

May 2021

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# RESEARCH & INSIGHTS

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## Demystifying Talent Management: Why Candidates Often Fail at the Job Interview

*This is the first in a monthly series of articles (and vodcasts) providing insights into talent management, talent attraction, executive search, recruitment, talent development and career transition.*

Since commencing operations in 1999, one of the most common questions we've been asked by thousands of candidates we have worked with and placed is, **"How can I best prepare for the job interview?"**

The fact is, many talented, qualified candidates, at all levels, are poorly prepared for job interviews and fail to progress past stage 1 of the assessment process, let alone secure the role they apply for because they are not well prepared for the initial interview.



Recruitment interviews are by their very nature, to an extent, ***a step into the unknown.***

- Who will I meet?
- How long will it be?
- How many interviewers will there be?
- What are their backgrounds?
- What will their focus be?
- What questions will I be asked?

In my experience, interviews are an art that is never completely mastered. I base this POV on many years of post-interview debriefs with candidates, hiring clients and employers. We ask every candidate to critically review and rate themselves on their own performance, not only to understand the dynamics of their interview, but to provide input and coaching if required on how to do better as part of our ethos of continuous improvement. Seldom do candidates rate themselves over 80% in terms of their own interview performance with the average being 65-70%.

Based on the above context, I offer the following thoughts:

A key element in the interview process from the interviewer perspective, is about examining a candidate's experience, qualifications, attitude, intelligence quotient (IQ) , emotional quotient (EQ) and overall suitability for the role. By the end of the interview, the interviewer should have a good sense of alignment - or not, to the role.

All interviewers are different with their own style, however they are all busy people, and they want to obtain as much factual and accurate information as possible from the candidate in the time allocated for the interview.

Interviewers want to achieve a clear picture of candidate's past performance to feel confident about how they will most likely behave and perform in the future. This Behavioural Interview technique and is one of the methods widely used by professional interviewers and enterprises.

Most interviewers want to hear about specific examples of situations (not theories, ideas, opinions) that candidates have dealt with, so they can assess how they reacted to these scenarios and how they are likely to deal with similar situations in the future.

Interviewers can get frustrated when the candidate refers to "we" / "they" / "the team" / "us" when they are trying to assess them, so use the word "I" when discussing past job activities and experiences so the interviewer can be sure of what the candidate actually achieved.

EQ and awareness of other's views and perspectives are important for leaderships roles, and as such there will always be questions relating to EQ as a personality trait.

Interviewers tend to prefer that candidates' prepare at least 6 – 8 situations/case examples or previous activities that they think are central to the position.

Questions that will be asked will tend to reflect the content of the job description and generally speaking, interviewers like to see a structured response to their questions. Our experience tells us the following formula works well when answering any questions.

**Candidates should not make the assumption the interviewer(s) have read a CV.**

When asked to respond to each question about specific situations, it can be useful for candidates to follow a structure such as:

Briefly confirming the following:

- 1) What role was the candidate in at the time
- 2) What company was the candidate with at the time
- 3) When / what (year) was the candidate in that role



***Then explain in a clear manner:***

- 1) What was the situation the candidate had to deal with
- 2) How did the candidate deal with it / process they went through
- 3) What was the outcome / result, bottom line of the situation discussed

**Key Takeaways**

- Interviewers usually have an average of 20-30 questions to ask and the average interview lasts 40–60 minutes.
- We suggest completing question responses in 1-2 minutes, interviewers will let the candidate know if they want more information.
- Many candidates are not used to interviews and get a little nervous, we suggest taking care not to talk longer than needs be for each question.
- We recommend candidates take a notebook and pen to note any important follow ups, no laptops (unless for a presentation), tablets or phones on the interview desk.

This information may seem simplistic but most candidates fail to optimize the massive opportunity an interview, either face to face or virtual can provide to secure the perfect role, which is often a career defining and or a genuine life changing experience.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kim is the founder of Logistics Executive Group and delivers 40 years of executive leadership experience spanning Executive Search & Recruitment, Leadership Development, Executive Coaching, Corporate Advisory, Motivational Speaking and Trade Facilitation across various sectors. Operating from the company's global offices, he is a regular contributor of thought leadership to industry and media, is a professional Master of Ceremonies and is frequently invited to chair international events. Kim is a qualified (IECL Sydney) executive coach, and the Founder / Chairman of successful not for profit humanitarian organisation Oasis Africa ([www.oasisafrica.org.au](http://www.oasisafrica.org.au)) which has provided freedom from poverty through education to over 8000 mainly orphaned children in East Africa's slums. Kim holds an MBA and BA from Massey & Victoria.

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