

Interview Questions: what to consider.

I must admit that I have found myself in the interviewer seat more often than in the candidate seat in my career. This has made me hyper-aware of what I am looking for. Unfortunately, I do not always get the answers I am looking for. This is not because the

candidate has answered questions wrong, but because he or she did not know why the questions were there, and what the interviewer was hoping to glean from the answers.

There are a few questions that always appear in the interview.[read more] Ideally the interviewer wants to know the truth on these, but is also likely to pass judgement on the answers that are really negative. You will almost always get asked what your weaknesses are in the interview. When I ask this question, I want to know if the candidate's weaknesses are tolerable in relation to whatever else he or she is bringing to the table. However should the response be something like "I am chronically disorganised," the scenario that passes through my head is one of a person who does not know if they are coming or going, that their colleagues are going to be constantly behind in their work because of this person. While this person might really mean that they operate in organised chaos! It is important therefore that, when answering this question, a candidate not only states the weakness, but also their method of dealing with the weakness. I am chronically disorganised, as a result I depend on my diary / phone / computer to keep me in line.

Another question that is often a trap like question is "Tell us about yourself" In many instance I have had a person give the longer version of their CV. Starting back from Primary School. This is unimportant information really. Ideally a candidate will summarise their CV in a three or four sentences, and then talk about the aspects of their career that are pertinent to the job. This is the one question where the candidate has control over the interview. He or she can use this opportunity to sell themselves. It is a place where he or she can talk about the things that are outstanding about themselves that might not come up in other questions. For instance, unless it's for a job in the tourism industry, a candidate might bring up their love of travel. This can be followed by the fact that it has opened them up to all the possibilities that exist, and that their thinking is not myopic at all. This can impress. It is also where a candidate can talk about their passion for the industry, and how this came about.

A third tricky question is the one about salary. Personally I would like for a candidate to tell me how much they want to earn. It makes life so much easier if you have an idea of the value that the candidate puts on himself. But one must be careful , as this question can also lead to the company thinking that you are too expensive if you state an amount that is too high. It becomes important than to know what the industry standards are for your job in that industry. In Lesotho however there are no clear industry standards. Salary surveys only cover companies that are interested in being a part of the survey, and unfortunately not too many participate. This is even worse in the private sector, where the salaries are often fixed by the proprietor. Furthermore, even the salary surveys that a produced are sold at astronomical prices, making those who have bought them very protective of their data.

These are merely some of the questions that populate many an interview. Having said all that, the most important thing to know is the job that you are applying for. In our hurry to attend

interviews that we have been shortlisted for, we often forget one critical step in preparation. Know what the job entails. You have a right to request of the company that they furnish you with the job description. If they are taking the time to interview for this position, it means they know what needs to be done(I hope). Having this instrument will allow you to have a greater understanding of the questions, and you can make sure that your answers are relevant. Just because the company said they need an accountant does not mean that the questions are going to be from an accounting exam, nor are the responsibilities going to be necessarily what you have found the responsibilities of the an accountant to be online. If there is no job descriptions, your asking for one will fulfil 2 purposes. It will remind the company that there is a need for one, and it will push you towards learning more about the company, and the relevance of your profession.

Remember, Mmaes, Lesotho is a unique country, how we deal with things is not necessarily how other countries deal with them. So relying on only the internet for research is a rather limiting exercise. Half of the companies in Lesotho do not have websites, and of those that do, half are not informative at all. Even the some government websites have limited information. There is need therefore to talk to people, and ask them about the company. And you know what, you can even go to the company and find out more information about them. But please, please do not do it the morning of the interview. Do it in advance. Well in advance if possible.