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"Competency Based" Interview

The primary purpose of these interviews is to get a better understanding of your personality by asking questions where you give actual examples of how you would deal with various scenarios.

Format of the interview
Generally you are given a particular scenario/situation and you will be asked the following;

- What was the situation
- How did you deal with it
- What was the result/outcome

Some of the typical scenarios that are asked are as follows;

1. Have you ever dealt with a conflict situation in work?
2. Have you ever dealt with a difficult work colleague?
3. When was the last time you feel you were involved in a successful 'work-team'?
4. How would you deal with a lazy team member?
5. How would you deal with 'sloppy work' from a member of your team?

Some of the typical questions that are asked are as follows;

1. What has been your biggest achievement to date? (both work & non-work)
2. What has been your biggest disappointment to date?
3. How do you deal with stress?
4. What do you consider your strong 'points'?
5. How would you describe your management style?
6. What motivates you?
7. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
8. Why are you leaving your current position?

Points to note for interviews

1. The Interviewers expect that interviewees have been prepared for interview & that they have ready examples to the questions.
2. Generally the interviews are conducted in an efficient & business-like manner
3. They look for genuine answers and examples to their questions.
4. They like interviewees to be motivated – they judge this in a number of ways;
   - Does the person enjoy their work?
   - Has the person completed some research into the company history, where it is going, its products/services etc?
   - Is the person pleasant to speak to?
   - Does the person use a friendly tone when describing their current role / company?
   - Did the person have some achievement that they can point to in their previous position(s)?
5. Some Interviewers will ask, directly, what salary the interviewee is currently on & what their salary expectations are (if there is a large 'gap' between the two salaries, then they may feel that the salary expectation is too high).
6. Most interviews will last between 40mins & 55mins – this is because the interview questions are very focused and there is no time wasted on unnecessary questions.

Suggested Answers to 'typical' Interview questions

Q1: What are your strengths / how would your colleagues describe you / why do you believe that you suitable for this position?

Please remember that all of the above questions can be answered similarly. The answer being sought to any/all of these questions generally falls into the following format – the Interviewer(s) is/are trying to establish;
- your technical ability to do the job &
- if your personality 'fits' the team/organisational culture

Note: Please ensure that you clearly list all the benefits they company will enjoy by hiring you for the role. This is where you list your work achievements that are relevant for this role/position.

So a suggested answer to these questions could be as follows:
"I believe that I am suitable for the position because….
….from a technical perspective I have extensive experience of X / Y / Z and
…I would describe myself as A / B / C"

Now the 'technical perspective' mentioned in the above answer will vary from position to position. The best way to ascertain what the 2 – 3 key technical skill-sets being sought is to look at the Job Description for the role & then relate the experience you have gained to date in those areas.

The 'character traits' which form the second part of the above answer may vary somewhat from position to position but they generally fall into one of the list detailed below;
- Ambitious / Flexible (in work attitude) / Hard working
- Fair / Honest / honourable
- Organised / Efficient
- Loyal
- Happy / Pleasant
- Etc etc

Q2: What are your weaknesses?

Given the fact that this is a negative question, I would strongly recommend that you would phrase the start of your answer as follows;
"An area that I am looking to improve upon at the moment is….."

Now the rest of your answer can concentrate on the areas that you are looking to improve upon.
The key thing to remember when you are listing the areas of improvement is that your are actually doing something to improve them. For example, if your time management was an issue – then you had better have bought a time management book, be attending a time management course or have spoken to work colleague who is excellent in time management and be implementing changes to your current work practices etc!
In general, most weaknesses/areas of improvement fall into one of the following categories;

- Time Management / Delegation / Work Load
- Taking a 'bigger picture' approach
- Being a Mentor to junior staff
- Etc etc

Q3: Why are you interested in this position/why do you want the job?

This is a direct question and as such should be answered very succinctly.

Most answers to this question have two parts to them;
1) You are interested in working for the company because they are;

- Expanding
- Young / dynamic
- Involved in a very interesting business sector
- An 'Employer of Choice' in the area
- Etc etc

       and

2) This position/role is a very good career move for you because it;

- Builds on the experience you have gained to date
- Offers a challenge
- Etc etc

Note: Please ensure that you finish the answer to this question with all the benefits the company will enjoy if they hire you for the position!

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Four Michael Street | Limerick| 061 414455
www.bdorecruitment.com