

SECTION 1: Attract and Select

TOOL 1.5: SELECTION INTERVIEW RESOURCE GUIDE

Purpose	This extensive guide, which is clearly referenced and user friendly, is based on behavioural interviewing techniques. Processes, tips, templates and many examples of interview questions are provided to enable managers and other professionals to plan and run an effective selection campaign , in order to hire the right person for the position and the company.
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Application	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Read the selection interview procedure for an overview of the entire selection process.b. Define the job clearly using 1.1: JOB DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE.c. Choose the interviewers for the selection campaign, agree on competencies and behaviours from the seven job-specific competencies and compile the interview questions (refer to suggested examples). Write your own questions, if preferred.d. Conduct telephonic screening interviews to shortlist, followed by intensive culture and competence interviews to compile the final shortlist. Conduct 'team fit' interviews before making the hiring decision. Complete the relevant selection decision matrix after each interview the SELECTION DECISION MATRICES.e. Conduct the reference checks of the final short-listed candidates.f. Plan and implement an effective onboarding programme for the new recruit.

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1 The selection interview process

a The three-step interview process: Number and sequence of interviews

Research into high-performing organisations emphasises the importance of taking candidates for a vacant position through a rigorous selection process. The successful candidate should realise that s/he has been especially selected for the position, thereby creating a positive expectation in the candidate that s/he will perform well in the new job. This applies to both internal and external candidates. Whereas external candidates should be taken through three interviews, two interviews are usually sufficient for internal candidates. It is strongly recommended that you follow the '**Rule of three**', i.e., have at least three potential candidates, at least three people interviewing them, and that you interview the candidates during three separate interactions. The following table and explanation summarise the recommended selection interview process:

Step 1: Screening interview

The screening interview is usually conducted telephonically and takes approximately 20–30 minutes. The aim of the interview is to assess the candidate's qualifications, work experience and attitude relevant to the position being filled. In addition, the interview aims to gauge the candidate's level of genuine interest in the job and the company. The HR representative usually conducts this interview and produces a shortlist of candidates for the second interview. The direct manager or a senior staff member could also conduct the screening interview.



Step 2: Culture and competence interview

This interview is conducted face to face and lasts between 60 and 75 minutes (or longer for more senior positions). The aim of the interview is to assess candidates in terms of the company culture and their level of competence against important job-specific competencies. The direct manager and one or two senior colleagues or technical/professional experts do this interview. The candidate could be asked to prepare a brief presentation as part of this interview. Shortlisted candidates are invited to a final interview.

Exit interviews in many companies show that staff members who voluntarily leave the organisation during the first few months of their employment do so mainly due to an inability to settle into the company culture. This is why it is vital, early on in the selection process, to assess the candidate's ability to fit the culture.

Step 3: Team fit interview

This final interview involves shortlisted candidates being interviewed by two or more team members, to increase the chances of finding the best team fit. This process is important for developing psychological buy-in from colleagues who will be able to support the new staff member – especially during the initial onboarding period. The client may also be involved at this stage if the position is to be dedicated or outsourced to a client.

Step 1 Screening interview 	Step 2 Culture and competence interview	 Step 3 Team fit interview
Timing: 15–20 minutes	Timing: 60–75 minutes	Timing: 30–45 minutes
Telephonically	Face to face	Face to face
Assessment of the candidate’s qualifications, work experience and attitude relevant to the position. Also, to gauge the candidate’s level of genuine interest in the job and the company	Assessment of the candidate regarding the company culture and level of competence against important job-specific competencies	Assessment of the candidate’s team fit. This is the final interview before a selection decision is made and the job is offered to the successful candidate
After the interview, complete SELECTION DECISION MATRIX 1 and shortlist or reject candidates	After the interview, complete SELECTION DECISION MATRIX 2 and shortlist or reject candidates	After the interview, complete SELECTION DECISION MATRIX 3 appoint or reject candidates
Who interviews? HR representative, direct manager or senior employee 1 person	Who interviews? Direct manager, HR representative, technical specialist and/or senior employee ± 3–5 people	Who interviews? Senior employee, peers, team members (and clients, if appropriate) ± 3–5 people

b Preparing for a selection campaign

Consider the following important aspects while planning your selection campaign and preparing for the selection interviews. You might want to use the guidelines as a checklist:

- Have you considered **other options** to recruitment and selection? Can the job be reorganised or reallocated to current team members? Have you consulted your team to decide on the best option? Is this an opportunity to bring in a person with a different and more desirable set of competencies than the person who is leaving?
- Remember to **involve your HR representative** in your recruitment and selection campaign. You will generally save on costs by using internal resources for hiring.
- Have you decided **who should be involved** in all the interviews, but especially interviews two and three? Have all panel members been informed of their involvement, as well as the dates/times?
- Is the **Job Description Template** well described, updated and relevant to the current position? Is each member of the interview panel familiar with the job description? If necessary, work with your HR representative to develop an accurate statement of the job requirements.
- Has the interview panel confirmed the **key competencies and behaviours** required of the position and have they **prepared questions** to explore in the interview? (Remember that the candidate is also interviewing the company.) <Have the competencies been shared among the panel, preferably two or three each?> <unclear> <Has each panel member been prepped to ask questions on ...>
- Other than choosing **four universal company values**, choose some (or all) of the **seven job-specific competencies** which are relevant to the position. The competencies can be prioritised in terms of level of importance (see **Selection Decision Matrix Form**). Also, consider which competencies are vital to the current position, and where it would be beneficial if the candidate 'exceeded expectations'.

- Use a selection of the questions provided in this **SELECTION INTERVIEW RESOURCE GUIDE** or phrase your own and write them down in the spaces provided. Provide copies of the appropriate pages to all interviewers (Interview Guides 1, 2 or 3). The questions are set at a professional level, therefore the focus may be raised or lowered depending on the level of the position for which candidates are being interviewed.

- Plan to allow 30 minutes after the candidate has left for panel members to discuss amongst themselves, **complete the SELECTION DECISION MATRIX** and agree on the next step for each specific candidate.

- Have you booked a **suitable meeting room**? Is the room quietly positioned and well set out so the interviewee feels as comfortable as possible? Make sure there are no large barriers between the interviewee and the interviewers. Is fresh water and clean glasses available for use in the meeting room?

- Are there clearly written **name tags** to identify interviewers?

- Ensure that all interview panel members are aware of **potential biases** in selection decision making. Discuss such biases beforehand to raise awareness and minimise their influence on the outcome of the interview. Common biases include:
 - Primacy effect: first impressions
 - Recency effect: last impressions
 - Stereotyping: All Xs are Y!
 - Just-like-me effect: 'mini me' syndrome

Pre-employment testing

Candidates can be put through a battery of work-related tests, e.g., a case study, help-desk simulation, problem-solving tasks, technical troubleshooting, software application, as part of the screening process to assess relevant entry requirements for the position. Candidates should be informed of the results immediately or shortly after completing the tests or exercises. Ensure that the tests are applied fairly, and are valid and reliable.

c The selection interview process

Use the following interview process for all face-to-face interviews:

Opening the interview

- a Make the candidate feel welcome and thank her/him for attending. Introduce yourself and other interviewers.
- b Outline the structure and format of the interview to the candidate.
- c Begin interviews 2 and 3 by asking selected starter interview questions. Refer to TOOL 1.5: **SELECTION INTERVIEW RESOURCE GUIDE** for tips related to all interviews.

1 During the interview

- a **Step1: Screening interview.** Ask questions to clarify and uncover evidence of the candidate's qualifications, work experience and attitude relevant to the position. Also, to gauge the candidate's level of genuine interest in the job and the company.

OR

- b **Step 2: Culture and competence interview.** Ask questions to uncover evidence from the candidate relating to the company culture and his/her competence against important job-specific competencies.

OR

- c **Step 3: Team fit interview.** Ask questions to uncover evidence of team fit.

3 Closing the interview

- a Encourage the candidate to ask questions about the job, company and the market.
- b Explain the next steps in the selection process and provide a realistic time frame for feedback pertaining to the outcome of the interview.
- c Promote the company positively and realistically using TOOL 1.6: **EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION**. Bid a warm farewell and escort the candidate out.

4 After the interview

- a Review your interview notes.
- b Consult with other members of the interview panel.
- c Complete the appropriate **SELECTION DECISION MATRIX** (1, 2 or 3) in . 1.4 to make your decision regarding the candidate (shortlist/employ, not suitable, future interest).

d **Begin with starter questions to get the interview off to a good start**

Starter questions aim to get the interaction off to a relaxed and engaging start, thereby setting the tone for the rest of the interview. Steps 2 and 3 include suggested starter questions. **Please note:** Do not give away too much information about the specifics of the role or situation too early in the interview. First allow the candidate the opportunity to respond regarding his/her style and approach to work without being unduly influenced.

e **During the interview**

Ask the four types of interviewing questions

It is the candidate's interview, so the role of the interviewer is to ask the right questions and then to listen carefully and take accurate notes. After beginning with the starter interview questions, ask many **open-ended, best/worst, situational** and **probing questions** to ensure you are collecting as much information as possible regarding the candidate's level of knowledge and skills, against the chosen competencies.

- **Open-ended questions** tend to open up the interview and usually start with the words 'What', 'Why' and 'How', three examples being: "What do you like most about your current job?" "Why are thinking of changing careers at this stage?" "How have you managed your career to date?"
- **Best/worst questions** encourage the candidate to share information about positive and negative issues, e.g.: "What has been your greatest success with a client?" "What led to this success?" "Tell us about an instance where your project failed completely" "What did you do to salvage the damaged client relationship?"

- **Situational questions** place the candidate in a situation that is typical of the position, e.g.: “How do you respond to a client who phones in a state of panic and says that his entire system is down?” “What do you do when your top-performing employee gives one month’s notice?”
- **Probing questions** explore issues in greater detail, thus making a better selection decision more likely, e.g.: “Tell us more about how you created a solid relationship with your key clients” (“What else do you do to engage your clients on an ongoing basis?”) “You said you have competent people on your team. How do you measure competence in others?”

Two or three questions per competency are generally enough to gain the information required to make an accurate assessment of the candidate, relative to the competency. During the second half of the interview, provide the candidate with more detailed background on the company and the role. If available, provide relevant company marketing material (to external candidates) when they leave the interview.

Always remember to take good, accurate notes so that you can refer to this information when ranking and making comparisons between the candidates applying for the position.

f **Closing the interview**

Consider the following important aspects when closing the interview:

- **Check with the interviewers** to ensure they have asked all the questions needed to evaluate the candidate against the competencies allocated to them.
- **Ask the candidate to voice any questions** s/he may have regarding the role or the company.
- **Explain the next steps** in the selection process, e.g.: “We have a number of strong candidates to interview, which will take another ten days. Follow-up interviews will be arranged for successful, shortlisted candidates within a fortnight. We will contact you before the end of the month with our decision. Please contact me at any time before then, if you have any queries.” Rather overestimate than underestimate the time required, so as not to disappoint a candidate.

- **Promote the company positively** using the **Employer Value Proposition** statement. Refer to the . 1.6: **EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION** for information on how to formulate an appropriate statement. An example is:

“Our company’s values of respect for people, personal commitment, dedication to quality and client service, teamwork and partnership are shared and demonstrated among all employees. These values are core to what we are, how we behave and how we conduct business, no matter in which office employees are located. One of our major drivers is a commitment to high standards of service to our clients and a supportive internal culture for our employees.”

- **Thank the candidate** for his/her presence. Candidates may have taken a day’s leave in order to attend the selection interview.
- **Accompany the person** on leaving the office and bid him/her a warm farewell.

g **After the interview**

- All interviewers review their interview notes individually and complete the rating scale for their competencies. The panel members then discuss their opinions among themselves and **agree on a rating for the candidate in terms of each competency**. The competency rating scale has nine options to choose from, three each for the categories of ‘meets’, ‘does not meet’, or ‘exceeds’ the requirements of the job.

Do not select a candidate who exceeds standards in all competencies, because the role may lack challenge for him/her after a relatively short period. Prior to initiating a selection campaign, select those competencies where it would be desirable for the candidate to exceed expectations. Overqualified candidates often become frustrated employees, especially if the position is a specialist one which offers little flexibility.

- The HR representative or recruiting manager should record the agreed rating per competency on the appropriate **Selection Decision Matrix Form** which will assist in deciding the shortlist or in making the final selection.

- Note clearly the **reasons for rejecting** a candidate who is not suitable based on low competence and insufficient experience, so that you or the agency can give appropriate feedback to the candidate.

Please note: If you have involved several people in the selection process, **collate all interview guides, notes and feedback** for later retrieval, if and when required. These notes should be kept on record for a year, in case of a dispute arising from an unsuccessful candidate.

- **Reference checks:** Candidates should be asked to provide the names of their previous employers and other referees as a source of reference. Refer to . 1.2: **JOB APPLICATION FORM** where references are requested from at least one previous employer, as well as a personal reference.
- Usually only the references of the final short-listed candidates are usually checked. Telephonic references checking are usually most convenient. Some organisations undertake reference checking prior to the manager interviewing the candidate, and after the first telephonic screening interview. Refer to the last page of this guide for the **REFERENCE CHECK TEMPLATE**. This template guides the telephonic reference checking process.

Always seek permission from the candidate to obtain information from a reference that is not included on the candidate's reference list. Choose a referee who is willing to give a forthright and accurate opinion, and has had the opportunity to work closely with the candidate. Ask questions of the referee that will uncover evidence of the candidate's competencies as they relate to the position being filled.

- **Security checks:** If required of the position or by the organisation, candidates should be asked to sign a letter of permission for a security check to be done (as part of their job application). Candidates need to willingly permit the company to undertake any credit or criminal charge checks. The need for a security check should be justified by the nature of the position. Consult the laws of the land as regards security checks, to ensure compliance with the applicable legislation.

2 **Step 1: Screening interview**

a **About interview 1**

A screening interview is usually conducted telephonically but can also be done electronically, if necessary. This is not a face-to-face interview, although it is always 'live'. The HR representative, recruiting manager or a senior employee conducts this interview.

The primary purpose of the screening interview is to assess the candidate's qualifications, work experience and attitude appropriate to the position, as well as to gauge his/her level of genuine interest in the job and the company. A successful candidate is shortlisted for a face-to-face interview.

Note: Do not give away too much information about the specifics of the role until the candidate has had an opportunity to respond to the questions without being unduly influenced. Keep TOOL1.1: **JOB DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE** at hand, in which the job is clearly defined.

b **Screening interview:** Questions for exploring qualifications, work experience and attitude

Name of candidate: _____ Date: _____

Ask the following eight questions of all candidates to ensure that the screening process is consistent. You may want to raise or lower the level of the questions, based on the position being filled.

1 **(Work experience)** In three minutes or less, walk us through your work history to date and tell us a little about each of your jobs. (Investigate reasons why candidate left certain jobs/companies. Also, fill in any time gaps in his/her work history.)

2 **(Qualifications and work experience)** What education, training and experience do you have that makes you the best person for this position?

3 **(Attitude)** What do you like best about your current or most recent position? What do you like least about your current or most recent position?

4 **(Attitude)** What are you most proud of having achieved in your current job/career to date?

5 **(Level of interest)** Why are you prepared to leave your current position?

6 **(Attitude and level of interest)** Describe some of the challenges or opportunities you are looking for in your next job.

7 **(Level of interest)** What do you know about this company? Why are you particularly interested in our company?

8 **(Attitude and level of interest)** Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself, as it relates to this job application?

SELECTION DECISION MATRIX 1

Complete a separate matrix form for each candidate, and for each interview or interaction.

Name of candidate:			Position applied for:								
Date of interview:			Position location:								
Position status:	Full-time	Part-Time	Position's direct manager:								
STEP 1: Candidate screened against relevant qualifications, work experience and attitude											
Category of competence	Competence	Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements			
		9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
Qualifications, work experience, and attitude appropriate to the requirements of the job	1 Qualifications										
	2 Work experience										
	3 Attitude										
	4 Level of interest										
Comments	1 Qualifications appropriate for the job										
	2 Work experience relevant to the job										
	3 Attitude appropriate for the job										
	4 Level of interest in or 'hunger' for the job										
Total score:				Interviewer:							

Recommendations:

Shortlist

Not suitable

Future interest

Reason why the candidate is not suitable: _____

STEP 2: Assessment against company culture and job-specific competencies

a About the culture and competence interview

The two sets of questions that make up step 2 are directly related to the culture or values of the company and the competencies required for the job.

The **first set** of questions covers the **four universal values** and is written to be relevant to most organisations' cultures, even though different terminology may be preferred. Terms can be changed or customised to suit the company's culture.

The **second set** of questions covers the **seven job-specific competencies** that are described in such a way as to cover most professional/technical positions in an organisation. These competencies are the same as those included in . 2.1: **JOB DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE**. The direct manager and HR representative should pre-select the competencies and behaviours (knowledge and skills) in this template for the position being recruited. On the other hand, all seven competencies could be relevant.

Select those questions which suit the position being recruited for, as well as the interviewer's style. Alternatively, write preferred questions in the spaces provided. Generally, two or three questions per area are sufficient to gain the information needed to measure each competence.

The direct manager, HR representative, technical specialist and/or senior employee conduct this vital face-to-face interview. Shortlisted candidates are invited to the final team fit interview.

Please note: Do not give away too much information about the specifics of the role until the candidate has been given an opportunity to respond as regards his/her style and approach to work, without being unduly influenced. Also, ask one question at a time, even if two or more questions are suggested.

STEP 2: Starter questions

The purpose of starter questions is to get the interview off to an interactive start. Begin by asking a few starter interview questions to relax the candidate and 'warm up' the interview.

- 1 Take two minutes to describe a typical day in your current or most recent position.

- 2 What have been the major challenges in your current or most recent job?

- 3 How do you go about planning your day at work? Why do you use this method? What do you do if this method does not work?

- 4 Share your knowledge of the industry. What is your current assessment of the industry? What important industry trends have you noticed lately?

Questions to explore company culture (values)

A Respect for people

- a Promote an environment of respect by valuing people and their opinions;
- b Encourage and recognise others for their contribution, knowledge and experience;
- c Treat people fairly and equitably regardless of job level or circumstance;
- d Collaborate with others by sharing information openly and honestly;
- e Treat people as they would like to be treated.

Suggested questions

- 1 It is common practice in our workplace to work with people from a range of **multicultural** backgrounds. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of working in a multicultural environment? What have you found to be the most rewarding aspect of working in a multicultural environment?

- 2 How do you encourage others to share their ideas freely? What do you do when people seem afraid or reluctant to voice their opinions?

- 3 How can a lack of respect cause conflict among employees? How did you go about resolving conflict that arose from a lack of respect being shown?

4 Tell us about a time when you worked with people from varied backgrounds, cultures or experiences. How did you modify or change your behaviour when working with this group? What did you learn from the experience?

5 Tell us how you included someone in your team who is perceived to be different from most of the other team members. What was successful and what did not work well? What advice would you offer a new manager who is faced with a similar situation?

Own questions, if preferred

Respect for people								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

B Personal commitment

- a Demonstrate enthusiasm for and a strong commitment to the success of the company, to clients (internal and/or external) and teams;
- b Take accountability to execute plans and achieve results;
- c Meet commitments, get the job done consistently and see projects through to completion;
- d Take responsibility for own decisions and outcomes;
- e Speak positively about the company, its mission and objectives;
- f Identify and pursue learning and development opportunities to increase competence.

Suggested questions

1 Give an example of when you showed dedication to your work beyond what was generally required of you. Why did you do this? Can you give other examples?

2 Reflect on a time when you were particularly enthusiastic about and energetic in doing your work. What was it about the role or work that made you so enthusiastic?

3 How do you compare with your colleagues in terms of the personal commitment you show to your job and the company? How do you know this to be true?

4 Tell us about your current personal development plans. What actions have you taken to ensure that your knowledge and skills remain up to date?

5 At times we find ourselves in situations where we realise some action is needed, but it does not form part of our job. Tell us about a time when that happened to you. What was the situation? What did you do? How did things turn out in the end?

6 (For internal candidates only) What do you generally say to outsiders about our organisation? How do they respond to what you say?

Own questions, if preferred

Personal commitment								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

C Teamwork and partnership

- a Work in collaboration with clients, colleagues and other teams;
- b Take on additional tasks to assist in reaching team objectives;
- c Accept advice and feedback from others, and complete own share of work within specified time frames;
- d Share information with and learning willingly from others;
- e Make decisions that put the success of the company ahead of business unit or personal gains;
- f Enable stronger company performance by working together;
- g Build effective working relationships with colleagues in different functions or businesses in the company, to further the achievement of overall objectives;
- h Build effective relationships with clients, suppliers and others outside the company, to further the achievement of business objectives;
- i Create a social network and obtain input from a range of relevant business people who serve the needs of the business;
- j Project a friendly, engaging interpersonal style.

Suggested questions

- 1 Tell us how you get accepted into a new team. What did you do when you were initially not accepted into a team?

- 2 Tell us about a time when you had to work as part of a team. What did you enjoy about it? What was the most challenging aspect of the collaboration?

3 Almost all work situations require us to interact with people with whom we do not get on well. How did you handle such a situation?

4 Tell us how you built an effective team spirit in a group.

5 What external business networks have you established? How did you do this?

6 Give an example of where effective collaboration resulted in significant business or project success. What was it about the team that enabled you to work together and achieve so much?

7 Describe the most demanding experience you faced, in having to manage a group in order to achieve a common goal. Why was this difficult? What tools and techniques did you use to encourage the group to work together? What was the final outcome?

8 Describe your most recent experience of working in a group where participants had different or varied backgrounds. How did their backgrounds vary? How did you modify your approach? What was the reaction from the group? What did you learn from this experience?

9 As team leader, how do you encourage collaboration and genuine teamwork among team members?

Own questions, if preferred

Teamwork and partnership								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

D Dedication to quality and client service

- a Strive to achieve excellence in every task or project;
- b Focus on high-quality standards, balanced with consistent achievement;
- c Follow company policies and procedures appropriately;
- d Listen to the client's needs and work to satisfy these;
- e Deliver service in line with the client's expectations and follow up in good time to ensure client satisfaction;
- f Develop a reputation as a quality professional;
- g Check all written communication to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings;
- h Give fanatical attention to detail, when required.

Suggested questions

1 How do you measure the quality of your work? And the quality of your team's work?

2 Tell us about a time when you proactively identified a new way of working, or a new approach, that improved a work-related process. How did you promote your new approach? What was the positive impact of your new way of working?

3 How do you go about getting feedback on your work-related weaknesses? What feedback have you received? What actions did you take to overcome your weaknesses?

6 What is the most successful relationship you ever built with a client? How did you go about building and maintaining this relationship?

7 Describe a situation where you had to perform while under extreme pressure. How did you prioritise tasks? How did you keep your focus and maintain quality standards?

8 Tell us of a time when a relationship with a client went sour, and it cost you the client's business. What caused the breakdown? What did you try to win back the client?

Own questions, if preferred

Dedication to quality and client service								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Questions to explore job-specific competencies

1 Team leadership (for people management positions)

- a Influence others to achieve the organisation's mission and goals;
- b Organise the work and allocate roles and responsibilities to self and staff members;
- c Provide ongoing direction to individuals/teams in terms of roles, goal setting and performance standards;
- d Coach and assign/delegate tasks to develop the capabilities of others, finding satisfaction in knowing the impact made on an individual's work and career;
- e Lead from a position of influence, not only authority;
- f Create and reinforce a culture of teamwork and cooperation among all stakeholders;
- g Create a climate of sustainable motivation at work that empowers people to want to do their best;
- h Provide the information and other resources needed for staff to perform their tasks well;
- i Communicate results achieved on a regular basis, and realign focus and standards when needed;
- j Complete face-to-face staff evaluations and written appraisals;
- k Resolve conflict between and among employees constructively and fairly;
- l Manage poor performance in good time and decisively;
- m Implement disciplinary procedures by following organisational policy and labour law.

Suggested questions (ask one question at a time)

1 How would you describe your primary leadership style? Why do you use this style?

2 Tell us how you use your leadership skills to motivate staff to achieve high performance. Where has your leadership not been effective in the past? Why was this and what did you learn from the experience?

3 We can't always make decisions that everyone agrees with. What unpopular decisions have you made in the past? How did you communicate the decision(s) to others?

4 How do you go about managing a staff member who is not achieving to the required standard? Give an example of where your management and leadership have influenced a staff member to improve his/her performance.

5 Tell us about a time when you had to lead a team/group to complete a difficult task or objective. What was the objective? What did you do? What went well? What difficulties did you encounter? How did you overcome these obstacles?

6 Describe a time when you were working with a group whose morale was low and was having a tough time collaborating as a team. What did you do? How did things turn out?

7 What actions do you take to keep your staff motivated and focused throughout the business year?

8 Tell us how you built a team from scratch.

Own questions, if preferred

Team leadership								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

2 Strategic orientation (for more senior positions)

- a Think beyond your own area of direct operation. Use complex strategic thinking and incorporate conceptual, analytical and intuitive abilities;
- b Apply strategic thinking to a function or process, product and market, business unit or corporate entity;
- c Formulate and communicate a clear vision for the future;
- d Develop clear, step-by-step strategies and tactics by analysing the company's competitive position and considering: industry and market trends; current and potential clients; and the organisation's inherent strengths and weaknesses;
- e Understand competitors' strengths and weaknesses;
- f Formulate policies and procedures to support the business;
- g Plan and implement changes and innovations in your own and in other areas of the business;
- h Identify and verify critical information and intelligence for formulating goals;
- i Set long-term objectives for your area of responsibility;
- j Build an appropriate image for your department, company and/or organisation.
- k

Suggested questions (ask one question at a time)

1. Highlight a number of recent industry trends which you are aware of, as well as their impact on the business.

2. Would you describe yourself as being more logical or intuitive in solving problems? Give an example to highlight your problem-solving style.

3. Give an example of how you positioned yourself favourably in the marketplace in comparison to a variety of competitors. How did you achieve this favourable perception in the clients' eyes?

4. Describe how you gain knowledge of your competitors' strategies, actions or developments. How do you learn about changes or trends in the marketplace that may affect your business and may require a change in tactics?

5. Describe a time when you were responsible for making an important business decision. What was the decision, and how did you approach the decision-making process? What were the potential risks? What did you decide to do? What was the outcome of your decision?

6. Are you the kind of person who likes to 'experiment and try new things' or do you 'stick to regular routines'? Give an example to illustrate.

Own questions, if preferred

Strategic orientation								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

3 Entrepreneurship and profitable growth

- a Proactively look for opportunities to grow the current business and identify new business opportunities;
- b Act on your own initiative to identify new business opportunities;
- c Identify opportunities in clients' businesses to promote relevant solutions in your own business;
- d Determine, as soon as possible, the costs and benefits of a business proposition;
- e Understand the key performance indicators driving the market, in respect of clients' businesses and your own;
- f Conduct a meeting with a client of equal business stature;
- g Understand and manage the market dynamics (competition, the rules of the game and regulations);
- h Understand financial terms and conditions in the business process, including cash flow, discounts, credit terms, implementation costs, project funding, foreign exchange, tax, etc;
- i Formulate a budget;
- j Understand and work closely to that budget.

Suggested questions (ask one question at a time)

1 How have you added value to the bottom line of your current business?

2 Name three important industry changes that are happening right now. How are these changes affecting your current role in the organisation? What about their future impact?

3 Give an example of where you showed entrepreneurial thinking in your work and subsequently achieved excellent results.

4 Tell us how your level of business acumen benefited you during interaction with a client. What was the situation? How did you approach it? What was the result?

5 Describe a time when you were responsible for an important business decision. What was the decision and how did you approach the decision-making process? What were the potential risks? What did you decide to do? What was the outcome of your decision?

6 (For a sales position) How have you used your broad understanding of financial terms and conditions in the sales process (including discounts, credit terms, implementation costs, project funding, etc.) to win an important account?

7 Give an example of where you used your innovation and initiative to achieve excellent business results.

8 What legacy (long-term results or impact) will you leave the team in your current position?

Own questions, if preferred

Entrepreneurship and profitable growth								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

4 Solving problems and getting results

- a Accept responsibility for resolving a problem to its final conclusion;
- b Drive achievement and the on-going improvement of business results;
- c Show dissatisfaction with poor performance and drive processes to achieve business goals;
- d Strive to achieve agreed deadlines and standards, especially when the going gets tough or the anticipated situation changes;
- e Review and evaluate proposals in line with broader business strategies;
- f Know when to move on to the next opportunity and do not invest too much time in spent business opportunities;
- g Apply a systematic problem-solving approach to identify causes, explore alternatives and decide on the best course of action to resolve the problem now and in the future

Suggested questions

- 1 Tell us about a business opportunity you identified and pursued. How did you know it was a good opportunity to take forward? What was the end result?

- 2 Tell us about the best business opportunity you ever identified. How did you identify it? What action did you initiate to take advantage of the opportunity?

3 What has been the greatest achievement in your career to date? What made it so? How did you manage to achieve it?

4 Describe a role you assumed, where you had to manage multiple tasks for multiple people. How do you manage expectations or deadlines and set priorities?

5 How do you go about planning and organising your time? (For example, managing tasks to be followed up monthly, weekly, daily, etc.) Provide a recent example of where these techniques worked well.

6 What do you do when your schedule is upset by unexpected events?

9 Give an example of where you resolved a difficult problem and received praise for the outcome or results? How did you resolve the problem? What general problem-solving approach do you use when tackling a difficult problem?

10 Give an example of where you planned and exceeded client or project expectations. How did you manage to exceed expectations? Was this a good thing or a bad thing, in the long term?

11 How do you plan to 'stay ahead of the game' in your job?

Own questions, if preferred

Solving problems and getting results								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

5 Functional expertise

- a Remain up to date in your area of speciality or expertise;
- b Apply a body of knowledge and experience to current business situations in order to add value and improve business efficiencies and profitability;
- c Apply technical or specialist expertise and experience for the benefit of the organisation and consider the context in which these are applied;
- d Ensure that your functional expertise supports that of other experts, rather than being in competition with them (e.g., colleagues and clients);
- e Persuade or negotiate with others by relying on technical or specialist knowledge and experience;
- f Present documented material or proposals in a credible and professional manner;
- g Share the technical implications of a situation with non-specialists, or explain it to them.

Suggested questions

- 1 Tell us about the most valuable technical or professional expertise you bring to your current position. Give an example of how you used your functional knowledge to persuade someone to take an important action.

- 2 How do you stay marketable as regards your expertise or speciality, and how do you plan to improve your chances of job security?

3 Tell us how you plan, structure and write an important technical or professional proposal. Give an example of the best written proposal you have done thus far. What made it so successful? What did it achieve?

4 How do you ensure that you stay up to date with important knowledge and expertise in your field, in order to contribute optimally to the company?

5 How do you go about obtaining and tracking market or competitor knowledge in order to understand their key advantages and disadvantages? How do you then use this information to your organisation's benefit?

6 Tell us of a situation where your expertise was placed in direct competition with a colleague's expertise. How did you deal with it? What was the end result?

7 How difficult would it be for your current organisation to replace your expertise if you decided to leave?

Own questions, if preferred

Functional expertise								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

6 Interpersonal skills

- a Speak clearly and confidently, be articulate;
- b Listen actively to fully understand the other person's view or perspective;
- c Tailor feedback to the specific needs and communication styles of others;
- d Make effective presentations and concisely present/communicate a complete and accurate picture of the current situation or of the company's products and services;
- e Develop and maintain two-way communication with a variety of people at different levels both within and outside the organisation;
- f Suggest proposals to address your clients' most vital concerns and important business issues;
- g Structure meetings and presentations to create the desired impact and increase the chances of a favourable outcome;
- h Build a network of relevant role-players both within and outside the organisation;
- i Resolve customer complaints in a professional and confident manner;
- j Resolve unhappiness or conflict in a calm, objective and comprehensive way.

Suggested questions

- 1 Evaluate your interpersonal skills generally: What do you do well, and what do you find more difficult to do?

- 2 Tell us about a time when you had to provide negative feedback to someone. How did you approach this in a sensitive manner? What was the outcome of the interaction?

3 How do you generally react to conflict? Tell us about a conflict situation you dealt with particularly well. Tell us about a conflict situation you handled badly. What did you learn from this experience?

4 Give an example of a time when you could not meet a commitment to a client. How did you handle the situation? What was the client's reaction?

5 Describe the network you established within the company that allows you to stay up to date with company issues. What about your network outside of the company that allows you to stay up to date with industry issues?

6 Tell us about a time when you were able to arrive at a win-win outcome during an important negotiation. How did you approach the negotiation? Why did it work well?

7 How do you identify a client's needs most accurately? Give an example of where you did your homework to identify the client's needs and it paid off.

8 Give an example of when you were required to develop your direct reports. How did you approach their development? What coaching and mentoring skills did you use? What was the result of your coaching?

9 How do you plan and structure a presentation to an important client or for an important situation? What is the best presentation you ever made, and why do you think this?

Own questions, if preferred

Interpersonal skills								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

7 Self-management

- a Work effectively under pressure and proactively manage stress levels;
- b View change as an opportunity for growth or improvement;
- c Adjust your personal style to meet changing business demands;
- d Work productively in a high-pressure environment, maintain a positive outlook, handle criticism well and learn from it;
- e Focus on the issue, not the person;
- f Remain focused on the task at hand despite regular distractions and ongoing requests for service;
- g Identify your inner feelings and emotional state, and express those feelings to others in an appropriate manner;
- h Work hard when required and work smart whenever possible;
- i Manage your own time effectively by setting priorities and through productive time management;
- j Plan for shorter-term personal development and longer-term career development.
- k

Suggested questions (ask one question at a time)

1. Why do people often resist change? Tell us about a situation in which you persuaded people to accept a significant change. What was the result?

2. Tell us about an important change you faced in your career to date. How did you react to it? What actions did you take? What was the final outcome?

3. How do you go about planning your work and your life when you know the pressure is going to be especially tough?

4. What do you consider your three major professional strengths? How have you made the most of these strengths in previous roles?

5. What do you consider your major professional weaknesses? How have you worked to overcome or work around these weaknesses?

6. Think about the last time you had a stimulating day at work. What made it such a special day?

7 What kind of training have you completed recently? What work-related books are you currently reading?

8 Why do you feel that this role is a career opportunity which you would like to take?

9 What do you know about the company? How did you find this out?

10. What is the difference between pressure and stress? Give an example of where pressure allowed you to achieve more. And where stress affected you badly?

11. What current personal development plans do you have in place?

12. What career plans do you currently have in place? How did you decide on these plans?
Where would you like to be during the later stages of your career?

13. What are your strengths as an individual? What are your weaknesses? How do you work around these weaknesses? How do you maximise your strengths?

14. How do you keep yourself motivated, especially when great demands are made on you?

Own questions, if preferred

Self-management								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

SELECTION DECISION MATRIX 2: Culture and competence interview

Complete a separate matrix form for each candidate, and for each interview or interaction.

Name of candidate:			Position applied for:									
Date of interview:			Position location:									
Position status:	Full-time	Part-Time	Position's direct manager:									
STEP 2: Candidate assessed against the company culture and the competencies of the job												
Category of competence	Competence	Total score	Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements			
			9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
Assessment against company culture	1 Respect for people											
	2 Personal commitment											
	3 Teamwork and partnership											
	4 Dedication to quality and client service											
Assessment against job specific competencies	1 Team leadership (people management positions)											
	2 Strategic orientation (more senior roles)											
	3 Entrepreneurship and profitable growth											
	4 Solving problems and getting results											
	5 Functional expertise											
	6 Interpersonal skills											
	7 Self-management											
Total score:		<input type="text"/>	Comments:									

Recommendations:

Shortlist/hire Not suitable Future interest

Reason why the candidate is not suitable: _____

Interviewer(s):

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

STEP 3: Assessment against team fit

a About the team fit interview

This interview is held during the final stage of the selection campaign, to improve the chances of a successful culture and team fit. It is important to involve the relevant people in the final selection of candidates, so as to promote early commitment to their engagement.

The candidates are interviewed by two or more team members to ensure team fit. This process is vital for gaining psychological buy-in from colleagues who will be able to support the new staff member as they commence their employment. A close-knit team may find it difficult to accept a new team member, if they are not directly involved in the final selection decision. The recruiting manager should shortlist two or more candidates and allow team members to make the final decision on whom to hire.

A client may also be involved at this stage, if the new staff member is to be dedicated to the client or will be physically based at the client's place of business.

The general tone of the interview is informal and conversational, although the interview is guided by clearly defined competencies and questions. Starter interview questions are provided to set the appropriate tone.

The team fit competencies are:

- a. Team player
- b. 'Can do' attitude
- c. Flexibility
- d. Client focus.

STEP 3: Starter questions

Begin by asking a few starter interview questions to relax the candidate and create a welcoming, informal environment:

1. What kind of management style do you prefer to work under? How would you describe your own preferred working style?

2. What kind of work do you personally find most energising or motivating?

3. In what direction do you see your career heading?

4. How would your colleagues describe you?

A Team player

- a Lead by example and be a good team player;
- b Willingly engage with others and work closely with colleagues, employees or other stakeholders towards a common goal;
- c Generously share knowledge and expertise through coaching;
- d Offer help without being asked, thereby supporting a cooperative and high-performing team;
- e Participate effectively in meetings and other group efforts, thus serving to unify and engage all members in shared decision making.

Questions to explore team fit: One or two questions per competency should be enough.

1. Give an example of where you added value to your current team and clearly improved the team's results. How else do you add value to the team?

2. Give an example of where you supported the team without being asked. How did you realise that they needed your support? How did the team react to your support?

3. What is your usual role in team meetings? How do you participate in team meetings?

4. What is the best team you have ever been part of? What made the team so good? What roles did you play to contribute to this team's success?

5. What is the worst team you have ever been part of? What made the team so ineffective?
 What actions did you take to try and improve the situation?

6. Describe a time when you experienced conflict with a team member. How did you attempt to resolve the conflict? What was the final outcome?

Own questions, if preferred

Team player								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

B 'Can do' attitude

- a Do not wait to be told to do something or to resolve a problem – get on with it and do what needs to be done;
- b Use initiative confidently, when required;
- c Generate innovative, original and creative ideas and approaches;
- d Develop and implement new ways of dealing with problems or opportunities;
- e See the opportunity in problems with a view to getting them sorted or improving things.

Suggested questions

1. Tell us about a time when you used your initiative at work and achieved good results. What was the situation? What would have happened if you had not initiated this action?

2. Give an example of when you volunteered a new idea or suggestion for a change at work. What was the idea or suggestion? What impact did the new idea have on how work gets done?

3. Tell us about a time when you were required to present somewhat 'dry and boring' information to a group. What approach did you take to engage their interest? What was their response?

4. How have you encouraged others to develop a 'can do' attitude? How did your actions encourage others to use their initiative to achieve good results?

5. In trying to achieve goals we often encounter obstacles. Tell us about an important goal, an obstacle you faced, and what you did to overcome the obstacle.

Own questions, if preferred

'Can do' attitude								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

C Flexibility

- a Ability to work with ease and effectively in a variety of situations and with various individuals or groups;
- b Understand and appreciate opposing perspectives on an issue by being prepared to compromise and adapt your approach to the changes, when needed;
- c Try out new ways of doing 'old things';
- d Prepared to work overtime, at short notice, when required;
- e Prepared to change direction or shift priorities from the current task when circumstances require it.

Suggested questions

1. How did you respond when a client or your manager changed his/her mind for the umpteenth time? Give an example of such a situation which you encountered. What did you do? What was the outcome?

2. Give an example of where you gave up 'promoting your opinion' and accepted someone else's opinion. What was the result of the flexibility you showed?

3. How have you shown flexibility in your current job?

4. What would your colleagues say about your ability to be flexible?

5. What are some of the issues you find difficult or almost impossible to compromise on?

6. What have learned from others in your current job? What have others learned from you?

Own questions, if preferred

Flexibility								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

D Client focus

(The term 'client' refers to both internal and external clients.)

- a Talk to clients to find out what products and/or services they need and want;
- b Assess how satisfied clients are with the products and/or services they are currently receiving;
- c Discover clients' needs and find ways to meet these needs more effectively;
- d Engage with clients using their language and terminology;
- e Proactively take action to resolve a team member or a client's problem (without being asked);
- f Do whatever it takes to keep a business process moving forward;
- g Go beyond what a client asks or expects, when appropriate;
- h Enhance the reputation and credibility of the team through exceptional client service skills.

Suggested questions

1. Give an example of where you were able to turn a customer's complaint into a customer success story. What did you do? How did the client react to your actions?

2. Give an example of when you went the extra mile for a client. How did the client respond to this extra effort?

3. Tell us about a time when you were unable to resolve a customer complaint. What did you do in an attempt to resolve the issue? What did you learn from the experience?

4. Tell us how you go about building a solid relationship with a client. How do you then maintain that relationship?

5. Being accessible and responsive to clients is a very important part of client service. How do you ensure that you are accessible and responsive to internal and external clients?

Own questions, if preferred

Client focus								
Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

SELECTION DECISION MATRIX 3: Team fit interview

Complete a separate matrix form for each candidate, and for each interview.

Name of candidate:			Position applied for:								
Date of interview:			Position location:								
Position status:	Full-time	Part-Time	Position's direct manager:								
Interview 3: Assessment against team fit											
Category of competence	Competence	Total	Exceeds requirements			Meets requirements			Does not meet requirements		
			9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Competencies related to team fit	1. Team player										
	2. 'Can do' attitude										
	3. Flexibility										
	4. Client focus										
Total score:			Comments:								

Recommendations:

Shortlist/hire Not suitable Future interest

Reason why candidate is not suitable:

Interviewer(s):

REFERENCE CHECK TEMPLATE

Introduction	
Candidate: _____ Referee: _____ Date: _____	<i>The candidate (referred to as X) has given your name as a referee in support of their job application for the XYZ position at (give name of company). Were you aware that you were to be a referee? Are you prepared to act as a referee and answer some questions related to your opinion of the candidate? It will take about fifteen minutes.</i>
1. Introduce yourself and say something like...	If the referee is prepared to talk, provide an overview of the requirements of the position. Say something like... <i>The purpose of the position is to achieve sales targets by interacting telephonically with prospective students, providing relevant information on courses and using a persuasive customer orientated sales approach.</i>
Question	Record Referee's Answers
2. In what context do you know X, and for how long?	
3. What words would describe X?	
4. How well does X interact with others?	
5. What are X's strengths?	
6. What are X's weaknesses?	
7. What does X enjoy doing most at work? Why?	
8. What were his major achievements while working with you?	
9. What role did X play in the team?	
9. Tell me how X organises his time at work? Does X deliver on time? Give an example.	
10. Recruiter's personal comments: Any concerns identified by undertaking the reference check?	