

# Onderhoudvaardighede / Interview Skills

Loopbanekantoor (SSVO) / Careers Office (CSCD)

## What is an Interview?

*For the candidate:*

- The interview is a marketing tool
- An opportunity to gather information to make a decision (Is this what I want to do and where I want to do it?)

*For the company:*

- It is an opportunity to assess the candidate's suitability, potential, skills, personality and experience.
- Also a marketing tool

## What is the main objective of an Interview?

Its main task is to convince prospective employers that you are the best person for the job and that they should employ you.

## Types of interviews

- Screening interview
- Selection interview

### Screening interview

- First interview
- In person or telephone
- Verification of information on CV
- Do you meet minimum qualifications and skills for the job?
- Also have CV / paper screening prior to screening interview

### Selection interview

- Do you have the personality for the job? (fit in)
- How would you interact with management and co-workers?
- May be selected or put on final short-list and invited back for more interviews
  - Panel interview
  - Group interview

### **Panel interview**

- One candidate is interviewed by several people at once.
- Can be very intimidating
- Remain calm and establish rapport with each member

### **Group interview**

- Several job candidates are interviewed at once
- Separate leaders from followers
- How do you interact in a group, are you a team player?
- Employer is looking for specific type of personality
- Act naturally

### **Interview Formats**

- Traditional interview
- Situational interview
- Competency-based interview

### **Traditional interview**

- Questions about CV, academic achievements, background, interests

### **Situational interview**

- Questions structured around how you have dealt with certain situations in past (past behaviour predicts future success)“ *Describe a situation where you had to work under pressure in order to complete a task on time*”

### **Competency based interview**

- Questions aimed at determining abilities in relation to specific competencies (skill sets)

Examples: creative thinking, logical decision making, analytical ability

“*Describe a situation that displays your analytical ability*”

## **Structure of interviews**

- Ice breaker: general questions, about CV
- Info about company (What do you know?)
- Gathering of info (qualifications, skills, abilities, experience, training - benefits)
- Something you want to ask?
- May be different

## **Employers' selection decisions**

- Can you do the job or do you have the potential to do the job?
- Do you fit the company image?
- Will you complement or disrupt the department?
- Can they afford to employ you?

## **Informational interviewing**

- Finding out more about the practical side of the job
- Shows initiative
- Informs your career choice
- Networking
- Building up knowledge and understanding of professions
- Learn more about the organization

## **Tips for informational interviewing**

- Be clear about who you want to interview
- Decide on the organization you would approach
- Set up the appointment
- Call organization and ask to speak to relevant person
- Explain why you want to interview the person
- Set up time and date that best suits interviewee
- Take checklist of questions with you

## Interviewing Tips

- Always be prepared: will boost your self-confidence, cope easier with unexpected, and sell yourself better, shows proactivity
- Practice, ask friend for comments, mock int.
- Research job & organization
- Info about interview & selection process
- Study application form, CV & cover letter
- Plan outfit & transport
- Sell yourself & your skills, don't be modest
- Be professional: be on time, appearance, be friendly & well-mannered, don't criticize previous employer(s)
- Body language (non-verbal communication): **don't** slouch, fold arms, frown, sigh excessively, chew gum, eat/drink, and play with hair. Be friendly & maintain good eye contact.
- Listen to questions (ask if uncertain), speak clearly, answer in full sentences & give examples when necessary / relevant
- Be yourself and be honest
- Be friendly, enthusiastic, relaxed & confident
- Create impression of being interested in what you can do for the company
- Always take copy of CV & other documents
- Prepare to ask relevant questions at end (avoid questions about salary & benefits)  
Thank interviewer for opportunity
- Follow up with thank you letter (see notes)
- Evaluate interview & learn from mistakes

## **The absolutely crucial thank you letter**

Did you know.....thank you letters sent after job interviews - to interviewers and others who assisted - are one of the key factors in determining whether people get employed or not?

Thank you letters are crucial to every job hunt - yet sending them is probably the most overlooked step in the whole job search process.

But it is not only in a job search that thank you letters are used: send them after receiving help on a project, after vacation job interviews, after informational interviews. Send them to *everyone* who has helped you in some way, such as interviewers, referees, assisting secretaries and network contacts.

### **Why?**

Thank you letters are clearly a basic courtesy, but they make more of an impact than most people realise.

A thank you letter...

- ◆ helps the person remember you and establishes goodwill; it can help consolidate your relationship for the future (you may need help again!)
- ◆ makes you stand out; in a job search, following up is part of your strategy for marketing yourself
- ◆ shows your ability to communicate well with people, and shows professionalism
- ◆ shows enthusiasm, energy and seriousness of purpose.

### **You can use them to...**

- ◆ express sincere appreciation
- ◆ reiterate your interest (in a job or a project)
- ◆ add information or correct a wrong impression you may have given earlier (in an interview)
- ◆ re-emphasise the main points you wish to make clear to the person (such as your strong points or experience)
- ◆ remind the person of a request you made; ask for contact with them in future or for the names of others you could approach.

### **When?**

You usually send them immediately - although this is ultimately a matter of judgement.

### **The personal touch**

Thank you letters should never be generalised or follow a formula!

A good thank you letter is personal and thorough: it refers very specifically to your interview (it might mention important points discussed, and your thoughts and plans now). It is genuine, positive and reflects your individual style. Since it is a formal document, it is also professional: it is very neat, addresses the person by the correct name and title, is not over-friendly, uses clear and direct language, and is short.

**Thank you.**

## **Most frequently asked questions during interviews**

Tell me a little about yourself

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

What are some of the more difficult tasks that you have had to perform? Why were these tasks difficult?

Why are you looking for another position now?

What do you know about our company?

Why would you like to join our company?

How well do you cope with pressure? & Give an example of when you had to deal with pressure?

What are your important achievements?

Why do you want this job?

Why should we employ you?

Describe your problem-solving abilities and give examples of your ability to overcome difficulties.

How do you deal with difficult clients / colleagues?

## **Questions that you could ask**

What will my primary responsibilities be?

Who will I report to?

Will anyone be reporting to me?

Will I work on my own or as part of a team in this position?

Where does this position fit into the organization?

To what extent will I be able to use my own initiative?

Why has the position become vacant?

How many other applicants are you interviewing for this position?

When will the decision to appoint someone be made?

Do you provide any training?

## Other models of selection

- **Graphology** – Interpretation of handwriting / signature
  - Sign natural
  - Check the credentials of the graphologist
- **The in-tray test** – several administrative tasks to be completed within a given time
  - Stay calm
  - Testing your ability to prioritise
  - Testing your problem-solving ability
- **Psychometric testing** – especially personality questionnaires and aptitude tests
  - In most cases part of recruitment process
  - Relax and do your best
- **Credit checks** – Do you manage your own money effectively
  - Usually done in cases where the job entails working with lots of money
- **Case study** – scenario of problem and you need to come up with a solution or a business plan
  - Do it yourself, do not give it to someone else to complete
  - Testing your thinking skills and problem-solving ability

## **Interview Do's and Don'ts**

### **Do's**

- Arrive 10-15 minutes before the appointment. This will allow you time to allow for any unforeseen traffic problems, find the office, visit the rest room, and to unwind before the interview.
- Enjoy a good night's rest before the interview to ensure clarity of thought.
- Be enthusiastic. Smile and shake hands when meeting the interviewer and any other staff you might meet. Speak clearly and concisely. Vary your tone of voice,
- Remember the names of people you may have met (or spoken to telephonically). Be sure of correct pronunciation.
- Use "please" and "thank you" when needed. These basic courtesies are vital during your job search.
- Answer interview questions thoroughly and comprehensively.
- Keep an upright posture; maintain eye contact, lean forward slightly. Show a sincere interest in the job and the interviewer.
- Be suitably dressed and well groomed.
- Be prepared to answer irregular or personal questions eloquently.
- Arrive alone. Do not ask a friend or family member to accompany you.
- Acquire information about the company/organisation before the interview.
- Market your skills instead of your need of employment.
- Be courteous toward the receptionist/secretary. An important front of office link, he/she often decides on which correspondence should be brought to the interviewer's attention.
- Have some money in your wallet. You may want to buy a cup of coffee or need to make a call.
- Listen attentively to the interviewer. It prevents repetition of information and allows you to clarify any details you may have misunderstood.
- Write down questions during the interview.
- Confirm your interest in the position by saying: "I hope that you would consider my application favourably" or "I am very interested in this position because....."
- Thank the interviewer at the end of the interview.
- After you have left the interview, write down your impressions and note what you would do differently at your next interview.
- Send a follow up letter or make a call after the interview.

### **Don'ts**

- ...forget to have an extra copy of your CV and list of references handy.
- ...only ask salary and benefit related questions.
- ...act as though you're entitled to getting the job.
- ...interrupt the interviewer. Wait for an appropriate pause to ask questions.
- ...use the interview as a platform to discuss personal issues (personal finance and health). Focus on your skills and qualifications
- ...criticise previous/current employers and colleagues.
- ...make poor excuses for leaving previous employment e.g. "My colleagues were so unfriendly!"
- ...chew gum, smoke, fidget, play with your hair.
- ...Read other documents or touch articles on the interviewer's desk.
- ...bring clumsy baggage such as oversized briefcases and bags into the interview room. Your CV, a small notebook and pen for notes are sufficient.



## Resource List

- Association of Personnel Service Organisations (APSO), <http://www.apso.co.za>. Western Cape branch (021) 872-8552
- Bolles, N.R. 2003. **What Color is your Parachute? A practical manual for job-hunters and career changers.** Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.
- **Bradley's CV's.** Available at <http://www.bradleycvs.co.uk/cv-writing-tips/cv-personal-details-interests.htm>
- Business Partners (011) 480-8700 – assistance with developing a business plan and starting up your own business.
- Coleman, Lynn. 2000. **Developing workplace Skills: How to get your first job and keep it.** Kenwyn: Juta.
- **Job Interviewing.** Available at [http://careerplanning.about.com/od/jobinterviews/a/job\\_interview.htm](http://careerplanning.about.com/od/jobinterviews/a/job_interview.htm)
- Joubert, D. 2007. **Writing the Winning CV.** Cape Town: Zebra Press.
- Maties Careers - **MyMaties.com**
- McLintock-Rudnick, C. 2001. **The Business of Becoming Employed.** Claremont: Spearhead.
- **Types of Interviews.** Available at [http://www.jobskills.info/resume\\_edge/types\\_of\\_interview.htm](http://www.jobskills.info/resume_edge/types_of_interview.htm)
- **Types of interviews.** Available at <http://www.gradx.net/article/articleprint/14/-1/98/>
- [www.careerweb.co.za](http://www.careerweb.co.za)
- [www.cvonline.co.za](http://www.cvonline.co.za)
- [www.wcn.co.uk](http://www.wcn.co.uk)
- <http://www.jobweb.net>
- <http://www.easyinfo.co.za>
- <http://www.careerjunction.co.za>
- <http://careers.iafrica.com>
- <http://www.jobs.co.za>
- <http://sundaytimes.careerjunction.co.za>
- <http://www.jobmail.co.za>
- <http://www.careerclassifieds.co.za>
- [www.biotech-register.com](http://www.biotech-register.com) & [www.pharmacy.org/company.html](http://www.pharmacy.org/company.html) (some BSc degrees)
- [www.findastudent.co.za](http://www.findastudent.co.za) (part – time work)