Perceptions of an Interview

Interviews are an integral part of the recruitment process. Though, for many people an interview can be a negative experience. A negative interview experience stays with us because it is personal in nature. Our aim from an interview is to make a good impression and receive a job offer. So, before we look at the interview process it is important that we consider strategies to prepare for the process.
Internal/Personal Negativity

Negativity comes from within. You need to accept this and then start to deal with it.

Simplistically, preparing yourself mentally and understanding what you can achieve by performing well at an interview can remove many of the negativities.

What you need to do is “Create Your Own Emotional State”.
Creating Your Own Emotional State

You must develop a stable emotional state prior to attending an interview. Research has shown that performance can be linked to the emotional state experienced at that time. Job seekers wish to impart a good impression in the interview and often need to juggle many emotions. It is important to have prepared yourself adequately to enhance your interview performance.
Performance Inhibitors

- A high level of anxiety.
- Nervousness, which could be mistaken for a lack of enthusiasm or interest.
- Cluttering of thoughts.
- Having unrealistic expectations about the interview.
- Poor preparation.

*Through good preparation, performance inhibitors can be minimised.*
Reducing Anxiety

Many performance inhibitors are related to anxiety.

You need to remind yourself that anxiety is not brought on by the interview, but rather the thoughts and attitudes that are brought into the interview.

The key to feeling less anxious/uptight and in control of an interview is to alter your attitude.
Altering Your Attitude

Think of the interview as a challenge rather than a threat.
Give the interview your best effort and no matter what, you have done well!
Increase your energy levels prior to the interview. The impression presented in the interview is often lasting.
Start the interview on a positive note.
Remember - give the interview your best effort.
Understanding the Interview Process

Try to understand the position of the interviewer, it is not about you, but their wants and needs.

“Because I want something very much, I ought to have it”.

Do not assume that others automatically know and understand you.

Clarify your response so that the interviewer does not make assumptions because they are usually/often incorrect.

When an interview is conducted properly, the result is neither fair nor unfair.
Interview Questions

More and more, people are asked “Behavioural Interview” questions during an interview. Though we also have to prepare for “non-behavioural” interview questions. You cannot prepare for the “off-the-cuff” interview, where you may not even be asked a question.

You have no control over the questions that are asked of you. Note: This raises the issue that you should never try to control an interview.
Behavioural Interviews

In a nutshell - the past predicts the future.

In this type of interview, the interviewer tries to ascertain your capabilities by relating the questions to your past experiences.

Behavioural interviews focus on past behaviour in actual work, study or conflict situations.

The basis of the questions will be the key competencies associated with the position.
Key Point

In a behavioural interview, the interviewer will be looking for an example of when you demonstrated particular behaviours or skills, how you dealt with the nominated situation and what the outcome was. General answers about behaviour are not what the employer is looking for; you need to provide specific answers and examples.
Format of the Interview

Constructing a good Behavioural Interview takes a lot of time and will often take one to two hours to conduct.

The company will ascertain the position Key Selection Criteria and develop one or two questions for each one.

Most positions will have between 6 and 10 criteria.

The benefit of a Behavioural Interview is that all participants are asked the same questions and hence are compared directly with each other.
Some Things to be Aware of

A properly prepared Behavioural Interview will take away any personal bias of the interviewer. Notes will be taken.

Often in large companies more than one interviewer will be involved in asking questions. You may get what you perceive to be “negative” questions, so be prepared for them.

A word of caution: Do not try to make up answers in Behavioural Interviews.
How to Respond 1

Today, people talk about the STAR approach to answering Behavioural Interview questions.

**Situation or Task (STAR)**

Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalised description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
How to Respond 2

**Action you took (STAR)**

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did - not the efforts of the team. Do not tell what you might or should have done, tell what you did.

**Results you achieved (STAR)**

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? The outcome.
The key point to remember in Behavioural Interviews is that the interviewer will be looking for an example of when you demonstrated particular behaviours or skills (STAR), how you dealt with the situation (STAR), and what the outcome was (STAR). General answers about behaviour are not what the employer is looking for; be specific.
Behavioural Example

Most people have been in a scenario where they have had to deal with a difficult person whether they be a work colleague, team member or customer. Could you please describe such a situation, including why did you perceive the person to be difficult, how did you deal with them and what was the eventual outcome?

*The interviewee would be expected to describe a specific time when they encountered this situation. In this type of question they would have to describe the situation, what they did and the outcome as this is what the question is asking.*
Teamwork is important to us. What do you believe makes you a good team member or player?

*In response to a question such as this, it is easy for the interviewee to list good team working characteristics such as, “I listen to other people’s ideas” or “I encourage open communication within the group”. This type of question is open to the person providing a response that they think the interviewer wants to hear and it may not provide a true indication of their abilities.*
Be Careful

Do not think that Behavioural Questions are the “hard” questions and Non-Behavioural Questions will be easy.

Many a person gets themselves into trouble on what they think are the innocuous, easy questions.

Questions are asked for a reason and each and every one should be treated with respect.

You need to think about your answers.
**IMPORTANT**

*A word of caution:* Do not try to make up answers in a Behavioural Interview. If you do, eventually you will trip yourself up. You need to be honest in your response. People cannot make up scenarios that they have not been a part of to try and fool an interviewer. Do not expect a positive outcome if you go down this pathway.
Competencies Often Looked At

Ø Problem solving skills;
Ø Analytical or technical skills;
Ø Ability to work under pressure;
Ø Motivation;
Ø Adaptability/flexibility;
Ø Team working capabilities;
Ø Negotiation skills;
Ø Leadership;
Ø Written and verbal communication skills;
Ø Customer liaison skills; and,
Ø Innovation or initiative.
Examples of Behavioural Interview Questions 1

• Describe a time, for any position that you have held, in which you were faced with problems or stresses, which tested your coping skills?

• Give me an example of a time in which you had to keep from speaking or finishing a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision?

• Tell me about a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision?

• Please provide me with an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your co-workers or subordinates at work?
Examples of Behavioural Interview Questions 2

• Please provide me with an example of a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.

• Please describe a situation in which you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values?

• Please describe the biggest work related problem you have faced in the previous twelve months?

• What did you do to prepare for this interview?
Interview Tips 1

Prior to the Interview

Gather as much information about your potential employer as possible. Do some research, it is expected.

Practice interviewing techniques with a friend or partner.

Arrange your documents and copies in an organised way, so you are able to access them quickly.

Be prepared with questions to ask your potential employer.

Be prepared for the types of questions that they might ask.

A well prepared advertisement will provide you with a good background in respect to what sorts of questions to expect.
Prior to the Interview Continued

Know yourself and know your achievements, so you can utilise the opportunities to illustrate your strengths.

Be tactful about the reasons why you have left previous positions.

Arrive at your interview approximately 5 - 10 minutes early. This allows you to relax, take in the atmosphere and attend to last minute grooming and to become comfortable with your surrounds.

Be polite to everybody you encounter; first impressions count.
Interview Tips 3

Prior to the Interview Continued

Switch off your mobile phone. If you forget and it rings, apologise and switch it off. **DO NOT** answer it.

Ensure you are dressed professionally. Remember first impressions count.

For men: a suit, or at least a shirt and tie. Make sure that your hair is neatly groomed.

For women: a suit, or at least trousers or a skirt with a collared shirt. Hosiery in preference to bare legs. Hair neatly styled and if you use makeup make sure it looks professional.
Interview Tips 4

During the Interview

Acknowledge your potential employer when they greet you by standing and shaking hands. A firm handshake is appropriate. If you have a tendency to get sweaty palms, wipe them prior.

Wait to be seated. Avoid leaning on the table. Do not slouch.

Frequently make eye contact with the interviewer. If there is more than one interviewer try to acknowledge all.

Maintain a positive attitude and demonstrate enthusiasm, interest and confidence. Do not promise what you cannot deliver.
Interview Tips 5

During the Interview Continued

Be aware of your body language. For example, crossing your arms is seen as being defensive. A good recruiter will learn a lot from your body language.

Avoid talking too much (as well as too little).

Avoid premature salary discussions.

Do not discuss personal problems or problems you have had with previous colleagues.

Thank the person/people who interviewed you.
Tough Interview Questions 1

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What do you know about our company?
3. Why do you want to work for us?
4. What would you do for us? What can you do that someone else cannot?
5. What did you find most attractive about the role? Least attractive?
Tough Interview Questions 2

6. Why should we hire you?
7. What do you perceive to be your strengths?
8. What do you perceive to be your weaknesses?
9. What do you look for in a job?
10. How long do you believe it would take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?
In Summary

Before the interview, get yourself into the right frame of mind in order to convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the role.

Dress to impress - first impressions DO count.

Research the company and practice answering interview questions - never assume that you can “wing it”. Be prepared!

Be PROFESSIONAL and CONFIDENT during the interview - it will be noticed by the interviewer.
Thank You and
Good Luck