the wrong impression about you. For example, questions regarding salary and remuneration package detract from your genuine interest in the opportunity itself. Of course, salary is important and should be discussed in early dialogue with your Principal People representative. If the interviewer asks what salary you are seeking, you should revert them back to discussing this with your Principal People representative. If pushed, you should state the salary you have agreed with your representative, however, we recommend following this up with a statement similar to "salary is one element of the reason for applying". It may be useful to mention some others - challenge, security, ongoing development etc.

Always avoid questions which might imply you believe the job is already yours!

Questions you should always ask

- What are the next steps?
- When do you expect to make a decision?

What to watch out for when asking questions

- Watch your interviewers body language and listen to their tonality. Pay close attention to their response to your question.
- A well-chosen question should, time permitting, open up a good conversation which is interesting to both you and the interviewer. This is significantly more valuable for you than a quick-fire exchange of question and one or two-word answers.
- Paying close attention to their body language and tonality in addition to what they are saying will also give you the feedback of when you have asked too many questions.

Closing

- Confirm your level of interest in the opportunity.
- Ask the interviewer if they wish to return to any points for further clarification.
- Ask about the next step in the process / when they are hoping to make a decision

After your interview

- Please call your Principal People representative at the agreed time following your interview. During this conversation, your consultant will discuss all aspects of the interview with you and how you feel it went.
- It is critical we have spoken to you and have a clear understanding of how you feel following the interview before we can contact the client for your feedback.

Good luck and please do not hesitate to reach out to your Principal People representative if you have any further questions beforehand.