



THE SALESPERSON'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT INTERVIEW

*90% of recruitment decisions are based
on performance at an interview*





For over 25 years, bta has been at the forefront in proactively placing quality sales professionals and executives into their dream jobs. Therefore, to maximise your performance at interviews, bta has developed this comprehensive guide and supporting workbook to give you the insight on how best to prepare and perform at an interview. Regardless of your seniority or experience level, the fundamentals of interviewing remain that same.

This guide will provide you with a detailed list of steps to follow to ensure you make an unforgettable first impression, but with the substance and depth to ensure you get the job.

BTA SALES PRE-INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

- Research the company – e.g. www.companieshouse.com.au.
- Print relevant information off the corporate website and highlight key areas of interest.
- Map and directions for meeting – e.g. www.whereis.com.au.
- Understand the meeting format – e.g. telephone, one-on-one, panel, presentation, etc.

Do you want to make an extra special effort?

First impressions count – always make sure your personal presentation is impeccable. From your suit and shoes, to your eye contact or handshake, no one wants a sales person who doesn't look the part. Dress for the role that you want. Remember, you will be the face of the company, so act that way.

Research the company, their competitors and the interviewers you will be meeting with extensively – both via the internet (e.g. company website, Google, LinkedIn, etc) and through your industry contacts. Do some fact finding about their products / services and markets. Clients always love to hear what you have been able to find out about them that isn't on their website. Take this in with you.

Compile sales information and any supporting documents into a concise handout – e.g. sales targets, list of key achievements/deals won, summary of client database.

Identify direct competitors.



THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1

INTRODUCTION

The decision maker will almost always ask for a brief run down about your background. Prepare and practice a short summary of your background, highlighting any key areas of interest / achievement you think the company will be interested in.

2

FACT FIND

Using the information and questions you have prepared from the company website, fact find about the company and their sales team. Find out where they are positioned in the market place and exactly what kind of candidate they are ideally looking for. Make sure you take notes!

3

SELL YOURSELF

By now the decision maker will have told you exactly where the company is going and what kind of sales person they are looking for. Use this valuable information to sell yourself into the role focusing on the areas the decision maker has highlighted. If you have any sales information (awards, print outs, copies of large orders, client lists etc) that backs up your claims, now is the time to present them to the decision maker. Remember the company has a need and you are the solution to that need, so ensure that you present your skills directly inline with what they are looking for!

4

SUMMARISE, STATING YOUR INTEREST IN THE ROLE

Summarise, stating why you would be right for the role, let him/her know why you want the role and why you think you will succeed using all the information the decision maker has given you.

5

CLOSE

Decision makers always refer back to whether or not a potential candidate tried to close them or not. Asking for the sale is make or break time in any sales presentation and the sales interview is no different. I'm sure you have a preferred method of closing a potential decision maker which you could use at this point, if you don't you could always ask "Given what we have discussed, are there any reasons why you feel I couldn't do this job?"



COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Not only will you need to make sure that you have a brief overview of your background and experience, you will more than likely be asked some of these common interview questions:

What are your weaknesses? This is the most dreaded question of all. Handle it by minimising your weaknesses and emphasising your strengths.

Why should we hire you? Summarise your experiences. Clients are looking for insight into their products or services or knowledge of the market you will be selling into.

Why do you want to work here? The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought and are not attending interviews just because there is an opening.

What are your goals? Sometimes it's best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future.

Why did you leave (or why are you leaving) your job? If you're unemployed, state your reason for leaving in a positive context. Never speak of your employers – present or past – in a negative light as it reflects poorly on you and not them.

What can you do for us that other candidates can't? What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits and how they relate to what the client is requiring in the role. Clients are looking for the best return on their investment. Summarise concisely.

What are three positive things your last boss would say about you? It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes.

What salary are you seeking? It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first.

What is your greatest sales success? The interviewer is looking for insight around how you have won business, the size of the deal, and as well as your budgets, targets and KPI's. Know your numbers. Also be prepared to speak about the biggest deal you have lost. Clients are keen to understand what you would have done differently.



ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USING STAR

Past performance is the best indicator of future performance. As a result, it is common that interviewers will ask competency-based questions which will require you to draw upon your experience to answer.

When answering competency-based questions, it is helpful to format your response using the STAR. It will ensure that your response has context and will focus on what **you** did – not your manager, team, etc.

Remember, the client is looking to hire **you**.

S – Situation (Set the scene)

T – Task (what were **you** required to do)

A – Action (what **you** did)

R – Result (what was the outcome that **you** affected)

It may seem silly but practice your responses. The more you rehearse the answers to the most common interview questions, the more natural and relaxed you will be. Remember, you are the one topic in the universe that you know everything about. **Be the expert!**

TOP 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK AT AN INTERVIEW

This list of interview questions has been in the market place for decades, so please don't ask them verbatim. Instead use this list as a guide of the types of questions you should be asking as well as perhaps the genesis of your own questions.

1. Why is this position open?
2. What key skills and experience are you looking for in the role?
3. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
4. What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in this job?
5. What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position?
6. What type of support does this position receive in terms of people, finances, etc?
7. What advancement opportunities are available for the successful person and within what time frame?
8. In what ways has this organisation been most successful over the years?
9. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
10. What accounts for success within the company?



PROFILE WORKSHEET

All strong candidates will prepare for an interview by researching company websites, brochures and competitor websites. Don't diminish your chances of securing your dream job by letting other candidates have the edge on you! Completing this work sheet will help you understand the requirements of the company you are interviewing for and where you will be able to add value to the organisation.

PRODUCT / SERVICE PORTFOLIO

I understand ABC Co. provides (This is your chance to demonstrate your understanding of the product/ service portfolio and that you will need minimal training to get started in this role):

Candidate Match:

1. I have extensive experience in the sales of... (give specific examples of deals won, sales figures etc.)

2. I have had sales training in... (give details of when and which training courses undertaken.)

3. I understand the main competitors in this market sell... (give details of competitors you have encountered in the market to show how you have had success where they failed.)

4. I understand the point of difference of ABC Co.'s portfolio is... (give details based on your research of this company's unique selling points v.s. your understanding of competitors' solutions.)



TARGET MARKETS

I understand ABC Co. focuses on targeting X markets and X decision makers within this space (This is your opportunity to demonstrate your intimate knowledge of the industries and level of decision maker you will be targeting in this role):

Candidate Match:

1. I have extensive sales experience within... (give details of the corresponding markets you have targeted and had success in)

2. I regularly deal with decision makers ranging from... (give details of level of decision maker you dealwith, e.g. Financial Director to Purchasing Manager, and any current contacts or organisations you have identified to prospect)

Candidate Match:

1. Let me tell you what to expect if you were to hire me... (give details of your personality, work ethic and how you would add value to the company's culture)



SUMMARISE, STATE YOUR INTEREST & CLOSE

1. Qualifying Interest in the Opportunity

You - *“John, before we wrap up, I would like to state my interest in the position. In fact when I was called by (bta CONSULTANT) I was quite excited at the prospect of working for (COMPANY). But, after meeting with you today and gaining greater insight into the position, I’m giving this precedence over my other opportunities.”*

2. Discussing the Next Steps in the Process

You - *“In moving forward, could you kindly explain your process from here?”*

At this stage, you should listen and take note of the time frame the company discusses.

3. Discussing Concerns or Issues

You - *“Great!!!! John, before we discuss our next move, I’d like to know if you have any concerns or issues which will prevent us from taking the next step.”*

If the answer is “NO”, move on to step 4.

If the answer is “YES”, do not register shock and counter the objection by asking *“Could you share them with me?”*

Listen and allow the decision maker to voice their concerns). Once they have explained his issues, cushion this objection, overcome it and move on. Do this using tangible examples, which meet the company’s requirements. Once you overcome each objection, qualify any other concerns.

Example Objection:

Decision Maker – *“I think our organisation may be a bit small for you.”*

You – *“Thanks for sharing that with me John and I understand why you may have that concern. However, when I joined my current organisation, I came from a company that was quite small. In fact, my current employer had a concern I may not be able to adjust to a larger company culture. I do enjoy working in both environments but enjoy the smaller culture because of the recognition you receive for your successes. I did make the adjustment smoothly in my last move and know I will do the same with this one. Is there anything else that may be concerning you?”*

Once the company explains they have no further concerns, move onto step 4.



4. Closing

You - *"Great. As I explained, I do have several opportunities in the pipeline that are moving quite quickly. You mentioned that second interviews were occurring next week. I have a reasonably tight schedule next week. Are you aiming for the beginning of the week or the end of the week?"*

Decision Maker - *"The end of the week."*

You - *"Great!!! Thursday or Friday?"*

Decision Maker - *"Friday."*

You - *"OK. I have a 2nd interview on Friday at 12pm. Is the morning better for you or is the afternoon more suitable?"*

Decision Maker - *"Morning"*

You - *"Great!! Would 9am or 10.30am suit you better?"*

Example Closes:

1. *John, I'm very impressed with what I've seen today. I'm confident that I can do this job as I have (Summarise why you are a match) When can I start?*

2. *John, I'd love to work for ABC & Co. I'm very impressed by what the company is doing/heading - I want to be part of it! When can I start?*

3. *John, I understand you are looking for someone who can (Feed him a summary of his needs). Well I believe I'm your person, I have and*

4. *If on second/last interview, express that you have had time to think about this along with other positions, and have come to the conclusion that this is where you belong and want to be. After the interview ensure you know where you stand. You must have conviction in your voice. Your statements must be genuine and sincere. The delivery should be natural (almost casual) yet passionate and direct.*



POST-INTERVIEW

Once you are finished with the interview, make sure to call your consultant ASAP for a post interview debrief.

They will want insight around how you believe the interview went, questions asked, what went well and perhaps areas that did not quite go to plan. To be on the front foot when speaking with the client, your consultant will want your feedback prior to seeking theirs.

The sooner you call them, the quicker you can get feedback.

Good luck!!

A close-up photograph of two hands shaking in a firm grip. The hand on the left is wearing a gold ring on the ring finger. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

ABOUT **bta Sales**

bta Sales is a specialised recruitment agency with national reach and a strong network of candidates and clients. We work with businesses and individuals as a consultant to find the perfect match for both parties.

Our sales specialisation is largely unrivalled within the industry and takes in many disciplines and levels ranging from junior sales level to senior management appointments across all market sectors.

bta is sales recruitment. It's our passion. It's what we live and breathe. In fact, it's all we do. So our interest and focus equal yours.

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