

Interview Guidance Notes

Good News

First of all congratulations on securing a job interview! You have been invited in by your potential future employer as they have been impressed by your credentials. You should take pride in the fact that you have proved your worth and remember that an interview is a 2 way process. This is your chance to find out if the employer and the role is deserving of your abilities, skills, and qualifications.

(PPPPP) Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance

The secret to delivering the perfect interview is effective planning. An interview is really a chance for you to sell yourself as the best candidate for any given role. In order to secure the perfect position you will be competing against other people and you need to do 2 things to secure a position:

- Find out what the definition of the best candidate would be in the company's eyes
- Find out how to sell your attributes in relation to being the best

The first step then, is to put yourself in the interviewer's shoes. You need to find out about who the best candidate to them will be. From a company's perspective the best candidate is the one who not only has the right skills and qualifications, but the one that fits their overall commercial goals and objectives, their progression routes and their staff development schemes. They will, therefore, be interested in your aspirations, and personality as well as your skills and qualifications.

Pre-Interview Research

You need to establish before you walk into the interview room what the definition of the best candidate is and then highlight your attributes in relation to this. The secret to preparing for interviews is to be company and position specific. In order to find out these details, you should research before the interview:

- **Company Goals and objectives:** Look on the internet at the company's website, look in the news and in any industry associated publications to see what the company is aiming to do. Interviewers will be impressed if you know any recent growth figures and/or specific forecasts and/or company turnover etc. Finding out the basics about a company are also important for 2 more reasons; it shows that you are serious about your career; and you will be able to fill any awkward silences by mentioning something that you have read. The easiest way to get this information is to look for an 'about us' page on a company's web site.
- **Progression Routes:** Luton Bennett will be able to offer advice on the ways that any company intend their employees to progress into the future. We will also be able to inform you on specific progression by other staff members that are presently with the company in question. Again, by bringing this up in an interview, it shows that you are not only focussed on your long term career but it will put you ahead of other interviewee's in the interviewers mind.
- **Staff Development Schemes:** As well as finding out about a company's training schemes for your own direct interest, you can use any training schemes as a means of overcoming any skill related gaps that you have in an interview.
- **Find out your own strengths:** Producing a list of your own strengths prior to interview builds confidence and so it should. These aspects that are unique to you will form the basis for your answers when questioned by the interviewer. It is important that you don't portray arrogance in an interview but a quiet confidence.

- Find out your own weaknesses: This is important so that you can pre-prepare a list of reasons for why your weaknesses won't stop you from being the best person for the job. Don't be disheartened by this list as every single person (including the interviewer) has limitations. It is true that the interviewer will have on average 3 doubts in their mind about the candidate that gets selected for any given vacancy. An example, of this technique in an interview is as follows: As I am confident in my own ability I have the tendency to dive straight in to any tasks that I am set. I have learnt through experience that this isn't the best approach and should analyse the situation and come up with a step by step plan before beginning.
- Work out answers for the 'classic' interview questions: No matter what type of company or job that you are being interviewed for, there will always be a number of 'classic' interview questions that get asked. It is worth revising some answers to these so that you give your best performance on the day. Classic questions include tell me about yourself, what is your biggest achievement and how would your current colleagues describe you.
- Pre-prepare a list of questions that you would like answers to. These can be anything that interest you about a role, company or whatever but avoid asking material questions relating to salary, hours of work and holiday entitlement etc. These questions do not show you in a positive light and Luton Bennett will have the answers for you anyway.

First Impressions Count

At your interview you only get one chance to make a good first impression. On the day, make sure you know who you are meeting (and their job title) and the journey length so that you can arrive 15 minutes early. Make sure that you take along to the interview all the research that you have completed, 2 copies of your CV, Photo identification (Passport or Driving Licence).

When you arrive (15 minutes early) at the company's premises remember to be polite to everyone that you meet. Dress formally in a smart business suit.

In The Interview

Remember that it is human nature that if you make a good first impression the interviewer will want to give you a job! If you instantly impress the person that you meet they will view all of your answers with a positive mindset. A confident introduction with eye contact and firm handshake will set you in good stead.

At the start of the interview it is important to ask the interviewer what they are looking for from the interview. You need to do this as when you have their definition of the best candidate for the job, you know what key strength to sell for each questions that you are subsequently asked. If you asked to describe yourself as this is a common early question, turn the question around and ask them what specifically they would like to know. This ensures that you will give the answer the interviewer wants to hear and not waffle.

The interview style typically used in an interview for an engineering position is a competency approach (also known as a behavioural or situational interview). This interview format is an attempt to establish key competency levels in different areas that will be relevant to the job post. Key competences that interviewers are interested in are as follows:

- Motivation
- Organisational Skills
- Leadership

- Responsibility
- Commitment to Career Plans

When answering a competency based question you need to be very specific and back up your answers with real life examples of things that have actually happened. The interviewer will be keen to hear about the examples that you provide and will probably ask 3 or 4 questions about the situation. Make sure that you remember your example situations vividly, as the interviewer might require in depth information.

Throughout the interview maintain professionalism. Don't put down any current or previous employers and make sure that reasons for leaving jobs are positive. Don't forget to ask your pre-prepared questions when you are prompted in the interview. They show that you are keen, serious about your career and well researched.

At the end of the interview, if you are keen on a position then you should tell the interviewer. Ask them if they have any doubts about you and then make sure you dispel the doubts by selling your relevant strength. Finally, ask what the next stage in the process will be and thank the interviewer for their time. At the end of the interview it is good to drop in a compliment for the interviewer and let them see how keen you are moving forwards.

After the Interview

Immediately after the interview, please call us here at Luton Bennett on **0117 355 9798** as we will need to go over your feedback from the interview. Our clients are keen to gather this information and the sooner that you call us the sooner we can give you the news from their perspective!

It is also good practice to send a letter addressed to the interviewer thanking them for their time and expressing your continued interest in the role. Luton Bennett can advise on the content when such time arises.