

Interviewing With HR: Secrets for Success

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The employment market has always been, and remains, a changeable, rapidly developing structure. For this reason today it is difficult to surprise anyone with the existence in a company of an HR department, although it is still possible to say in Russia that this practice is young.

The functions of an HR manager have radically evolved from the time of an ordinary personnel service. Today these specialists are faced with the tasks of identifying a candidate who meets a company's corporate culture: They determine the value that a new employee can bring the company, how easy it will be for them to interact with colleagues, and what areas for development the company will be able to provide them with. All these matters can be clarified in the course of an HR interview, and naturally the majority of companies are interested in holding such a meeting. At the same time, it is completely natural that such an event is stressful for the majority of job-seekers.

The proportion of candidates who are weeded out at the HR interview stage is very high. Where previously we could observe this trend predominantly in the oil and gas sector, now the palm for candidates' failing to progress after the first interview goes to IT, industry and the metal industries. Evidently, the greatest difficulties are experienced by people with a technical cast of mind.

For most candidates, the difficulty of passing an HR interview consists in the absence of presentation skills and the desire to reveal one's professional attributes and successes to a future manager. The argument is always one and the same: Why should I waste my time when the qualifications of the HR person will never be adequate for them to assess me as a specialist?

On the one hand this viewpoint is fully understandable, since however hard you try, it is only

a line manager who can go into all the subtleties, verify professional competence and describe to the future employee their forthcoming tasks. However, here once again we return to the functions that the modern HR manager has acquired in the course of the profession's evolution. Today in the majority of companies such a manager is an in-house consultant who is faced with clearly defined tasks in searching for and assessing staff. One of the most important aspects of this work is sifting out candidates who irrespective of their qualification level will not be able to fit in to the corporate culture, will not be of any benefit to the company, and will even themselves fail to derive any benefit from joining the firm.

As a representative of a recruiting company, I can offer several recommendations, and if you follow them you will be able to clear this difficult hurdle with little effort.

- Look on the HR interview seriously, perhaps even more seriously than the final interview involving your manager because it is on the results of the first that your chances of reaching the second stage depend.
- Even if you don't consider that the member of the HR service is sufficiently capable to understand the complexities of your work, it is not worth closing down and avoiding answers to their questions, for one of the assessment criteria for a future colleague is their ability to explain complex things in simple terms for a nonprofessional in a specific business area.

Further, remember that first and foremost, HR assess your business skills and your ability to fit into the corporate culture. It is for this reason that it is in your own interests to seem a sociable and considerate person.

- It is essential to be honest and open in presenting yourself. The representative of the HR service will try to understand the facts of your professional activity from the general to the particular. They will be interested in information about what the company does, what the division does and, most important, what precisely you do as a specialist. If you just say that you took part in the latest project, HR is bound to ask you about your individual contribution to it.
- Continuing from the previous point, don't forget that your CV should be as detailed as possible. It no longer suffices to give your places of work and the post that you had. HR services expect information about what precisely your company did, what your specific duties were as a specialist, how many people you supervised. It is also helpful to provide performance indicators.
- Because of the rapid pace of the discussion in which as a rule an HR interview is held, I would even compare it to a quiz. The high speed of the dialogue is imposed by the HR employee themselves, quite deliberately because at such a speed the candidate might subconsciously reveal his or her key competencies. So you can train beforehand and prepare yourself mentally for the fact that you will not be given the opportunity to speak in sentences with long subordinate clauses, but expect specific, confident and succinct answers.
- The most difficult interview stages, in my opinion, are discussions of compensation and motivation. Often, HR will ask you to give a description of your ideal job. They do this in order to understand the extent to which a candidate is suitable for the company, and the company for the candidate. For example, if your dream job provides, let's say, rapid career growth, but the company cannot guarantee that to the candidate for the post, there is a risk that the cooperation between the candidate and the company will end in disappointment for both sides.

You should be ready to be asked what your current salary is. It is not worth hiding your present compensation under the pretext of confidentiality, or for other reasons; it is most important for the HR to have an idea of the figure. It is also imprudent to gild the lily and give an exaggerated figure for your current salary because in most cases the information can easily be checked. It's much better to be honest and disclose the figure you are presently earning, and then explain, with good reasons, why you would expect more in your new job.

I wish you all a successful outcome at all the interview stages and brilliant achievements in your careers!

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