

## **SLS SERVICES - INTERVIEW TIPS**

Some of these points may seem obvious at first, but in our experience it is still very worthwhile to read them through in plenty of time before your interview, even if you have had lots of interviews before. It is our job to ensure that you feel as confident and knowledgeable as possible, so please call us any time on 01403 216216 if you have any questions. Further interview guidance, creative ideas and advice are also available at [www.sls-services.co.uk](http://www.sls-services.co.uk) and our [LinkedIn page](#).

### **HOW DID YOU GET THIS FAR?**

Before you begin to prepare for your interview, you should first consider *how* you got to this position in the first place. You may have applied to an advert, or a consultant at SLS may have contacted you about the vacancy. Either way, **you** made the choice to apply for this job. You have taken the time to write a CV that you feel represents you in the best possible way. You may have written a cover letter too. You will have spent time speaking with your consultant about the role. In other words, you have already invested a lot of time in getting this far. Then, having reviewed this CV, the company has decided they want to meet you. It is likely that there are many other people who want this job but have not managed to get as far as you have. We typically receive 50-100 applications per advert we post online.

A lot of people take these above points for granted, but the reality is that you have already done very well to get to this stage. You now owe it to yourself to do the best you can in the interview.

### **WHY ARE YOU BEING INTERVIEWED?**

This guide highlights some of the questions you might be asked and suggests strategies to help you answer them as persuasively as possible. Always remember that every interviewer will be thinking:

1. Are you right for this job?
2. Are you going to work hard and make the job a success?
3. How well will you fit in?
4. Are you manageable?

## **BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

- Do your research. Make sure you have read as much information about the company and the position as possible. Use the company's webpage as a starting point and see what recent updates they may have shared online, particularly on sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Recent news articles and blogs will be particularly relevant.
- Basic information to learn:
  - What are the company's core products / services?
  - How big are they?
  - Who are their main competitors and how do they compare to them?
  - Have there been updates, events or changes within the company recently?
- You may wish to look the interviewers up on LinkedIn so you can learn about their backgrounds before the interview. This is often a really good idea, but do remember that they will be notified that you have looked at them, which means they will probably look at you in return. Therefore, make sure your own LinkedIn profile is up to date and consistent with what is written on your CV.
- We cannot escape the fact that so much of our lives is now available online. Therefore, ensure that all information that is accessible publicly (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) is something you are happy to share with a potential employer.
- Read the job description thoroughly. Make note of each of the duties listed and consider the areas in which you have relevant experience. Take note of items you are most (and least) excited about, and why. Ask us about anything on the job description that is unclear or ambiguous.
- Are there any questions you are dreading being asked? If so, why are dreading them? You probably **will** be asked them; so what will your response be? Talk to us if you are worried - we can coach you through it.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

- **DO NOT BE LATE!** Allow plenty of time to get to the interview. Ensure you know exactly where you have to go and exactly whom you should ask for. Make sure that you have every last detail on location, time, date, and contacts. If you are running late, please call us at the earliest possible opportunity so we can inform the interviewers.
- Dress properly for the interview. Ensure that you look neat and clean and that you are dressed conservatively. It is preferable to wear clothes you are confident in i.e. not necessarily ones bought for the interview. Remember that you only get one chance to

make a first impression, so do not take anything you do not need (especially carrier bags!). Polish your shoes and iron your clothes.

- Do not smoke immediately before you go in, as the smell will stay on your clothes.
- Be composed, well-mannered, and do not get impatient if you have to wait. Smile, shake hands firmly, and remember the names of the people you meet.
- Pay attention to your body language and posture. Maintain regular eye contact, smile warmly, sit upright and keep your hands still. Avoid fiddling with your hair, covering your mouth with your hands and staring out of the window - easy mistakes to make if you are feeling nervous.
- If you should be asked to complete an application form, do so neatly and thoroughly, ensuring it tallies with what you wrote in your CV. If you are unsure of how to answer any particular part, then ask. If you are going to have an official test of any sort, SLS will have made every effort to prepare you for this in advance.
- Be enthusiastic and interested - remember that the position your prospective employer is talking about is important to them, and they want someone who is genuinely excited by their company and this specific job opportunity.
- Never speak badly of a former employer.
- State your reasons for leaving your last role(s) calmly, briefly and truthfully. Hopefully you left / are leaving your last role(s) under positive circumstances; but if this is not the case, consider ways in which you can make it sound positive while remaining honest.
- Try to avoid discussing salary details, unless you are asked directly. Under normal circumstances we will have told you the package on offer. As a rule SLS will have informed the company of both your current (or previous) salary and your salary expectations. It is our job to fine-tune salary offers (and it is in our interest to obtain the maximum remuneration for you).
- Be prepared to answer awkward questions - see question advice below.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewers for their time and courtesy and shake hands again warmly. If you are interested in the job, *say so*.
- Remember that you may be watched out of the window after you leave the building. Save the jumping for joy until you are out of sight!
- Call us on 01403 216216 as soon as possible, while everything is still fresh in your mind, to tell us how it went. We will then pass on your feedback to the interviewers; and it will

reflect well on you if we can do this promptly. We do not want to have to chase you for your feedback.

### **QUESTION GUIDE**

- Listen carefully to all questions.
- Understand exactly what is asked before answering - if you are unsure, ask for clarification.
- Give yourself time to think before answering.
- Answer precisely and to the point - do not waffle.

### **POTENTIAL QUESTIONS – CONSIDER YOUR POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

- Why do you want this job? *(this is a key question because the manager will be looking for someone who wants this specific position, not just something that will get your foot in the door or just pay the bills while you wait for something better!)*
- Why are you looking for another job? *(remember: if you give a vague answer, you will not be convincing)*
- What elements of your current job do you find most satisfying?
- What frustrates you in your work?
- What particular strengths can you bring to this company?
- What attracts you to this company? What do you know about this company?
- Describe a situation that illustrates your communication / teamwork / management skills.
- Describe a particular problem you faced and how you resolved it *(make sure you use the word "I" as much as possible, instead of "we". The interviewer wants to know what **you** are capable of; so make sure you can substantiate your answer)*
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- What do you consider to be your weaknesses?

- How would you tackle a situation such as....?
- How would you help to develop your team?
- How do you respond to change?
- How do you see your career developing?
- Tell me about yourself (*a poor interview question, but it does often get asked. It is not an invitation to ramble on. If it seems too broad to answer, ask the interviewer to clarify the areas on which they would like you to focus your answer*)
- Describe your career to date / talk us through your CV
- How do you feel about your career's progress so far?
- What achievement are you most proud of in your career to date?
- What do you do when you are not working?

### **ASKING YOUR OWN QUESTIONS**

A key part of any Interview is when you are asked "Do you have any questions?" (hopefully you will be given this opportunity). There is nothing wrong with saying "No thank you, you've covered everything", but it shows initiative and interest in the position if you can ask something that portrays you in a positive way. It is a good idea to think about this in advance. If you so wish, you can write a pre-prepared list which you can put on the desk and run through, even if all your questions have been answered during the main interview. Good questions include:

- Why has this vacancy arisen?
- What happened to the previous job holder?
- What is the company's management structure and management style?
- What will the job actually involve?
- What did you find irritating about the last post holder's work?
- How are targets set and how is performance measured?
- What can I expect to be working on during my first month?

- Could you tell me more about the team structure?
- What facilities and support are available?
- What opportunities are there for training and development?
- What are the company's long and short term objectives?
- Are there any structural or organisational changes in the pipeline?
- What are the key issues the company is now facing?
- When would I be expected to start work?
- How soon will you make your selection?

Finish the interview by saying something to the effect of "I am very interested in the position, and if you were to offer it to me, I would accept", if that is what you feel. Do not be afraid of sounding pushy - all you are doing is letting them know that you are interested in the position; and everyone likes to know how they are perceived by others. The more interested you sound to them, the more they will be interested in you.

**ABOVE ALL, BE YOURSELF.  
THOUGH YOU SHOULD NOT NEED IT, GOOD LUCK!**

**As soon as possible after the interview please contact SLS Services on 01403 216216 with your feedback. This will enable us to progress your application and take it to the next stage. In turn, we will give you the company's feedback as soon as this is obtained.**