

EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE GUIDE



**Pendl
& Piswanger**

Management & Human Resources Consulting

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Congratulations!

The seed is planted, let's make it grow.

You have been invited for the interview with a potential employer.

Our goal is to give you few insights to ensure you put your best foot forward, learn as much about the opportunity and the team as possible, and make a positive, lasting impression on the interviewers.

You have likely had several interviews for various roles during your career and have probably done well in those interviews.

The purpose of this guide is to help you build on what you already know and make the most of this opportunity through a successful interview. A job interview is much more than a question-and-answer session with a prospective employer. It is a chance to make a lasting first impression; to learn things about an employer which cannot be learned anywhere else; and to enhance your career (whether you get the job or not!).

Let's review how to ensure that you do just that.

Interview Logistics

With whom will you be meeting?

If you're working with P&P, we will provide you with the name of people you'll be meeting and as much of the following information as possible on each of them:

1. Title & Function
2. Relationship to the hiring authority & Role in the hiring process
3. Professional background / LinkedIn Profile link
4. Hot buttons or items of interest or concern

We'll also provide you with important contact information (including ours) in case anything unusual comes up.

If you aren't working with an executive search partner, you should make every effort to get an interview schedule and research the backgrounds of the people you will be meeting.

Where and when will you be meeting?

Pay attention to minor details such as:

1. How long will it take to get to interview location? In case of video interview, which platform will be used?
2. Do you know where to park or better take underground? Did you check you have the last version of video interviewing platform installed?
3. For whom are you asking when you get there?
4. Do you have your identity card in case will be asked at gate? Do you have the password to enter the video conference room?
5. Did you fix the meeting in your agenda (including travel time if necessary) to prevent conflicting with other important meetings?

Arrive at the meeting's location / enter the waiting room of the video conference tool 10 - 15 minutes earlier to have time to manage any unforeseen difficulties.

Do you have a back-up plan?

If you are working with P&P in case a problem occurs prior to your interview and you'll be late or not able to attend, contact us immediately. Otherwise, make sure you have a backup plan someone to contact to announce in case a problem arises.

Preparing for Interview

Most of the following information may seem self-evident to an experienced executive or professional. The purpose of this guide is to ensure the best possible interview experience, therefore, so we'll leave nothing to chance.

Have an updated resume

Do your homework. When working with P&P InterSearch we will usually provide you with as much information on company & role as possible. However, we recommend checking on different sources and get informed prior to interviewing with the company.

Know your resume

This seems obvious, but it is possible that you haven't reviewed your résumé recently – at least not in the detailed manner that the interviewers will.

You should be able to walk the interviewers confidently and concisely through your résumé. For each of most recent positions listed, beginning with the most recent, you should prepare to identify and describe the key components of the roles and your differentiators as follows:

Your specific role	Top 3 or 4 responsibilities per each role	Main achievements YOU initiated or were directly involved (Avoid speaking about OUR – the Interviewers are interested in YOUR experience)	How did you achieve them, what was your contribution, etc.	Which were the learning from each period / role
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NEVER distort the truth about education, work experience, knowledge, tools, languages, income, or any other information which could come back to you as a boomerang.

For sensitive issues have already prepared answers, never avoid answering a question, no matter how difficult would be.

First impression

You only have **10 seconds to make a first impression**, and how someone dresses and acts is perhaps the most common way that hiring authorities initially assess talent. While attire is by no means a measure of how successfully a candidate will perform in the role, it is a consideration as clients measure cultural fit and how serious a candidate is about the opportunity.

So, follow some **basic rules for a good first impression**:

1. **Dress properly** to the event and type of organization you are going to meet (you did your homework. Even if the meeting is online, dress as for a F2F meeting).
2. Wear conservative jewelry and no perfume. Any distraction could work against you.
3. Always **TURN OFF** your phone and never, ever answer during an interview or keep the phone on the table on silent mood.
4. In case of online meeting pay attention to other possible distraction (not functioning application, bad lighting, pets moving in front of the camera, etc).
5. Be energetic and enthusiastic. Stand straight, have a firm handshake and good eye contact. Don't forget to smile! In case of online meetings do not forget to keep eye contact (look at the camera).

In case the interview will take place in café or restaurant remember some basic **business dinning manners**:

1. Alcohol should generally be avoided during any meeting with a prospective employer. If the interviewer orders it first, you should use discretion in determining whether to follow suit. In any case, we strongly encourage a limit of one glass of beer or wine, and absolutely no distilled hard drinks.
2. Avoid anything to be eaten with fingers. Stick with the cutlery.
3. The conversation at dining events is typically 50 percent about work and 50 percent about the locale or company culture. This is a good time for you to ask about the locale, especially if you're considering relocation. If the role doesn't require relocation, then focus on the company culture.
4. If you're having dinner with the hiring authority before the official interview, and if the hiring authority is not your first interviewer in the following interview, it's a good idea to ask the hiring authority for his or her vision of the role at that time. This can enhance your preparation for the interview.

What to answer before an Interview?

You have the perfect resume, made a good first impression, now focus on interview's objectives.

Remember, in a first interview, when presented to a potential employer by P&P, they have already received a detailed report about your professional accomplishments and personality traits. However, even after passing through P&P process interviews and tests and reference checks you should bear in mind that the employer's interviewer would like to examine once more your work history, educational background, strengths and accomplishments to determine the value you will bring to their organization. He or she is also interested in evaluating your level of motivation, values, attitude, and personality to see how well you will "fit" the company's culture and the role's requirements. In other words, they are trying to assess if you have the experience or knowledge to do the job, how well you will be able to grow in the organization and whether or not you will fit into the culture.

It might be that you will **go through multiple stages of interviews with different people** from the hiring company. Treat each interview, even the final one, with the same consideration as the first one. Do not relax and omit important aspect that could incline the balance in your favor.

Keep in mind that each stage's interview might have a different objective for the interviewers so answer the questions even if they seem to be repeated.

In case of multiple decision makers do your homework (with P&P's support) and find out:

1. On those interviewing you, who holds the greatest influence on final decision?
2. What is the process of reaching consensus among the hiring authorities?
3. What decision will be made after each stage of interviews?
4. What is the timeline of the internal recruitment process and what could influence it?

To be successful, knowledge, experience and skills are not enough - it is important to establish rapport to create a feeling of mutual understanding, confidence and trust between the company's interviewers and you.

Types of interviews

There are many interview styles and formats employers use during a recruitment process. Listed below are examples of most common interview scenarios you may experience. Use the information as a guide but remember, that usually interviewers use a combination of interview styles.

Most common TYPES of interview

Competency Based

The purpose of such technique is to give the interviewer the possibility to assess how you have previously dealt with particular situations, tasks or people.

The questions focus on finding specific skills or abilities that are important for the role you are interviewed for.

Behavioral Based

Even though they might seem like a competency based, a behavior interview focuses on how your previous actions might demonstrate how well you can perform in the new role.

The questions focus on getting an understanding of how you think and act.

Case Study Based

In the past used especially by consultancies, recently they've expanded to all types of companies for roles where critical and strategic thinking are key. You may be a business scenario that you must investigate and propose a solution to. The study case is often a situation that the interviewer has worked on in real life.

HOW to spot and deal with each type of interview

Competency based interview is designed to let you talk because the questions are open and invite an answer related to a real-life situation you encountered.

"Give an example of ..." or "Tell me about a time you had to ..." (face a difficult situation, be innovative, review a project after failing it, etc.)

Using the same type of questions but focusing on behaviors.

To nail such type of interviews we recommend using **STAR-L technique** when answering the questions:

Situation: WHY

Task: WHAT

Action: HOW

Result: Outcome

Learnings

Here are **some** advices:

- Listen carefully and ask questions to clarify the situation
- Structure the problem and build a framework
- Generate a hypothesis and different scenarios
- Demonstrate business judgment
- Make quick and accurate calculations if needed
- And last but not the least, **think BEFORE speaking**

Question to ask company's interviewers

When at the end of the interview you will be asked "Do you have any questions?" NEVER say no. Interviewers are evaluating you not only based on the answers to their questions but also on your own questions to them.

A good interview-end question does few things:

1. Allows the interviewer know you did some research and thought a lot about what to ask.
2. It gives you the opportunity to find more about the role and the organization, things which were not touched before and helps you assess if the role and the organization are a right fit for you too.
3. A good question gives you the opportunity to show the interviewer you are interested and motivated to continue the recruitment process.

Tips: NEVER ask questions which were already answered during the interview! This would only show that you did not pay attention to the interviewer and might not take the process seriously.

So, here are some advice:

1. Ask questions on each interview stage – and don't hesitate to ask the same question of more than one person.
2. Review your questions with a P&P Consultant beforehand. We may be able to provide advice on phrasing and, if appropriate, ensure that the client is prepared to answer them.
3. Always prepare customized questions based on your research of the role, organization and industry and avoid general question whose answers anyone could find on the company's website.

Examples:

1. Please describe your organization's culture and the types of people who best fit it.
2. What are the two or three significant opportunities (or challenges) which your organization faces – and what will be the role of this position holder in solving them?
3. What are the contributions expected from this role in the first 6 months?
4. Which stakeholders from the organization will interact mostly with this role?
5. Please tell me what is your leadership style and how you'd like to collaborate with someone who is reporting to you?

Closing the Interview

As important as first impression is the last impression. Therefore closing an interview should be done in a high note and leave the interviewer with no doubts about you as a fit per role, per company and per team as well as your interest and commitment to the ongoing process.

How?

1. Ask great questions. (And, please, listen to the answer! We see so many candidates failing in listening to answers)
2. Clarify any possible concerns before closing even though it might seem tricky.
3. Ask interviewer if there are any questions which they may have, and you did not get to answer them.
4. It is the perfect moment to remind the interviewer your strong points recommending you for that role.
5. Pinpoint again your interest and commitment for the role and company, as well as for next steps in the recruitment process.

NEVER tell an interviewer that you are NOT interested anymore. Discuss first with P&P Consultant who may clarify issues which drove your interest back and make an appropriate decision together.

6. Always ask about next steps. Usually, you will be told that they will be communicated by P&P Consultant – which may happen within one or two days after the interview but in some cases (especially when there was a panel interview with more participants) it might take up to 1 – 2 weeks.
7. Do not forget to thank the interviewer and add some closing words.

Remember to be short, positive, smiling, and polite.

Follow-up post Interview

After each interview in a process where you were recommended by us, please give your P&P Consultant a call, or send us a short e-mail touching these points:

1. How did you feel during the interview? Do you see yourself working with the people you have just met?
2. Did P&P InterSearch provide you with accurate information on the role and organization? Based on any additional information you got during interviews, what is your impression of your fit on the role? Can you do the job or are any areas which makes you unsure about your suitability?
3. What is the score from 1 to 10 (1 being an absolute no and 10 being an absolute yes) on your interest in the job? If not 10, what is missing?

Always send a short thank you message to those who interviewed you in 24 hours after the meeting took place. Take care to personalize your message, keep it short and concise and avoid grammar or spelling

From seeds to trees.

For more than 20 years we help

companies grow by matching

their leadership needs with

career paths of best executives

in the market.



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