

How to hire...

...and be hired

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How to hire and get hired

This short book considers the processes used to select suitable applicants for positions such as those of employee, contractor, consultant, athlete, or volunteer. The processes used in selection are detailed before considering what applicants can learn from these.

Advice

There's a lot of good advice on the internet about the recruitment process and I am not going to repeat it but I am going to suggest an additional method.

Let me start with a short story to illustrate the point I'm going to make: if I tell my wife that I have just attached six hinges, banged in 40 nails and screwed in 32 screws, she will not be impressed. If I tell her I have just built the IKEA wardrobe that we bought two months ago, she will be delighted as she can now hang up her clothes. Now, I didn't do anything differently, I just presented the information in a way that met her requirements. That's the secret of maximising your chances in the selection process.

Understand what the recruiter needs and present your skills to meet these needs

I'm not suggesting you lie, or 'bend the truth', it's not only immoral but no organisation wants someone they can't trust. You might also be recruited into a position which is too difficult for you. This will damage your reputation, cause stress and eventually your removal.

I am suggesting that before you become involved in the selection process you understand what the recruiter wants.

So I'm going to take you through the selection process from the recruiter's point-of-view, considering each stage and what you, the candidate can learn. This is a process which can apply to most selection procedures, such as university selection, choosing a contractor or consultant, athletic training program or job hire. I will not therefore refer to a 'job' but a 'position'.

The selection process typically has these stages:

1. Decide to recruit.
2. Define the requirements.
3. Publicise the vacancy.
4. Preliminary selection of applicants.
5. Final selection of applicant(s).
6. Offer the position.

Let's look at these stages in detail

1 Decide to recruit.

- The purpose of this stage is to establish the need to recruit.
- Most selection procedures start with the decision to recruit. This may arise from:
 - A vacancy due to the present position holder moving on.
 - The creation of a new position, possibly arising from additional work.
 - The combination of two (or more) jobs.
 - The recognition that a job needs doing not by a permanent employee but a contractor or consultant.
- Some organisations will recruit on a regular basis, such as the recruitment of students by a university or graduates by an accountancy firm. Their decision will be, 'How many?'.
- In some cases the decision to recruit may be made but at some time during the selection process the decision may be reversed due to a need to reduce costs or the realisation that the position is not necessary.

What the applicant can learn- decision to recruit

- Try and find out why the vacancy has arisen.
 - Did the position holder move on as the result of a promotion?
 - Have the responsibilities for the new position been clearly defined? If not, if you get the position you may find no-one knows what you should be doing.
 - If two positions have been replaced by one, does this mean you will be doing the work of two people in the time for one?
- If many applicants are to be selected, how many?
- It may not be your fault if your application is suddenly dropped and you're told the position is no longer available.

2 Define the requirements.

- The purpose of this stage is to identify the essential requirements for the successful applicant.
- This is an important stage for the recruiter. The requirements will generally be in the following categories:
 - Qualifications
 - Experience
 - Skills
 - Personality
- Qualifications and experience are matters of fact. The skills gained from qualifications and experience will depend on the personality of the applicant. It is sometimes better to recruit someone who is willing and able to learn than someone who is experienced but considers they 'know it all'.
- The requirements drive the publicity for the vacancy, the selection of candidates and the offer.
- If the position is established, there should be description of its responsibilities, skills required (including essential qualifications) and personality traits.
- If the position is new, this may require, in some organisations, the writing of a 'job description' which then has to have a 'score' assigned before a salary range can be assigned. This can be a lengthy process.
- The responsibilities part of the requirements defines what the position holder has to produce. It therefore defines the qualifications, experience and skills the person expected. In some cases these may be negotiable but not in others. If the position demands a qualified pharmacist, this isn't going to be negotiable.
- The personality required is often not specified. There may be phrases such as, 'Must be a good communicator'. These are generally useless since few candidates will consider they are bad communicators. For the recruiter the specification of personality should be important, since it will need testing during the recruitment process. Most jobs require a 'good communicator' but the requirements for a telephone marketer will be different to those for a software programmer. For example the programmer may have to be a 'good team player' whereas the tele-marketer may have to have an 'outgoing friendly manner'.
- The salary to be offered will also be determined at this stage. This will depend on:
 - The 'Job score', if applicable.
 - The market rate.
 - What other comparable positions in the organisation are paid.

What the applicant can learn- requirements

- Get a copy of the job description and any other document which defines the requirements for the position. Don't rely on the advert or recruitment agency publicity, they may not tell the whole story.
- Get as much information about the sort of personality the recruiter is looking for. Be honest with yourself; if the position is for a salesperson who can clinch a deal and you are a quiet introvert (but a friendly one) you are probably not going to enjoy the position.
- Be wary if the recruiter is vague about salary because 'the job hasn't been scored'. You may find when it is scored the salary allowed is a lot lower! (Search on the internet for 'Hay job scoring' to understand how one scheme works).
- The recruiter may not be able to offer a higher salary than stated because of constraints in the organisation. Don't assume they can match your present , higher salary, even if they are desperate to recruit you.

3 Publicise the vacancy

The purpose of this stage is to inform the 'ideal applicants' that a vacancy exists and to persuade them to apply for the position.

3.1. Preparation -choosing the selection process

- Before considering how to publicise the vacancy, the selection process must be established because the notice for the vacancy needs to specify how to apply. If there are likely to be many applications, some selection may be necessary at this stage.
- The selection process may be decided by the Human Resources (HR) Department in a large organisation.
- Publicity may be restricted to internal communications but policy may dictate that all positions are advertised externally.
- The application process decided will depend on the number of likely applicants. If less than 50 need checking by any one 'recruiter' (there can be more than one, for example in the case of graduate applicants for management training) then applicants could be asked to send their CV with a covering letter. This is a good test of the applicant's ability to compose a document. If you wish to prove an applicant's ability in a second language, the CV should be presented in this language.
- A standard application form is useful as it enables the recruiter to obtain the information they require. For example
 - Personal details: Name, address, e-mail.
 - Right to work in the country concerned and the evidence required.
 - Qualifications and skills: ideally the application form is tailored to the job description.
 - Job experience (including salary).
 - Hobbies and interests: to provide an impression of personality. This should include voluntary work of relevance to the position. For example, volunteering with the Red Cross would be relevant for a position with Ambulance or Fire Services.
 - Questions to aid selection: These are questions which might be asked in an interview but assist in selecting those applicants for the next stage. Examples are: why do you want the position? What makes you think you would enjoy the position?
 - Specific tests can be set, for example to test the knowledge of engineers, programmers, accountants, paramedics. If the position involves creative work, an example could be requested.
 - Names and addresses of referees, though this information can be obtained just before making an offer.
- The application form could be completed on line, or downloaded for completion.
- If the number of applicants is going to be over several hundred, then an on-line process is likely to be required possibly with some form of automatic selection. Specialists will have to be involved in setting up this type of application.

What the applicant can learn-preparation

- Never apply for a position, 'Just to get experience'. It will show during the selection process and may get you a bad reputation for future positions. You will also not be committed to getting the position – and commitment is essential.
- At this stage you should look at yourself honestly. Write down all your qualifications, experience, skills and personality traits – you will need this for later stages. Look at everything you have done and look at what skills you learnt from it. Even work which is not relevant to the position may provide skills which are relevant. For example, if you have helped out in a shop then you have skills:
 - You have experienced the discipline of work.
 - You may have worked long hours (probably).
 - You are used to working with the 'public', possibly dealing with complaints.
 - You may have acquired other skills such as stocktaking, working with computer systems, handling cash.
- Don't underestimate your abilities – ask friends and family for help in identifying them.
- Don't over-estimate your abilities either; the good recruiter will find your weaknesses.
- Don't be dissuaded by careers advisors, who may tell you, 'You'll never get a job with that organisation'. If you have the qualifications, skills and personality - go for it!
- If necessary, prepare well in advance by volunteering in a related organisation. For example, if you want to train as a paramedic, join the Red Cross/Crescent or St. John's Ambulance (in the U.K.). If you have no work experience, any volunteering will be beneficial.
- It's probably at this stage you need to research the organisation. You could leave this research until you are invited to an interview but knowledge of the organisation may help with your application. You need to thoroughly read the organisation's website and publicity material, including any press releases, Twitter Feeds and Facebook pages. Depending on the position, you may need to read the annual report and accounts, sales literature and news/magazine articles about them (Search the internet for information on the organisation).
- If recruiters are likely to have a high turnover of staff (for example retail and distribution) ask if they have vacancies. Check out their website.
- Recruiters with few vacancies are unlikely to respond to CVs sent directly when no position has been advertised. However, there's always a chance. Ideally write to a specific person in the organisation.

3.2.Options

- This publicise stage is all about telling the ideal applicants that a marvellous position exists and they should apply for it.
- If the 'ideal applicants aren't likely to be looking for to move positions, the recruiter may employ the services of a 'head hunting' agency for (very) senior positions. For other positions (for example surgeons), advertisements will be placed in the specialist publications they are likely to read (web or print). Recruitment agencies probably won't be used as the only means of recruitment, unless they are to place the advertisements.
- If there are plenty of 'ideal applicants' (new graduates, newly qualified accountants, school leavers), there are options:
 - An internal advertisement on the organisation's intranet. Some organisations may require internal advertisements before any external recruitment can be considered.
 - Social media, including LinkedIn and Facebook
 - The internet, using the organisation's website and/or recruitment agencies' websites.
 - Advertisements in publications likely to be read by the 'ideal' applicants.
 - Recruitment agencies, possibly placing a specific advertisement or using their pool of registered potential applicants.
 - 'Job fairs' for example at schools or universities.
- The options chosen for publicity will depend on the position.

3.3. Recruitment Agencies

- Depending on the position, recruitment agencies will be bombarding recruiters with e-mails giving details of candidates they consider 'ideal'. This occurs even if there is no vacancy!
- My method (I recruited newly qualified accountants) was to invite local and national recruitment agencies to 'pitch' their offer to me for the role of 'preferred supplier'.
- I then chose one local and one national agency. They were to provide me with the details of suitable candidates, when I informed them I had a vacancy and at no other time! I told all the agencies that if no suitable candidates emerged from the preferred two after two weeks, I would ask the other agencies but only if they didn't send candidate details when I wasn't recruiting. This approach worked.
- To get the best out of the preferred agencies, I briefed them fully on the 'job description' and the personality I was looking for. This may not happen for all recruiters and the agency may only have a vague idea of the position being offered.
- Recruitment agencies may interview candidates, or may pass details straight on to the recruiter.
- Agencies produce their own candidate CVs to their house style.
- Agencies may continue to take details of candidates for a position, after that position has closed, in order to boost the number of potential candidates on their books.

What the applicant can learn-agencies

- Note the agencies advertising in specialist journals (if any). This will give you an idea of which agencies specialise in positions which interest you.
- Ask friends and colleagues which are the best agencies, depending how secret you want your position search to be.
- Where an advertisement has been placed by an agency and they take your details, make sure these are passed to the recruiter (if necessary, check directly). Keep contacting the agency to ask for updates and any other suitable positions. Agencies can be forgetful.
- Check the CV the agency prepares for you. I've had candidates barely recognise themselves.
- Don't be surprised if an agency records all your details before telling you that job is taken but they have plenty of others.
- Beware of agencies deciding you have a particular competence (for example in accounts payable) and then only offering you positions in that speciality.

3.4. The advertisement

- If an advertisement is placed, the wording needs to be designed to get the ideal candidates applying - and no more.
- The following should be included
 - Qualifications required should be clearly stated
 - Skills required - be specific to prevent unnecessary applications.
 - The level of expertise (number of years post-qualification for example)
 - Any special working requirements such as shift working, time away from home.
 - Languages required, or desired.
 - Any other special requirements, such as fitness, age, gender (where permitted by law).
 - Salary offered. The inclusion of salary depends on the conventions for the position offered.
 - The benefits of working for the recruiter, including experience gained, working environment and promotion prospects.
 - How to apply.
 - You may wish to state in the advertisement that applications from recruitment agencies will not be considered.

What the applicant can learn- advertisement

- Learn where potential recruiters advertise and check these sources (social media, web, newspapers, magazines, specialist journals) regularly.
- By regularly reading advertisements you will get an idea of the skills potential recruiters require and the salaries on offer.
- Find out if the position is being advertised within the organisation. If so, don't be surprised if the successful applicant has already been decided and the selection process is just to obey the organisation's policies.
- If you have friends working at your desired organisation, get them to give you details of positions which are advertised internally. You may get lucky if you apply externally and they can't recruit internally. If you are suitable, they are saved all the work of placing adverts and selecting.

3.5. The applications

- If you are using the internet for applications, check the process works (including any tests) before the advertisement is publicised.
- Be prepared to send out applications (if applicable) as soon as a request arrives – it gives an impression of efficiency.
- Log completed applications with an identifying number as they arrive.

What the applicant can learn-application

- If you are not certain about whether to apply, see if you can talk to the person who is recruiting, either face-to-face, over the phone or video.
- Depending on the position, the organisation may want to recruit someone with the potential to move to senior management. Remember this when completing your CV and application form. Don't be too ambitious; most organisations don't want someone joining in a junior position who expects to make CEO within a year of joining (there may be exceptions). Such applicants often have an over-inflated idea of their abilities.
- If you have to submit your CV, check the internet for suggestions on content and layout. My advice:
 - Tailor it to the advertisement, making sure you include all the qualifications and skills the position requires (otherwise don't apply).
 - Keep it short, ideally no more than three pages.
 - Include all positions held (with dates) specifying the skills you acquired (see preparation). Don't go into great detail about what the position involved.
 - Send it with a covering letter (one page) stating why you are interested in the position.
- If you have to answer questions, such as 'Why do you want the position?' think of the reader. Yours may be the 49th application they have read. Make your answer worth reading.
- Check your application against the advertisement. Make sure you have covered all the requirements and listed all your relevant skills (see preparation).
- Before submitting the application, thoroughly check it (and have friends check it). Make sure there are no spelling or grammar mistakes. Remember, if there are a large number of applicants the recruiter is looking for any excuse to reject your application. Don't provide one.
- Don't delay your application until the final date for submission – it may suffer an unexpected delay. Leave yourself time to check it.
- If you have to complete on-line tests, research the possible types on the internet and get experience doing them.
- Find two referees and get their permission to be contacted if you are successful.
- Update your social media sites (LinkedIn, Facebook etc.). Remove any 'embarrassing' entries.

4 Preliminary selection of applicants.

- The purpose of this stage is to select applicants for the final selection process.
- If good applicants are very rare, this stage may not be necessary. Suitable applicants can move to the final selection where they can go through the selection process and, if suitable, be offered the position immediately.
- Once the advertisement has been placed, the applications will arrive.
- If an agency hasn't been employed, they will send details of candidates on their books. If any of these are selected, you will have to pay their fee.
- If an agency placed an advertisement on your behalf, depending on the agreement with them, they may carry out an initial selection (including interviews) or pass the applicants' information directly to you.
- The agency may have suitable candidates who are uncertain about the position and don't want to commit themselves to an application and interviews in work time. Offer to meet these potential applicants after they have finished work and talk to them about the role. This will enable the position to be 'sold' to them without taking time up in an interview, while the candidate will not have to take time off work. It will also provide the opportunity to pre-select, since some candidates may not be suitable.
- The next stage is to read the applications and reject those which:
 - Don't meet the essential requirements as set out in the advertisement.
 - Have below average answers to the questions posed on the application form, such as 'Why do you want the position?'
 - Have incorrect answers to any tests set in the application form.
 - Note on the application (or in some other way if it's on-line) the reason for rejection.
- Ideally (in my opinion) there should remain about 6 suitable applicants per vacancy, with about 6 in reserve. If there are more than this, attempt to put the remaining applications in order of merit, take the top 6 to the next stage, the next 10 (or more - you decide) and reject the rest.
- An alternative, particularly where there are a large number of suitable applicants for many positions (new graduate intake for example) further on-line tests can be used. Consider video or phone interviews to pre-select.

What the candidate can learn- Preliminary selection

- If a Recruitment Agency wants to interview you, it may be only to check that you are a suitable applicant to be on their books. It may not be for the specific position for which you have applied. Check this.
- Search the internet for information on the agency being used and agency procedures in general plus the likely questions to be asked.
- Depending on how well the agency recruiter has been briefed, their knowledge of the position, and organisation, may be superficial.
- Treat the interview as though it is part of the final section (see later).
- Use the interview to find out as much information as possible about the selection procedure:
 - What techniques, such as interviews, tests, presentations and group work will be used?
 - Who will interview? Will there be one, two or many interviewing together?
 - What questions are likely to be asked in the interview?
 - What tests will be used?
 - What is the likely subject of any presentation? How long will it be? Who will be in the audience? Will it be a group presentation? (see later for advice)
 - What can they tell you about the recruiting organisation that you may not find from publicly available information?
- If your application is turned down at this stage (or at any other stage) try and find out why.
- Try and determine what other clients use the agency. This may be useful information for future applications. Remember some positions may only be available through recruitment agencies.

5 Final selection of applicant(s).

- The purpose of this stage is to select an applicant to whom an offer will be made.
- The stage therefore examines whether each applicant is the best person for the position taking into account their:
 - Qualifications
 - Experience
 - Skills
 - Personality

5.1 Structure of the selection process

- The structure of the selection process needs to be defined, if it hasn't been already decided by HR. Will applicants be invited in singly, or in groups? Will interviews over video (Skype, Zoom or Microsoft Teams) be used? Will applicants have to complete tests and/or a presentation? Will group exercises be held? Over how long will the selection process be held? Where will the selection be held? Many ideas are on the internet.
- Interviews will probably be used in part of the selection process. In most organisations HR and the 'manager' of the position will interview. More senior managers, directors, trustees, professors etc. may be involved. The composition of the interview 'panels' will need to be decided.
- If necessary search the internet for ideas on interviewing techniques and questions.

5.2 Preparation for the interview

- An interview is possibly the only way to judge the personality of the applicant. Personality tests may help but they don't necessarily give a good indication as to how well an applicant will fit into the culture of the team and organisation.
- A document needs to be prepared with questions designed to produce answers which enable a judgment to be formed at the end of the interview on the suitability of the applicant for the position.
- This document, which should also be used for the other selection methods (tests, presentation, group work) forms the core of the final selection procedure.
- Since the job description should define the four qualities required, this should form the basis of the document. Take the job description and write alongside/under each quality the question(s) to be asked to assess the applicant's ability. Leave a space for the answer and any comments on it. Leave a space at the end of the form for final comments and a conclusion as to the applicant's suitability. We'll call this form the Applicant's Assessment Form (AAF) – an example is included at the end of this book.
- Ask questions designed to see how the applicant will/has coped with real situations. These are known as 'competence' questions and should give a good indication as to the applicant's skills and personality. Examples may be, 'How have you dealt with an angry customer returning faulty goods'; 'What tests would you carry out with a patient complaining of difficulty in breathing'; 'What questions do you ask a client when designing a house?' The applicant should not have been able to prepare for these so be aware that any agency

involved will question their applicants after an interview in order to brief future applicants. So vary the questions.

- Interviews can be based solely around competence questions. It's known as 'Competency based interviewing' (search on the internet for more information). It employs the STAR model:
 - Describe a typical **Situation** to the applicant which they should have encountered
 - Ask what their **Task** (responsibility) was in this situation
 - Ask what **Action** they took
 - Ask what the **Result** was
- Such questions give information about all four categories. Interviews consisting only of the same competency questions make the recording of the interview and comparison of applicants relatively easy. However, applicants can learn the answers if they have notice of likely questions and the interviewer may not get much information about an applicant's personality, depending on whether follow-up questions are asked.
- More informal interviewing, using the AAF as a basis, can give a more relaxed interview and better impression of personality. However, they are more difficult to document and therefore comparison of applicants is more difficult.
- If an applicant's answer involves information which can be quantified (number of 'colleagues' managed', sales budget) ask for numbers and try and match them with answers from referees.
- If an individual applicant is to be interviewed by more than one group, for example one interview with HR and another with managers, they will need to decide who asks what questions. If there is no agreement, trivial questions may be asked in each interview while important questions never get asked!
- If a 'panel' interview is to be used, one member should be the chair, who controls the questions being asked and one should note down the applicant's answers.
- Ensure that the time allowed for an interview enables all questions to be asked and answered, plus the applicant's questions at the end. Additional time should be planned in order to complete documentation and prepare for the next interview.
- Book rooms for the interviews (as appropriate for your organisation). They should be quiet with no danger of interruption. Ideally there should be a waiting area nearby. Decide whether the interviewers will sit behind a desk or everyone will sit in 'easy' chairs.

What the applicant can learn- preparation for interview

- Do what the interviewer has to do, prepare an Applicant Assessment Form using all of the information you have managed to collect from the advertisement, agency, friends who work at the organisation.
 - Include the usual questions asked at interviews (search the internet).
 - Include some typical competence questions. The agency should be able to help.
 - Include questions on your hobbies and interests.
 - **Write** in your answers on the AAF.
 - Get friends and family to interview you using the AAF.
- If you haven't already done so, get as much information on the organisation as possible.
- Use LinkedIn to get information about your interviewers
- If you don't know how to reach the venue, visit it if you live nearby or use Google Street View.

5.3 The day of the selection process (or just before)

- Read the CV/application form and prepare an AAF noting the applicant's name and any questions arising from the CV.
- Get to the interview room at least 10 minutes before the first interview to check it is clean and tidy. Set the chairs out as you require them. Get all the paperwork ready. If whiteboards or flip charts are to be used, ensure paper, pens and erasers are available. Water and glasses should also be available.

What the applicant can learn-day of interview

- If you live some distance away from the interview venue, arrange some accommodation locally. You will arrive refreshed and will not have had the worry of missed trains or traffic jams.
- Arrive very early if you have to travel on the day and sit in a nearby cafe to relax and go through your notes.
- Search the internet for any news which has just appeared about the organisation.
- Read your AAF.
- Aim to get to the venue around 15 minutes before the interview time, unless you have specific instructions from the organisation.
- Treat everyone you meet with respect. Secretaries and personal assistants are often better judges of character than their bosses, and their impression of you may count.
- Be prepared for the unexpected, such as tests, delays or interviews you weren't expecting.
- What to wear is a common question. Search the internet but here's my advice, in order of priority:
 - Where the culture of the country has particular dress codes, obey them.
 - Where the organisation has a dress code, obey it. Ask the organisation (or agency) if one exists.
 - Wear what you would normally wear in the position for which you have applied (unless it's a uniform). Pictures in publicity material may help.
 - If none of the above applies, then dress 'smartly'.
 - Think of the interviewers. If they are interviewing many applicants, they will end the day confused about which applicants had which qualities (which is why note taking is vital). So, if it is appropriate wear something that will identify you. It may be a brooch or necklace for a woman or a tie for a man. (Don't overdo it though!)

5.4 Interviews

- Documentation of the interview and the decision process is essential, as it could be the subject of a lawsuit by a rejected applicant.
- One member of the interviewing group should meet the applicant in the waiting area, introduce themselves and greet them as appropriate to the culture of the country. He/she should take the applicant to the interview room and introduce any other interviewers before requesting the applicant to take a seat.
- The interviewer (or chair) should give a brief introduction telling the applicant how the interview will be conducted and how long it should last.
- Questions should follow the pre-prepared documentation. Follow-up questions should be asked if any answers are unclear or require greater detail.
- The 'tone' of the interview will depend on so many factors; the country, the organisation, the job, the interviewers and applicant. The aim should be that at the end, the interviewer(s) have found out all they need to know; the applicant is happy that they have had the opportunity to present themselves in the best way; and everyone has a sense of satisfaction.
- The applicant should be given the opportunity to ask questions. These, with answers, should be noted on the documentation.
- The interviewer (or chair) should clearly bring the interview to an end by telling the applicant the next stage, including when they will be informed about the result. The interviewer (or one of the panel) should accompany the applicant to the waiting area and thank them for coming.

What the applicant can learn- interview

- Remember what I said at the beginning of this document, ' Understand what the recruiter needs and present your skills to meet these needs'.
- You should be nervous but the interviewer may also be nervous. They may not be used to interviewing. If you are the sixth applicant that day, they will also be tired. So think about the interviewer, try and get them to relax, take an interest in them (if appropriate to their culture). You may get an opportunity during the walk from the waiting area to interview room.
- You should greet the interviewer how custom demands. In the West you would normally shake hands. Use a firm grip, look the interviewer in the eye and smile.
- Greet other interviewers in a similar manner and sit down when, and where, indicated.
- Throughout the interview be enthusiastic. I have interviewed applicants who have been dull and unforthcoming with answers and it's terrible. If you make the interview interesting you may be forgiven for the occasional 'wrong' answer. If you are boring you may be rejected even if your answers were correct.
- If you are asked a question you can't immediately answer, say, 'I need to think about that' and go through your thought processes. Your answer may not be important; your method of reaching it may be what the interviewer is looking for.
- During a competence interview you may be asked whether you have come across a situation (for example a road crash) and how you acted. Don't just say, 'I haven't come across this situation', go on to say, ' but if I did, this is what I would do'. Think about why the interviewer asked the question.
- If you are asked, 'Why are you leaving your present position?', don't be negative (especially if you are looking for a new position in your current organisation). No-one likes a complainer. One answer is, 'Because I think I'm ready for new challenges'. Anticipate the next question, 'What challenges?'
- If you are asked, 'How long do you see yourself in this position?' Be careful. If it's a position where the organisation considers it's a 'stepping stone' for more senior position, 'Two years' might be a reasonable answer. If it's a position requiring highly specialised knowledge, which will take several years to acquire, say that it's a challenging position with much to learn and you will be happy in it for some years.
- At the end of the interview you will probably be asked if you would like to ask some questions. You should have thought of these before the interview (the internet will give ideas). Think of the interviewer and what they would like to be asked. Examples can be, 'What do you like about working here?', 'What sort of personality would be best for this position?'
- At the end of the interview, be prepared to shake hands (as appropriate - look at his/her face while doing so), smile and thank them for inviting you.

5.5 Video interviews

- Interviews using Zoom, Skype or another video conferencing app are useful when it is not possible for the applicant to attend in person.
- Video interviews can also be useful for pre-selection, since they can be held 'out of office hours' and don't require the applicant to travel.
- The advice in the previous section applies.
- The technology does require special consideration (see the notes for the applicant).
 - The app to be used will need to be decided and 'invitations' sent to the applicants.
 - Where a panel is involved, members need to be aware that, if they are not on 'mute' any sound may switch the display to them.
 - Any comments made by one panel member to another using the same microphone may be picked up, even if they are intended to be confidential.

What the applicant can learn - video interviews

- The usual advice for interviews applies. (Although your interviewers may be dressed more informally if they are not in their work places.)
- Don't lose the invitation with joining details (link, login and password). Remember they will need to be available on the device (computer, tablet, Smartphone) that you will use for the interview.
- Download in advance the app to be used and familiarise yourself with the functions. Use on-line training courses if necessary.
- Ideally have the camera at eye level, mounted so it can't move.
- Ideally use a monitor. This is important if several interviewers are involved, since you will need to see all of them clearly and this won't be possible on a small screen.
- A webcam and microphone on top of a monitor, with separate speakers, is probably the best equipment.
- If possible use a high-speed, reliable internet connection. If the interview is very important, consider using a friend's/relative's equipment or renting an office with a good connection for a few hours. (Remember to take the joining instructions).
- Ensure you are not interrupted and you are working in a quiet environment.
- You should have a tidy, uncluttered background. Beware of having books behind as the interviewer may be distracted by trying to read their titles. Don't use an 'electronic' background as bits of it may disappear at random, as well as bits of you.
- Avoid movement behind you, either people passing behind or windows with views outside.
- Check the complete installation (audio, vision, microphone) by carrying out tests with friends. Use the 'record' function to view the test and correct any issues.
- Avoid a bright light behind as this shuts down the camera aperture and darkens you. If necessary mount a diffuse light behind the camera to provide soft lighting of your face.
- Check the equipment (using the apps 'set up' option) just before the interview.
- If you are expected to give a presentation (using the 'Share screen' facility) make sure you thoroughly rehearse using it.
- If you can, have plan in case of equipment failure. For example, have a wired headset with microphone available (tested).
- Check advice for video interviews on the internet.

5.6 Presentations

- Asking applicants to do a presentation can be useful. It demonstrates their experience and skills, while also giving an indication as to how well they would function in the position.

- The presentation can be on a specific subject (for an architect - 'How I would design a house') or general (How I would decide where to live').
- It will be necessary to give applicants in advance a clear brief, indicating what facilities will be available (white board, flip chart, PowerPoint). The time allowed for the presentation, and who will be in the audience should be in the brief.
- Before the presentation, make sure all the facilities promised are available, and working.
- Give the applicant the opportunity to set up the presentation before the audience arrives.
- At least one person in the audience should take notes and, preferably, all.
- After the presentation, one person should record the opinions of the audience against the skills and personality noted on the Applicant Assessment form.

What the applicant can learn- presentations

- Hopefully you will be sent the instructions for any presentation several days before your selection process.
- Read these instructions very carefully. Note what the presentation is expected to deliver, how long it will be, whether you can use a computer and who will be in the audience.
- If you decide to use a computer, make sure a projector and screen will be available.
- The internet will provide advice on giving presentations. My opinions follow.
- If you can use a computer (PowerPoint or Libre Office) work on the basis of one slide per minute, including the opening slide (Title and your name) and closing slide ('Any questions?').
- Use a 'master slide' to get consistency across your presentation. Put your name in the 'footer'.
- Make any presentation materials (slides, flip chart sheets, white board) readable from at least 5 metres. So don't cram your slides/ flip chart with information.
- Be concise.
- Try and vary the presentation, using images, models and diagrams - anything to keep the audience awake. Be original, stand out from the rest.
- Don't stand still reading from notes as the audience will fall asleep. Move around, look at the audience and use your slides as a prompt.
- Rehearse your presentation several times. Involve family and friends to get their opinions.
- The introduction and conclusions are the most important parts, so work on getting those to have impact.
- Since you will probably be in the room first, greet the 'audience' as they arrive, introducing yourself.
- Print off notes for the audience but don't give them out until the end, as people will read them, instead of listening to you.

5.7 Group work

- A task involving six to eight applicants is a method to examine how applicants relate to others in a near-work environment.
- Decide how much time can be allowed for the task. Two hours should be considered a minimum. You can then decide on a topic. The internet can provide ideas as to which sort of group task to use. Ensure the task can be completed within the time.
- Ensure that the results of any group task can be directly related to the Applicant's Assessment Form. There is no point in running a group task if the results aren't relevant to selection.
- A group task will need relevant materials (flip chart, white board, computer plus projector) and a large room.
- Assessors will be needed to observe how the applicants work together and make notes against the AAF requirements.
- Assessors could form the audience but managers with an interest in the applicants would be better.

What the applicant can learn- group work

- You may be involved in a group task if you are involved in a 'Selection Centre' lasting a day, or maybe even longer, and typically used to recruit graduates onto a training scheme. Search on the internet for more information.
- The task will probably involve some sort of presentation at the end and should take at least two hours, or longer if the centre is more than a day.
- If you are involved in group work, treat it as a project :
 - Read and reread the instructions. Be clear on what you have to deliver and when.
 - Identify the tasks to be completed to deliver the outcome and how long they are likely to take. Include a Project Manager task.
 - Set up a time line to show what task has to be done and when. This will highlight tasks which must be started first because they take a long time.
 - Each member of the group now states which skills they have.
 - The group decides on a project manager and allocates tasks to group members.
- A project plan seems like 'overkill' but it will impress the watching assessors and will save time over the course of the work.
- If you have to decide on a group name, leave this until after the project plan, ask for one suggestion per group member, and vote on the best. No discussion. Don't waste time.
- During discussions, behave the way you think the watching assessors want. This is likely to be someone who involves all members of the group, is supportive of their ideas, and has plenty of his/her own suggestions. Don't 'switch off' if your suggestions are rejected - the assessors may like them! Basically, contribute and be positive.
- If you have to prepare a 20 minute presentation, using PowerPoint, work on the basis of one slide per minute maximum. If a slide takes 5 minutes to prepare, that's 1hr 40 minutes! Plan for it. Read the notes on Presentations.
- Try and be original. Possibly arrange for drinks and light refreshments for the audience members, if appropriate. Place headed note paper with your group name on it.
- Start the presentation by welcoming the audience and introducing the group.
- You might be tempted to have all group members give part of the presentation. Avoid this as it produces a disjointed presentation. Get all members up at the front for questions at the end.
- Anticipate the questions and have answers ready (that's a task you should have identified).
- Thank everyone for coming. Distribute copies of your presentation (PowerPoint) or a summary (whiteboard/flipchart).

5.8 Tests

- Tests should only be used where they aid selection, although if you have an HR department they may insist on them for consistency.
- Tests may range from a practical test, which checks that the applicant can do the job, and might include maths, typing and comprehension, to psychometric test which measure personal skills.
- Aptitude tests, which measure the person's ability to do the job, are probably the most relevant.
- Tests should be done before the interviews so that any questions arising from the tests can be asked.

What the candidate can learn

Tests

- Find out as much as you can about which tests you might have to take, and practice them.
- Ask how you will be told the results of the tests.

5.9 Meal with Senior Managers

- If the selection centre lasts for a day or more, a lunch or dinner with senior managers and previous years' successful applicants can be arranged.
- Such a meal serves two purposes:
 - The applicants are seen in another environment in which their personal skills are shown
 - It provides the opportunity to 'sell' the organisation to the applicants, some of whom may get several job offers.
- The meal can be a buffet or 'sit down', on the premises or at a local hotel or restaurant.
- Name badges for all attendees are advisable, so the senior managers know the applicants.
- One (or more) of the recruitment team needs to speak to attendees after the meal to get their impression of the applicants.

What the applicant can learn- meals with managers

- There may be a temptation at these meals to crowd round the most senior person in an attempt to impress them with your abilities. It may work but consider the senior person, would you like to be hounded by applicants telling you how marvellous they are?
- I suggest to use the meal to gain information on:
 - The organisation. Particularly its 'culture' and the personal qualities which fit in with that culture. Does it like brash and noisy or quiet and contemplative?
 - The next stages of the selection process.
- You should be able to gain this information from managers and previous selection centre candidates.
- Remember what most senior managers like talking about - themselves. Try and get some in conversation, 'What do they do?', 'How have they progressed through the organisation?', 'What sort of personality does well in the organisation?', 'What interests have they got in their spare time? Remember, if you can get them talking, they'll assess you on what they said.
- Don't drink too much alcohol (or any).
- Don't eat as though it's the first decent meal you have had in weeks - even if it is.
- Thank the managers for the meal.

5.10 After selection

- All information about the selection of an applicant should be collected onto the Applicant's Assessment Form.
- To assist selection, sections of the form can be scored, a weighting factor applied (to allow for some sections being more important than others) to give a weighted score for that section. These are added up for a total score which can help sort candidates between those whose applications are rejected and those where offers can be made (or an offer). If there are suitable applicants where an offer won't be made because there is a 'best' they could be put on hold, just in case the best candidate turns down the offer.
- Make a decision immediately after the selection centre (include this in planning) and notify applicants as soon as possible, certainly within 24hrs. If you have several selection centres, or interviews of other applicants, you should have warned them.
- Failure to decide quickly will make your organisation look inefficient, and no good applicant wants to join one of them.

6 Offer the position.

- The purpose of this stage is to make an offer of the position to the best applicant.
- Where you have specialist advice (HR, agency) it's worth asking to get the contents of the offer letter correct.
- It should certainly state:
 - The title of the position
 - The salary (or that it's a volunteering or intern position)
 - The start date (or that this is to be finalised).
 - Any specific features such as where the position is based, dress/uniform requirements, training periods).
 - Any conditions, such as proof of qualifications (state qualification and proof required) and suitable references.
- If the organisation has a policy of only allowing salary increases as part of a promotion or general (annual) increase and the offer includes a salary increase after (say) three months, depending on satisfactory performance get HR's permission for the offer. Make sure the 'satisfactory' performance has measurable targets and include them in the letter.
- Take up references as soon as they are provided. The main aim of a reference is to provide evidence of their experience and that they are a suitable person for the position offered. What you can ask the reference provider will vary with the country in which the organisation is situated. Obtain advice, or search the internet.

What the applicant can learn- the offer

- Check the offer letter thoroughly. I would be reluctant to accept a job offer that was an e-mail.
- Make sure the job title and salary are correct.
- Obey any instructions to provide proof of qualifications and permission to work in the country.
- Provide references, if not done already. Search the internet for advice on the best people to use.
- If you have been promised a salary increase based on satisfactory performance make sure the letter provides a time and specific targets which have to be met. Once in the job get monthly updates as to how well you are performing.
- If there is anything important missing in the letter, contact the organisation for a new letter. Accept nothing 'on trust'.
- Accept the offer as instructed in the letter. Keep copies.
- If you are a consultant or contractor you may need a formal order from the organisation agreeing to your terms and conditions.

How to hire...and get hired

Biography

After completing a PH.D. in chemistry at the University of Nottingham, I qualified as a Chartered Accountant at Price Waterhouse & Co.. I then joined the Boots Company PLC in 1976 and as Head of Group Internal Audit I was involved in the recruitment of qualified accountants and accountancy trainee graduates. I retired in 2003.

Websites

Since retiring, I have developed websites:

<https://www.internalaudit.biz> provides free books about risk based internal auditing.

<https://www.managing-information.org.uk> looks at information and how it is used for decision making.

<https://www.systemsimplementation.co.uk> provides advice on the selection and implementation of computer applications.

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Applicant's Assessment Form			Applicant No.		
Applicant Name:		Date of interview:	Interviewer:		
Question	Answer and comments from the interview		Assmnt	Weighting	Score
Qualifications					
Experience					
Skills					
Personality					
Other notes and conclusions not included above:					
From the meal:					
From the Group work:					
From the tests:					
Decision: REJECT/HOLD/OFFER	Offer letter sent (date):			Total	
Evidence of qualifications seen (attach copies)	References obtained (attach copies)				
Offer letter received (attach copy):					

Version control		
Date of publication	Version	Comments
28-Jun-20	1.0	Uploaded to LinkedIn and SlideShare