



PERSONA

PLUS

Winning the interview and the job



Winning the interview and the job

The most qualified person does not always get the job. Instead it is the person who impresses that they have the qualities that the interviewer values. Even though you are going for jobs you are well qualified for, you have to work on impression management. You need to ensure that the interviewer(s) get it when it comes to understanding your capabilities. You don't get any points for saying later – 'The idiots didn't see how I was the best person.'

In this module we are going to get you ready for and take you through a demanding interview. We can't ask you particular technical questions (about your architectural skills, or your budgeting experience, or your zebra management experience) – because we don't know what your career skills are. But we can get you prepared for your job interview.

Our approach is to guide you to apply what you know about your personality to customise your approach. Including preparing the questions you are likely to be asked in your interview.

This first section introduces the personality-based approach. If you want to go straight to the action – go to Winning the Interview 1.

We all approach interviews differently. Our interview personality can help us in many ways, but it can also set us up to fail. To ensure you win at your interview, you need to play to your strengths and flex around your weaknesses. Let's introduce the five personality dimensions, and then explore how they can work for and against you.

We recommend that you complete either the short or the comprehensive personality measure on-line at www.PersonaPlus.co.nz

Openness

High scorers are likely to explore the new and different. Low scorers are more likely to be conservative in behaviour and in their outlook. Low scorers are not unintelligent or authoritarian. Nor are high scorers unauthentic or lacking in integrity because they are flexible thinkers. High scorers may add some creative spark to the team or organisation. Others may find their contribution disconcerting. They may be hard to keep interested and to retain. Low scorers are more likely to make a useful contribution while following established practices and processes.

Conscientious

High scorers are future-oriented – and likely to use goals, plans and organisational flair to make progress. Low scorers are more likely to be opportunistic and responsive to environmental signals. Most organisations value diligent results-oriented employees. However, a rigid 'stick to the plan' approach may not help when the organisation and its employees find themselves in a context where the conventional wisdom is no longer working.

Extroversion

High scorers on the Extroversion factor enjoy people, are positive and tend to dominate. Low scores are not necessarily the opposite of these tendencies. Introverts on this measure are more reserved but not anti-social. They are serious rather than unhappy, and independent rather than followers. Extroverts' inclination to seek out opportunity together with their social impact suits them to selling and persuading roles. Introverts are a better fit to work that demands periods without the stimulation of social contact or other rewards

Agreeableness

Agreeable people feel for others and are more group oriented. Those scoring low on this dimension are more individualistic. Agreeables are more likely to cooperate, 'disagreeables' to compete. The empathy of high agreeables suits them to caring professions and service-oriented jobs. Tough-minded and critical thinking is appropriate in many scientific and business roles. Similarly combative roles such as court room litigation or politics are difficult for high agreeables.

Nervousness

High scorers on this factor have been described as 'neurotic'; they are more likely to experience negative emotions. Such nervous people are sensitive to threats, and learn to avoid such risks. They are more likely to be distracted by worrying thoughts. Relaxed and emotionally stable people have less to worry about, but they may miss important risk signals and be slow to learn important lessons. More nervous people are valuable contributors to accurate risk assessment and encourage vigilance to threats. They may be overwhelmed in turbulent and unpredictable situations.

How do these personality dimensions work for you in the interview?

Personality dimension	Advantages	Risks
<p>Openness</p> <p>LOW: Favour the familiar and proven - <i>Conventional</i> + <i>Consistent</i></p> <p>HIGH: Explore new ideas and experiences - <i>Strange</i> + <i>Creative</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Os will be interested in the chance to research different employers, even different jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Os may find the research process a grind. High Os may stop early in their research, when it looks like this is another job just like another job...and so miss some of the important detail. Instead they may flit off to look at the interesting job opportunities at NASA or CERN...
<p>Conscientiousness</p> <p>LOW: Lets things happen - <i>Drifter</i> + <i>Flexible</i></p> <p>HIGH: Get things done - <i>Compulsive</i> + <i>Hard worker</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearsing formal and informal job interview questions is hard work. Conscientious, getting the job done type people will find it easier to motivate themselves. Low Cs may have an advantage in not being put out by the unexpected – the phone interview that comes out of the blue for example. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Cs need to ensure they don't just get into a pattern. Rehearse answering unexpected questions – get a friend to help out. Low Cs will benefit from some external motivation to getting on with the interview prep programme. Again – having meetings with friends who rehearse the interview can help.
<p>Extroversion</p> <p>LOW: Independent - <i>Aloof</i> + <i>Steady</i></p> <p>HIGH: Positive and persuasive - <i>Flighty</i> + <i>Lively</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hi Es are going to find it easier building empathy. This will be helpful in informal meetings, on the phone, and in getting settled (and settling the interviewer) in formal interviews. As result they are more likely to have self-belief before and through the interview. High Es have another big advantage – they are better at self-promotion. Interviewers rate self-promoters, perhaps because they see it as an indicator of competence. If you are relatively low in the E zone – you need to get practice at talking yourself up into your interview style. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Es will need to persuade themselves that rapport and empathy do matter. And then work on the skills that will warm up their people relationships. High Es may find it hard to motivate themselves to work on the interview preparation. Or to bother to work on their research or the detail of their answers. The challenge for them is their self-belief in getting by in interviews may blind them to the need to have prepared for the substance of the interview.

continued on the following page →

Personality dimension	Advantages	Risks
<p>Agreeableness</p> <p>LOW: Self-centred, skeptical – <i>Selfish</i> + <i>Assertive</i></p> <p>HIGH: Sympathetic – <i>Gullible</i> + <i>Nice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having access to social support will buffer high As from some of the tougher challenges faced in the up and down world of job career transition. • High As are more likely to be able to sustain mutually supportive networking. People who are too blatant about their self-interest (perhaps labelled by others as ‘users’) may find that they don’t keep getting support. • Low As may find the self-promotion and self-assertion side of networking and interviews come more easily. After all there is usually only one successful applicant – and competitive people can come into their own in such a race. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tendency for high As to want to be helpful may not help them in a competition. The challenge for high As is achieving balance between giving credit to others while also emphasising personal accomplishments. • High A females get paid less. This is presumably because they see salary negotiations as ‘tough’, and back down earlier. Learn some of the techniques to negotiate a fair package, without having to be aggressive. • Similarly, the tendency for low As to push themselves forward may trigger concerns if the interviewer is looking for team fit.
<p>Nervousness</p> <p>LOW: Emotionally stable – <i>Easy-going</i> + <i>Calm</i></p> <p>HIGH: Emotional – <i>Worrier</i> + <i>Sensitive</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Ns are not likely to be complacent about the need to work hard on doing a good interview. A risk for high Ns is the temptation of going into avoidance mode – for example postponing the research and preparation needed, and spending hours thinking about what to wear, or the best bus to catch to the interview. • Low Ns are going to find it smoother sailing through some of the high pressure moments – calling about a job lead, handling an ‘out of the blue’ phone interview, and of course interview nerves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Ns may feel relaxed even when a bit of worry might help – to motivate, to energise, to recognise some challenges. • Hyperventilation, hand-wringing, tremulous voice or other signs of emotionality will disconcert the interviewer. Breathing-based relaxation will make a positive difference. • Hi Ns need to remember to give themselves time to get some objectivity, especially when looking at job offers.

What does the research tell us about interviews?

That it is not necessarily the best candidate that gets the job.

If there is a potential for irrational bias – then interviewers are prone to it. That includes gender, weight, ethnicity, age, disability, coming from the wrong suburbs. The most likely explanation is that interviewers are prone to hire ‘people like me’, and ‘never hire a stranger’ (New Zealand research has demonstrated that the closer the migrant applicant’s country of origin is to NZ in terms of culture, the more favourably the applicant is seen). The implication is clear – emphasise the similarities you have to those you meet, as well as your job-relevant achievements. Research suggests that prejudice is more likely in play in the

absence of more relevant information, so bringing in the more relevant information really helps.

Extroverts are better at ‘self-promotion’ (talking about how hardworking they are, as well as successful, flexible, goal-oriented and capable of leadership). And interviewers rate those who do self-promotion as better candidates.

Personality affects pay – probably because agreeable women candidates, and employees, don’t negotiate as hard as those who are less agreeable. At the end of the interview – when you are talking money – don’t be so nice that you devalue your earnings potential!

Further reading:

More similar candidates are favoured more – Kim Coates and Stuart Carr (2005), International Journal of Intercultural Relations Prejudice more likely in absence of other information - a 1985 meta-analysis by Henry Tosi and Steven Einbender in the Academy of Management Journal.

Extroverts and self-promotion – Amy Kristoff-Brown, Murray Barrick and Melinsa Franke (2002) in Journal of Management.

Agreeables and lower pay – Ellen Nyhur and Empar Pons (2005) Journal of Economic Psychology.

Winning the interview 1

Getting started

Who are you going to meet? Have you included other people who you might end up chatting to – potential colleagues in the work team for example? What does the business do? What are the hot button areas that you can help in? And the killer question – What do people in this business wear?

Knowing the answers means you are ready to get going.

Of course the high Cs will have planned ahead for this – so let's steal some of their approach:

- Research will include web sites – the businesses own, analysts' and journalists' reports
- Research should also include identifying some of the businesses clients and suppliers – what do they think about the challenges the business faces, it's competitive position?
- Include talking to knowledgeable contacts – to check out some of the 'softer' aspects – such as what is the culture – what behavior and results are valued
- And a visit to the building, or the café where their staff hang out – to get a sense of their overall business personality, but particularly their dress style

That way you'll be able to address some of the issues that you might not even get asked about, but are still in play when the interviewers make up their mind about you.

You will also work to establish the things you have in common with the other person. This is easy if they have a picture of themselves completing the Coast-to-Coast on their credenza, and you did that a few years ago. But this is more meaningful if you make the connection at the level of shared values.

Sure – they probably don't have a little notice on their credenza detailing their values ('I'm completely opportunistic' may not be signposted). But your research can give you some clues.

For example – if you are talking to health care professionals – then patient care is probably interesting to them. Tell them a story about a time you had to work hard to achieve a high level of patient care and you're likely to see them nodding agreement. Perhaps you are talking to business analysts, in which case your story of having to educate some entrepreneurs about the importance of achieving profit forecasts should elicit the same empathic response.

Finding what is important in this culture is easy once you start sleuthing for the clues – the words that the Chairman and the Chief Executive use in the annual report, and when talking in public; the stories about who gets promoted in the organization; the 'war stories'.



what do you know?

Name(s) and jobs of those I am going to (and likely to) meet

Background, personality and values of these folk

Who makes the hiring decision? Do I know enough about them?

What the business does. What do their customers buy? Who are their competitors? What is their competitive advantage? What are their issues – where are they struggling, what are their (particularly the interviewer's) hot buttons?

What the business is. How they work together and make decisions. The personality and values of the business. When you listen to what these people say, and read what they write – what are the key words? What are their assumptions?

What do people wear, for example when they are presenting to their clients, or to their Board?

Where is the interview? How do I get there? Where do I park? Where can I sit for 5 minutes and do some breathing relaxation?

What are 3 conversation topics so that I can chat easily in the 'getting to know you' stage of the interview? (See Winning the interview 3.)

What are the five or so 'deal-breaker' areas of experience for the job? What are my examples of my skills in these areas? (See Winning the interview 4.)

What are my questions about the job and the business? (See Winning the interview 5.)

What is a reasonable level, or range of remuneration for the job? (See Winning the interview 6.)

Winning the interview 2

Body language

Imagine yourself in the interviewer's shoes. The candidate is waiting in reception. As you walk towards them you notice that they are staring at their feet, wringing their hands, and humming gently to themselves. They don't acknowledge your existence until you are standing in front of them and introduce yourself.

The next candidate stands as you walk towards them. Looks you in the eye and smiles as they reach out to shake hands.

All things being equal – which of the candidates do you warm to?

The basis of all relationships is rapport. You want to get that working for you through the interview. Rapport helps the interviewer see beyond any apparent differences [age, different culture and so on], and to want to invest in understanding what you have to offer.

Let's look at some of the 'behavioural' aspects of building rapport in an interview. Rate yourself when you are practicing some of your answers to likely interview questions. Ask friends to rate you when you practice.

Tuned in	Tuned out
Eyes open, pupils wide, good eye contact	Eyebrows lowered, pupils narrowed, little eye contact
Face shows range of positive feelings, including smiling	Face set hard
Bright complexion	Pale or flushed
Relaxed but alert – noticeable in face, shoulders, hands. So forearms and hands resting on table or in lap when not gesturing.	Tense, hyper-alert posture. Shoulders hunched, hands clenched, fidgeting.
Expansive gestures	Arms, legs crossed or tense
Legs crossed 'towards' the interviewer. (Try this out to get the picture.)	Legs crossed as a barrier, 'away' from the interviewer
Leaning in to affirm	Leaning back, possibly hands on or behind head, or leaning in to challenge
Voice is lively	Voice flat or challenging tone
Nods	Shakes head
As well as on-topic answers; comments and questions are relevant	Cuts across topic, asks aggressive questions
Builds on ideas	Changes topic, or opposes ideas
Affirms ideas – 'right', 'absolutely'	Disagrees

As for what to wear – just what they are wearing, only a little more formal. If they wear ties – wear a tie clip with yours. If they go tie-less, wear a jacket as well as the open shirt collar. If they wear sneakers, make sure yours are newish.

For women – if they wear suits – go to the hair-dresser and wear heels with your suit; if they are wearing jeans – put a jacket and heels on. If they're wearing high-visibility vests – tie your hair back, make sure your clothes are clean and not ripped.

Ever had the experience of wearing a tie for the first time in ages and finding that it feels its strangling you? Or wearing heels and finding you are not striding as confidently as you usually do?

The answer – dress rehearsals. When you practice for your interview – get dressed up. That way you learn to be at ease in the clothes. And you know where the tie clip or the dress belt is.

Winning the interview 3

Getting to and getting started with the interview

The interview begins...when?

In the interview room? In the foyer? Over the phone when you chat about the job and the interview logistics?

All of the above obviously.

Frequently the decision-maker will give you a call to chat about the job – ‘so that we can ensure that we are not wasting your time by interviewing you for a job that doesn’t match your expectations.’

This is when you will be asked:

- What your salary expectations are
- Whether you are up for some of the unique aspects of the job – the travel, the weekends, the night-shifts
- Whether its okay for your referees to be contacted now, before any interview
- What your experience is of some of the key aspects of the job...

This is the screening interview. To be screened ‘in’ – you need:

- To smile, act like you are having fun – speak briskly and vary voice pitch so they hear your energy (note – this is likely to be a phone call – all the more reason to smile – it really helps you sound positive)
- To describe a realistic salary range – that doesn’t go too low at the bottom end
- To know what your life-style bottom line is (what you need to be paid to pay the bills)
- Remember to ask for time to contact your referees, so they are warmed up
- To be clear about your experiences and achievements
- To be positive about the opportunity (based on what you know), and to ask to come in and interview

In the first five minutes of the interview – from the foyer on, keep the conversation light. Save the seriously good stuff till everyone is warmed up. Be pleasant, work on the empathy, and be ready to chat about – sports, weather, traffic, religion, politics (ok – maybe not the last two).

Interviewers are, as we know, often influenced by first impressions. In fact they may spend the remainder of the interview working hard simply to confirm those early impressions they’ve formed. Work on the sorts of behaviours described in the ‘Tuned In’ column above.

Give the interviewer, or lead interviewer the chance to explain the interview process, what they plan to do, how they will manage the steps after the interview and so on. When they ask you if you have any questions at this point – you don’t hit them with your list, you may clarify things that are not clear (is this the job you thought it was?), but you are more likely to say – ‘I’d prefer to save my questions, since they may well be answered during the interview itself’.

This might seem like a strange strategy – since what you want is to get them talking about the business, and themselves. You want that – because that makes them feel more positively towards you. But you will do this at the end of the interview. Because that helps them remember you in the light of those final positive feelings.

However – if they want to talk about the business, the job, and their work – then you practice your listening skills. Use the empathy behaviours, ‘tune in’ to them, affirm their achievements, and listen out for the clues about what they want. Especially the things that will determine what sort of personality will be a good fit to the team and the business.

Winning the interview 4

Answering their questions

Most of the questions in interviews are predictable. We will start with the four most predictable ones – no matter what style of interview the interviewer is running with.

Before we give you the chance to answer these questions we want to emphasise some of the key aspects of successful answers. You want the listener to be able to see you as a person who is confident, competent and successful. You need to tell detailed stories of the challenge you faced, what you did, how you overcame issues, and how you triumphed.

The temptation for more humble (and agreeable) people is to cut out the really interesting bit – about how you did it. But the interview is all about you – you owe it to the interviewer to go into the detail here.

Try your answer to 'Tell us about recent personal achievement'. Finish off these sentences:

1. *'A project I'm particularly proud of is...*
2. *'My particular contribution was...*
3. *'I was able to deliver...'*

Of course it helps your credibility in any interview to give examples of what you've done. It is very worthwhile to prepare a list of your achievements. Use these to answer questions, or just to drop into the conversation ('You sound like you need someone to organise events – let me tell you about when I pulled together a party for Tom and Katie. I had to do it for under \$10,000, which I achieved. And I had to find three elephants and a pipe band. It went so well that Tom gave me a \$1,000 bonus').

Two very important points when talking about your achievements:

1. *Use numbers (dollars are excellent)*
2. *Always say 'I'*

Let's now give you the chance to try some of the more predictable questions.

- **'Tell me about you.'** (or, 'talk me through your CV', 'give me an overview of your career'). This helps you introduce yourself, and the key strengths you bring to the business (it also gives the interviewer a chance to settle – so again – take your time, don't fire your big guns straight away, when their mind is elsewhere).

This is a well-practiced answer for you – you work from your 'walking / talking CV' pitch (described further in

Networking to Success). This covers – early education, early career, specializations and career steps, recent achievements that illustrate present strengths.

- **'Why do you want to work here?'** Interviewers want to know that you not only have the skills, but will fit – into the team and the organizational culture.

Your answer needs to communicate 'because my values are a good match to your values', and you do this by talking about decisions you've made, opportunities you've chased that indicate you share the same values they do. You might talk of having turned down a promotion in a business that wasn't committed to customer service, or winning the chance to lead a project that was directed to developing the leadership skills of the business managers.

To be credible here – you need to give clear examples of each of these claims. To make an impact – you need to understand what moves them – and to make that connection you have to have read, researched and talked with people in or close to the business – their web site, staff and customers, shops or offices, and more.

- **'What can you do for us?'** 'My skills and achievements provide the best indication of how I can contribute. Do you want me to give you some relevant examples?' You have detailed examples; because you did the work in preparing the relevant examples for your CV (see the CV module). They are likely to go straight to more specific questions – we have several below.

- **'What salary do you expect?'** This is typically asked before the interview – in the phone 'catch-up', and again at the end of the interview. In the Negotiation section below we provide some clues about getting the salary range right. Make sure that the lower number of your range is close to what they expect to pay a competent person (bearing in mind that they may expect a lower level during the 'GFC' – global financial crisis).

These are questions you will almost always hear. And if you don't hear them, you need to take the initiative and answer them anyway (or in the case of the last question, ask your own question – 'What are the salary and benefits on offer?').

Let's move on to some more 'customised' questions, questions that reflect the different demands of different jobs. How do you prepare for these?

continued on the following page →

← continued from the previous page

Conscientious interviewers, and interviewers working in a sophisticated business, are likely to use patterned, structured approaches.

These are very rational and so predictable approaches. The steps are:

1. *What are the critical, or 'deal-breaker', aspects of the job*
2. *What are the skills, or 'competencies', vital to success in these*
3. *What are the questions that enable me to identify if this candidate has these competencies?*

For example, a customer service person must be able to work constructively with an upset customer. To do that they need to be able to listen, connect emotionally with the customer, identify and resolve the issues, communicate the solution, and check in with the customer that they feel that they have

been listened to, and that they feel the problem is solved.

An interview question to assess this competency could be – 'Tell me about the most recent time you had to help a customer who had a problem.'

We have provided you with a range of possible questions for a range of different competencies (at the end of this document). For any job you need to think about the important issues that need to be handled well (the deal-breakers), and to be able to talk about how you have handled them (for an IT person – an IT outage, for a lawyer – a brief with confusing precedents, for a sales person – a customer who keeps objecting, for a health worker – a triage situation...you know the challenging situations, and you know how you have handled them).

What do you see as the 3-5 'make or break' areas of the job you are going to be interviewed for? We have set up the table below in terms of three broad areas that you might want to consider.

Examples of 'deal-breakers'	Examples of how I've handled these
Handling data or information (e.g., analysis, report-writing)	
Managing relationships (e.g., customers, staff)	
Working with things (e.g., trouble-shooting, operating machinery)	

Interviewers might ask you 'what if' questions – checking your job knowledge through your description of how you would handle some typical 'deal-breakers'. Interviewers for some jobs may ask you to work through a business case.

In both of these situations – you are rated high if you clarify the issues by asking task- and job-relevant, insightful questions. This is going to be harder for those high on N, or low on O or especially E. Bring a bit of extroversion to the situation – talk about how you are thinking the problem through, offer to demonstrate using a white-board.

Winning the interview 5

Wrapping up the interview, and asking for the job

Interviewers like to talk about themselves. This is because people in leadership roles, and so doing the interview, are likely to be more extroverted. Also the interviewer is often triggered by what they hear you, the candidate say, and so inspired to make their contribution to the conversation.

Interviewers who talk about their positive achievements typically have a more positive view of their listeners. If you save your questions till the end, and your questions give the interviewer a chance to talk about themselves, then those final impressions of you are more memorable and positive.

Three appropriate personal questions:

1. *How long have you been at ...?*
2. *How has your career developed at ...?*
3. *What sort of social events do you enjoy at ...?*

Three examples of appropriate business questions:

1. *How would you describe the culture at...?*
2. *How is the ... (initiative that they're working on) working out?*
3. *What are some of the company's key initiatives?*

Also – ask about the decision-making process – what will happen from here.

Sometimes the interview does not go well, usually because the interviewer drops the ball. When interview candidates are quizzed about what they don't like about interviews, the major themes are:

- Interviewers who haven't prepared – are reading the CV in the interview, get career details mixed up
- Interviewers who disrespect the candidate – not acknowledging their expertise, not welcoming the candidate, dissing their gender or ethnicity (even without knowing it 'Well you wouldn't like that sort of work would you?'), answering their phone during the interview, or allowing other interruptions
- Interviewers who don't seem to know why they are interviewing – there is no clear pattern to the questions, it just seems like a general chat, they ask irrelevant or inappropriate questions
- The panel that isn't an effective panel – some members are late, some are in the room without having a role, they talk among themselves during the interview

How do you respond?

- Generally you are on the wrong end of the stick here – so one of your strategies is to 'out-professional' the interviewers – by smiling and retaining your poise.
- The chaotic interviewer does provide you with the chance to (gently) seize the initiative – and answer the first three of the four interview questions ('Let me tell you a bit about me', 'Why I'm attracted to work here is ...', 'What I can contribute to you is ...'). Just ensure that you hand back control of the interview when you've made your points – 'But of course I'm anticipating your questions, what else would you like to know?'

The appearance of chaos could well be a charade. Many interviewers use such techniques to check how candidates handle pressure (the 'stress interview'). The two points above – work on acting cool and taking the initiative – are going to get you good ratings if this is the agenda.



Winning the interview 6

Negotiating the package

High As are paid less (if they are women). That's not fair, but it probably reflects the reluctance of agreeable people to spell out that they are good, and so deserve to be paid for the good they can do.

Without being super-aggressive, there are some negotiation approaches that can help.

- Know what you're worth - you need to have a \$ range that brackets the top end of their range. Sources of information could include your mentor, your referees, workmates, professional colleagues and institutions, recruiters, internet.
- Be clear about how to negotiate – for example start by asking them what their range is – you have the advantage if you are responding to their offer

- If they talk about not being able to go higher, ask them about what benefits they could include beyond the salary e.g. car, car park, laptop, phone, superannuation, medical insurance, training, bonus, extra leave, 4 days work for 5 days pay.

- Be very clear about your bottom line, while also appreciating that you may be competing with people who will offer a discount to get the job.

Are you good? Damn right! Any doubts? Go back to your list of achievements.

What you need to do to sharpen your negotiation approach:

The remuneration range for this job, in this market –ask your referees, recruiters, colleagues (and remember to ask them what, if any discount would apply in the present market).

Your bottom line –in relative terms – how low you are prepared to go to get a good job, with reasonable prospects of salary growth.

Your absolute bottom line – how low you can go and still pay the bills.

Winning the interview 7

Follow-up and review

If they are a week late in getting back to you after they said they would – chase up. Start with the support person who looks after the decision-maker. This helps get a context – the person could have had to travel out of town, or deal with some other urgent issue.

Here's your interview review form. Try to do this soon after the interview. The point is to help you focus on doing it better.

Interview section	What went well	What could have gone better
Before the interview	<p>Research paid off – was able to talk about the new initiatives they need help with – and I could provide</p> <p>Got there on time.</p>	<p>Could have been better prepared for the phone interview – wasn't able to talk about salary expectations</p>
Interview kick-off	<p>Got all the names right.</p> <p>They looked relaxed and interested.</p>	
Interview itself	<p>Gave good examples of why I want the job – common values around being part of a growing business.</p> <p>Some good examples of business development achievements</p>	<p>Not such good examples about leading a team.</p>
End of interview	<p>Was clear about salary expectations</p>	
What I liked about the job	<p>Great business, on-to-it people</p>	
What I didn't like	<p>Suggestion they need to invest more in technology – do they have the resources?</p>	
What I would do differently in my next job interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop list of Q&A in case of phone interview as soon as I send off job application – and practice it Team leadership examples – the team-building and visioning session, dealing with conflict, the award-winning project the team completed 	

complete your own review on the following page →

Interview review form

Interview section	What went well	What could have gone better
Before the interview		
Interview kick-off		
Interview itself		
End of interview		
What I liked about the job		
What I didn't like		
What I would do differently in my next job interview		



Your author

This module is written by Stewart Forsyth. He is co-author of *Job Winning in New Zealand* (Penguin, 1993), he has worked in executive selection, provided outplacement support to people in a range of industries and professions, and was the career transition consultant in an Asian Development Bank project to India in the 90s – advising on providing a social safety net for the restructuring of state-owned enterprises. Whatever the job, and wherever in the world you are looking, these suggestions are designed to help you flex with your capabilities and learn effective approaches to winning the interview. **Learn more about Stewart at <http://www.personaplus.co.nz/about>.**

Sample interview questions

Read your CV – identify the achievements that are relevant to these questions. Make notes. Practice your answers – sitting down, in your interview clothes, looking at the interviewer (if you are practicing with a friend, or simply looking at where the interviewer would be) without referring to your notes.

1. Openness

(also – Flexible thinking, Creativity & Innovation)

Think through complex issues, come up with innovative solutions, master but not lost in detail

Questions:

- 1) **Tell me about dealing with a complex problem / challenging technical issue which required hard thinking on your part.**
 - In what way was it hard or complex?
 - What did you do?
 - What was the outcome?
- 2) **What would you consider a creative solution to a problem you faced?**
 - In what way did your solution make a difference?
- 3) **When is a time you've changed your mind about how to do something?**
 - What helped you to change your mind?
 - What encouraged you not to change your mind – to stick with the status quo?
 - What was the outcome?
 - And what do you do now?
- 4) **Tell me about a task where it was important not to follow the established process**
 - What did you actually do?
 - What were the short-term results?
 - And long-term?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited evidence of flexibility or creativity • Tends to have a few solutions to many problems • Prefers process to variety 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable flexibility and creativity • Good strategies for simplifying complexity • Able to combine different approaches to make a new solution 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly flexible • Able to work through complex situations • Genuine creativity 		

Sample interview questions

2. Conscientious

(Results Orientation)

Maintains high standard of performance, ensures obstacles overcome and results delivered

Questions:

- 1) **Give me an example of a task or project you were having difficulty with.**
 - What did you do to overcome this?
 - How did that work out?

- 2) **Tell me about a time when it was not possible to achieve a deadline.**
 - What did you do?
 - How did that work out?

- 3) **What is a part of your job where it is important to follow the process?**
 - Talk me through that process, and the issues you face in completing the steps

- 4) **What are some examples of quality checks that you apply in your work?**
 - At times there is a conflict between such checks and speed – what is a recent example of that?

- 5) **What is a part of your most recent job that you don't enjoy?**
 - How do you motivate yourself to get that done?
 - What's an example of your success at that?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets distracted • No evidence of pushing for results • Inconsistent in following processes and systems 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puts in effort when required • May get most important done at cost to less important 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to flex to fit with changing demands • Reschedules, re-prioritises • Uses checking processes to make sure quality is maintained under pressure 		

Sample interview questions

3. Extroversion

(Persuasive and influential, Selling)

Positive relationships, builds rapport, socially dominant

Questions:

- 1) **What is an example of you persuading someone to do things differently?**
 - What did you do?
 - What did they do?
- 2) **At times it is important to build a relationship with someone – what is an example of you doing that?**
 - What did you do?
 - What did they do?
- 3) **What is your experience of public speaking or presentations?**
 - What was your goal?
 - What did you do?
 - What was the result?
- 4) **What is an example of you selling?**
 - What were the obstacles to the sale?
 - What did you do?
 - What was the outcome?
- 5) **What are some formal or informal networks you are part of?**
 - What is an example of you leveraging your network to achieve a result?
 - What was the outcome?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited evidence of social impact • Doesn't use names, people seem to be more like objects, less like people 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good examples of positive relationships • Reasonable range of networks and relationships • Some evidence of influence, but more based on long-term relationships 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impressive examples of building relationships • Wide and varied networks • Uses influence strategies to sell and achieve outcomes 		

Sample interview questions

4. Agreeable

(Team-worker, Customer service)

High empathy, tries to help, supports others

Questions:

- 1) **In a team setting, where you were working to a common goal; what did you do?**
 - And the outcome?
- 2) **Tell me about dealing with an upset or difficult customer**
 - What was the issue? • What did you do? • The result?
- 3) **Have you ever spotted that someone, a work-mate or a customer was upset, although they didn't say anything?**
 - What were the indications of their feelings?
 - What did you do?
 - And the result?
- 4) **When was a time you contributed to resolving a conflict or misunderstanding?**
 - What was the situation?
 - How were people reacting?
 - What was your input?
 - How did that work out?
- 5) **Talk me through a time you've had to stand up for yourself?**
 - Why was the situation important?
 - What did you do?
 - How did you feel?
 - How did that work out?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited evidence of awareness of other's feelings or concerns • Limited listening ability • Asserts own views, not skilled at compromise or mediation 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuned in to others, reads clear signals • Some listening skills • Reasonable mediator 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly sensitive to body language and clues of others' emotions • Skilled at dealing with resolving interpersonal issues • Able to balance assertion with achieving workable solution 		

Sample interview questions

5. Nervousness

(Resilience, Emotional stability)

Able to make decisions, keep performing under pressure

Questions:

- 1) **When is a time you've needed to make decisions under time or other pressure?**
 - What did you do to manage the pressure?
 - What was your decision resolving?
 - What was the outcome?
- 2) **What would you consider to be your most high pressure work experience?**
 - What made it high pressure?
 - What was your reaction?
 - How did you get through that?
 - What were the impacts on your performance?
- 3) **What is an example of you spotting a problem that others hadn't?**
 - What was the clue that this was a problem? What did you do? How did that work out?
- 4) **Sometimes there are events that are just frustrating – what is a recent example of something coming up that got you upset?**
 - How did you cope?
 - What happened?
- 5) **What is an example of an organisation you worked with doing really well at communicating and managing change?**
 - What was the situation?
 - What did the organisation do?
 - How did you feel about that?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low stress threshold, small events trigger emotions • Performance disrupted by stress 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable resilience, copes with challenges • Some effective stress-management skills 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of resilience, keeps going under serious pressure • Good stress management skills 		