

**THE
INTERVIEWER'S
POCKETBOOK**

3rd Edition

By Sean McManus & John Townsend

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

CONTENTS



UNDERSTANDING INTERVIEWS

5

About this book, why good interviews matter, the stakes are high, the interview challenge, what makes a successful interview?, common interview mistakes, which skills do you need?



QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

15

A word of warning, types of questions (open; closed; evidence; hypothetical; probing; blockbusting; framing; challenge; reflective), additional techniques, keeping the interviewee on track, silence



QUESTIONS TO AVOID

31

Leading questions, psychology questions, discriminatory questions, self-appraisal questions, brainteaser questions, multiple questions



LISTENING TECHNIQUES

41

Good listening skills, the 30/70 rule, listening barriers, you can't multitask listening, taking notes, hearing clearly, paralinguistics



UNDERSTANDING BODY LANGUAGE

53

Using body language, postures and gestures, eye contact, orientation, proximity, looks/appearance, expressions of emotion, interpreting body language, using your own body language, mirroring body posture, echoing talking speed



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

69

Preparation, the candidate's information, checking the job description, the job specification, quantifying the job specification, preparing evidence questions, preparing answers, shortlisting applicants, scheduling the interview, preparing the interview room



CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

85

Meeting the candidate, opening the interview, the interview process, an interview example, how successful was the interview?, answering the candidate's questions, closing the interview, evaluating candidates, matrix, reference checking, follow-up

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

THE JOB SPECIFICATION



The specification might include things like:

- Certifications or professional qualifications
- Experience using particular technologies
- Written or spoken competency in foreign languages
- Experience delivering presentations
- Ability to meet tough deadlines
- Ability to come up with creative product ideas
- Track record in growing sales accounts
- Experience managing budgets for trade shows
- Health and safety knowledge
- Willingness to help others who are overloaded
- Commitment to exceptional customer service



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW



QUANTIFYING THE JOB SPECIFICATION

Where possible, you should quantify the job specifications. Including measurable specifications in the job advert avoids underqualified candidates wasting their time, and also makes it easier for you to shortlist candidates for interview with confidence.

For example:

- Typing speed of at least 60 words per minute
- Has ACCA accountancy qualification
- Has a year's experience managing an international team
- Has managed budgets of £1m or more

Don't set barriers unnecessarily high because that will shrink the pool of candidates you can choose from. For example, if you're recruiting someone to manage a budget of £2m, you might decide this could be done by someone who has previously managed a budget of £1.5m. Similarly, don't assume everyone needs three years' experience to become a great salesperson.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

PREPARING EVIDENCE QUESTIONS



To find out whether somebody fulfils the less quantifiable role requirements in the job specification, ask the candidate to tell you when they have demonstrated them in the past. That might be in a previous role, or could be through interests outside of work. Eg:

- Tell me about a time you delivered an important presentation
- Tell me about a recent time you used your French on the phone
- Describe a time when you had to meet a tough deadline
- Give me an example of when you came up with a new product idea
- Tell me about a time you grew sales within a customer account
- Give me an example of when you managed the budget for a trade show

To ensure interviews are comparable (and the process is fair), you should have a standard list of initial questions you will ask every candidate. These questions will steer the interview, although you will ask different follow-up questions to drill down into the detail in each case. It might take **10 minutes** to get to the detail of each question, so don't have too many! Remember, you can invite promising candidates back for a further interview.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

PREPARING ANSWERS



Candidates will have questions for you too, about the job and the company.

For example, they might want to know:

- Why has this position become vacant, or is being created?
- What opportunities are there to progress in the company?
- What are the short, medium and long term objectives of the role?
- Who are the people they would be working with?
- How is the company performing financially?
- What kind of culture does the company have?
- What hours do people usually work?
- What are the biggest challenges in this role?
- What are the biggest challenges working in this company?
- What kind of support is there for training and mentoring?

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

SHORTLISTING APPLICANTS



Shortlisting consists of choosing a relatively small number of candidates to interview from the total applications available. In many organisations this is the job of the human resources department.

Shortlisting involves comparing each application to the job specification and selecting those 'paper' candidates who seem to fit best.

NOTE: If the application contains insufficient data then ask for more or give the benefit of the doubt and shortlist for an interview.



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

SCHEDULING THE INTERVIEW

Contact candidates to agree mutually convenient times for their interviews. You might need to start early or finish late to minimise disruption to the interviewee's current job. Tell them how long you expect the interview to take (between 30 and 60 minutes is a good guide).

If appropriate, ask them to bring work samples with them, and warn them if you would like them to take any kind of test (such as a writing test) while they're with you.



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

PREPARING THE INTERVIEW ROOM CHECKLIST



- ✓ Ensure the room is available if it's a shared meeting space
- ✓ Ensure the room is clean and tidy
- ✓ Arrange furniture so you can sit adjacent to candidate
- ✓ Clock on wall of interviewing room (behind candidate)
- ✓ No telephone interruptions/ knocks on door
- ✓ No bright sunlight in candidate's eyes
- ✓ Water, tea or coffee for candidate

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

PREPARING THE INTERVIEW ROOM



Take with you:

- The interviewee's CV, résumé, application form or staff record
- Job description
- Job specification
- Preparatory notes and question list
- Notepad
- Business card
- Any company/ organisational literature

About the Authors

Sean McManus

Sean McManus writes inspiring books about business and technology. He is co-author of *The Customer Service Pocketbook*. His other books include *Web Design in Easy Steps*, *iPad for the Older and Wiser*, *Microsoft Office for the Older and Wiser*, *Scratch Programming in Easy Steps*, and *Raspberry Pi For Dummies*. His magazine contributions have appeared in *Marketing Week*, *Customer Loyalty Today* and *Business 2.0* among others. Visit his website at www.sean.co.uk for bonus content and free chapters from his books.



John Townsend BA MA MCIPD

John has built a reputation as a leading trainer of trainers. He is founder of the highly-regarded Master Trainer Institute, a total learning facility located just outside Geneva which draws trainers and facilitators from around the world. He set up the institute after 30 years' experience in international consulting and human resources management positions in the UK, France, the United States and Switzerland – notably as a European Director of Executive development with GTE in Geneva where he had training responsibility for over 800 managers in 15 countries. During his long career as a trainer of trainers he has not only helped to spread unique Master Trainer Institute philosophy across the world via his conferences, seminars and bestselling training videos, but also written a number of widely translated management and professional guides.

