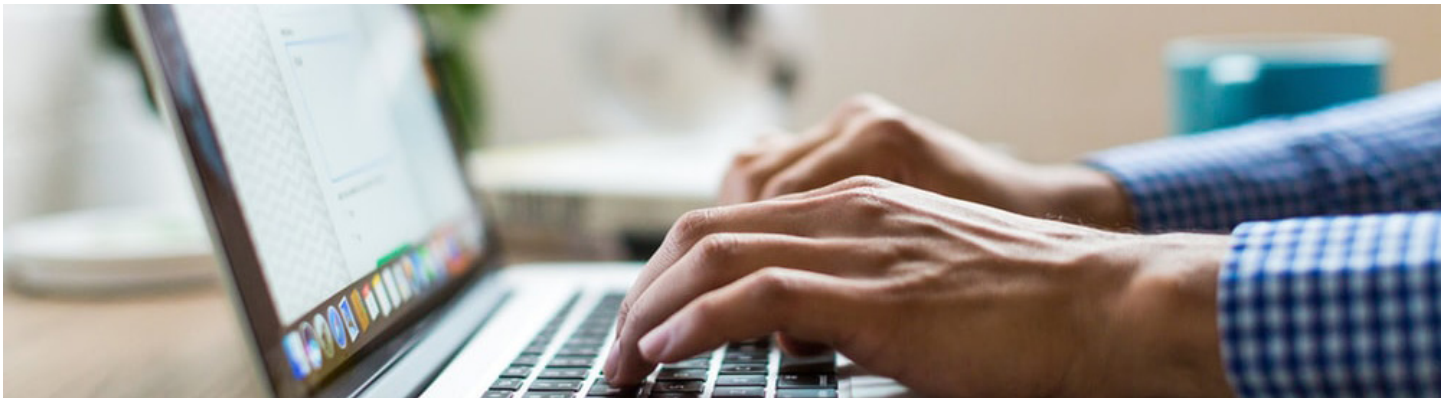


End to End Interview Guide

A comprehensive guide to perfecting your interview skills



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Preparing for an interview



Parity Consulting's Managing Director Victoria Butt, together with Parity's specialist consultants, bring you this comprehensive "Interview Guide" to assist you in fine tuning your interviewing skills, understanding how to best answer common interview questions and most importantly to prepare you for success!

A comprehensive guide to perfecting your interview skills

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The preparation process

Being prepared is the key to success in any interview

Interview preparation is one of the key contributors to your success when interviewing for a new role. It provides you with a strong level of understanding about the organisation you are interviewing with, as well as the actual role and the interviewers. Keep in mind that first impressions are vital - a personal branding specialist says you only have 7 seconds to make a first impression on someone when meeting them for the first time.

Before an interview you should always:

- Research the organisation thoroughly
- Research the interviewers
- Review your interviewers LinkedIn profile
- Know your CV and your experience

"It is a highly competitive market where there can be at least 3 - 4 qualified applicants for any one role. Therefore ensuring you are spending at least 2 hours to prepare for each interview will set you up for success"

- Victoria Butt, Managing Director at Parity Consulting

Competency based interview questions

Requires candidates to refer back to real-life situations and examples

The golden rule when you're answering competency based interview questions is to always talk around 3 things:

Context Action Result

Context is about describing a situation and setting the scene.

Action is about explaining what action you took.

Result is about detailing the outcome of your action.

Your ability to answer these questions can often make or break your interview - so we have put together a few examples for you to assist with your interview preparation:

Stakeholder Management

- Describe a time when your communication and interpersonal skills helped in dealing with difficult clients/colleagues
- Describe a situation where you were given feedback on your performance that wasn't what you hoped for.

Teamwork and Leadership

- Tell me about a time when you were the leader of a team and the team disagreed with your decision. How did you handle it?
- Give me an example of how you used your leadership skills to help your team meet a difficult challenge.

Problem-solving

- Tell me about a difficult problem you were faced with, and describe how you went about solving it.
- Describe a time when you proactively identified a problem at work, and were able to devise and implement a successful solution.

Organisation and Planning

- What was the most stressful aspect of your last role and how did you manage it?
- What specific systems/processes do you currently use to organise your day and how successful are they?

Integrity

- Have you ever had to work with or for someone who was dishonest? How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you had to stand your ground against a group decision that you disagreed with.

Achievements

- What are three achievements from your last job that you are particularly proud of?
- What is your five year career plan?

Questions to ask in an interview

An interview is a two-way street - be as active as the interviewer when asking questions

The importance of formulating your own questions for an interview cannot be emphasised enough. They are a key tool to help you better understand the organisation, the role in question and the priorities of the hiring manager in relation to the role. The right questions will help you get a better perspective on the suitability of the role and engage your interviewers with your proactive interest in employment with them. The questions below are designed to assist in your interview preparation and for you to better understand the opportunity at hand.

- How will you gauge my success in this role?
- How would I report to you in this role and what is your/their management style?
- What are the key objectives you would like to see completed in the next 3 to 6 months?
- How would you describe the culture of the organisation?
- What are some of the common attributes of your top performers?
- What are some of the more difficult challenges I could expect to deal with in this role?
- Are there any advancement opportunities available for me in this role, and within what time frame?
- How can I most quickly become a strong contributor within the organisation?
- What are one or two things that really drive results for the company?
- What makes you think I will be successful in this job?
- What causes you concern about my candidacy?
- What do you like about working here?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

We highly recommend going through these questions (and any others you may think are relevant) and making note of your answers. As well as being well prepared and having answers fresh in your mind, the notes will serve as a prompt should you begin to forget any key details or points for discussion during your interview.

Competency based or behavioural questions are based on the premise that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour

Victoria Butt, Managing Director



Tips on how to answer some of the most common interview questions

Q: What prompted/motivated you to apply for this job?

- Focus on emphasising the match between your skills/ experience and the operations/ culture of the company you are applying to;
- Demonstrate your understanding of the company and have good reasons for wanting to work there – this will show that you've researched the company thoroughly.

Q: Why are you the best person for this job?

- Bearing in mind the specific requirements of the role, emphasise what you can offer to your potential employer, rather than what they can do for you;
- Choose 2-3 of your most unique qualities that you think set you apart from other candidates.

Q: Why did you leave your previous role?

- Whatever your reasons for leaving your last job, do not talk negatively about your previous employer;
- Focus on your future, and ensure you sound positive and optimistic as you elaborate on your chosen career goals.

Q: What would you describe as your key strengths?

- Focus on skills your potential employer is looking for (i.e. from the job description);
- Elaborate on your chosen strengths, using examples from your past experience.

Q: What would you describe as your main weakness?

- Present some of your minor weaknesses - not the ones that will greatly impact your ability to do the job;
- Alternatively, mention areas that you were once slightly weaker at, but which you have been working on and improving;
- With any weakness you mention, ensure you emphasise your awareness, willingness and efforts to improve.

What if you receive a counter offer?

Counter offers are common in today's market where talented applicants are becoming scarce.

In many cases, companies suffer a "knowledge gap" when people leave and it is costly for them to hire and train new employees. Therefore if they offer you a counter offer, you will most likely need to make a difficult decision, particularly as there can be ties which make it harder to leave a familiar environment. It is only natural to think about the trusted relationships you have built, as well as the knowledge of the existing role, current travel arrangements and the comfort factor these points bring.

In many cases, an employer will make a "counter offer" where you are asked to stay. This may cause you to re-think your options, especially if there are more favourable terms offered. You may have gone into the process knowing a counter offer would be extended, or it may come as a complete surprise. If you find yourself in this position, keep in mind there would have been a compelling reason that made you decide to look for a new career opportunity - you would have initiated a search for a change in circumstance or career prospects.

Research, as well as results from our 2019 Salary Survey findings, show that in most circumstances, money is not the key motivator in a person looking to change their career, and often it does not address the compelling reason for a change. Results from our 2019 Salary Survey also highlighted that career development and progression were the top motivators to move roles for both Product and Marketing professionals.

A salary increase as part of a counter offer, may seem attractive on paper, however a five or ten thousand dollar increase, when calculated equates to \$20 - \$40 per day respectively before tax. Is this likely to make a significant impact on your lifestyle?

Statistics have shown that 80% of those who accept a counter offer, will still leave their current role within 6 months. This is because the same circumstances that caused you to consider a change are likely to repeat themselves in the future, even if you accept a counter offer.

Ask yourself what the core reason that led you to decide to start looking for a new opportunity. It is often the case that when an individual makes that initial decision to move, it shows that they have a focus on finding the right career opportunity for themselves. We advise that you maintain that focus, as well as your initial decision, when considering a counter offer over a new job opportunity.

Top tips to prepare for an interview in Product Management, Marketing, Communications & Digital

The connection you have with the interviewer remains a significant part of a successful result. With today's increased expectations, you have to do so much more to demonstrate your ability to succeed in a role and secure an offer of employment. We have compiled a few key points to help you in your interview in Product, Marketing, Communications or Digital:

Make a 30, 60 and 90 day plan

This includes your role strategy, BAU activities, short and long term goals, key stakeholders, NPD and innovation and professional development.

Most interviewees may not feel they have enough information to complete this accurately at the first interview stage but you can provide a relatively generic plan and tailor it as much as possible. This demonstrates your engagement and willingness.

Know your numbers

As a Product, Marketing, Communications or digital professional, you must be able to recite your numbers in your sleep:

- How has the product grown since you have been running it?
- What is the growth rate?
- What is the budget and portfolio size?
- What is the history of the commercials?
- What was your involvement in Campaign X?
- How did you measure the success of Campaign Y?

Have an answer to the question "Tell me about yourself?"

Opening questions like this can be surprisingly hard to answer in an interview situation. I would suggest you talk to the interviewer about yourself for a couple of minutes (family, children, hobbies, travel) and then provide them context in a positive way as to why you are meeting with them. This is not an elevator pitch but a short story to help you connect to the interviewer and start the interview on a lighter note.

Know your strengths and development areas

While it might seem antiquated, this old school line of questioning has come back in full force. With emotional intelligence becoming increasingly important in hiring decisions, the interviewer will be looking to establish how self-aware you are about your development areas.

Lean on existing connections

Have a clear understanding of the business strategy, recent reshuffles and any challenges for the business you are interviewing for. You can do this by speaking to ex colleagues or contacts you have who currently work for the business. Be targeted in what you ask them and do not be put off by disillusioned or disenfranchised ex colleagues.

Ensure you have examples for competency based questions (refer to our examples!)

Rehearsing your examples for key product management and marketing activities is crucial. I would suggest you have at least 2 examples for:

- Working with difficult stakeholders;
- New product development, project management and closing a product;
- Completing a task you do not agree with;
- Influencing virtual teams;
- Negotiating with sales and pricing simultaneously;
- A marketing brief you developed for a recent marketing project or program.

Provide evidence of your work

If it is in the public domain, take copies of your work and leave them with the interviewer. If this is not in the public domain, take hard copies of your work and ensure you take them back from the interviewer before you leave. While they may not have time to read it, they will get a good sense of your style and communications.

Have at least 10 questions to ask

Many of your questions will be answered in the interview, however if you have 10 questions prepared you will be guaranteed to have 2-3 left over at the end. Ensure these questions are important to you and be mindful of which questions you might ask members of staff. See Parity's suggested questions on the previous page.



Video Interview Tips

It is important to prepare for video interviews just as you would for a face to face interview. Following Parity's video interview tips will assist you in presenting your best self during your next video interview:

Before your interview:

- Potential distractors - If you don't live alone, eg with parents, kids, housemates etc, let them know that you have a video interview and that you will need privacy and a quiet environment;
- Pets – Make sure they won't be in a position to distract you;
- Research the company, just as you would before you go into a face-to-face interview; and
- Practice your interview – If you can, ask a friend to help you and record the interview so that you can review and critique yourself (how you sound, look, position yourself). Continue to practice until you feel comfortable that you are portraying your best self.

Appearance:

- Dress appropriately:
 - Wear solid colours, but avoid white if possible; and
 - Avoid patterns – Wearing patterns may create the illusion of movement and distract the interviewer from focussing on you.
- Glasses - If possible, wear glasses with an anti-glare coating to avoid the reflection of the computer. This will also enable the interviewer to see your eyes.
- Makeup – If wearing makeup, use anti-shine makeup to avoid looking shiny/sweaty.

Video Set Up

- Select the optimal place to set up, taking into account background and lighting:
 - Background – Neat and simple (avoid a completely white wall, as it can be too plain);
 - Lighting – Your face should be clearly visible and the background should be well lit. You may need to adjust your blinds/window coverings or use lamps - make sure that the light is facing you directly (not under, above or behind you).
- Keep the camera at eye level – This may mean you need to put your laptop on top of something (eg books, box);
- Don't sit too far away from the camera – arm's length is ideal;
- Avoid sitting on swivel chairs, you are more likely to move while sitting on them;
- Audio – Check your audio levels beforehand and make sure there are no loud noises around you.
- Key consideration:
 - Empty rooms will create echo, therefore being in a furnished room will decrease any sounds of echo. Being in an empty room may sound ok to you, but it will definitely echo to the interviewer!
- Make sure your internet connection is strong and steady – connecting your ethernet cable will be a better option than relying on a Wi-Fi connection.
- Use post-it notes or have key information opened on your computer – this will help you remember key points, answers to potential questions or questions you may have for the interviewer.
 - Note - if you are using your computer to view your notes, ensure you can still see your interviewer on the screen when

Things to remember during the interview:

- Body language – do not slouch, squirm, yawn etc. A video interview should be no different to a face-to-face interview.
- Smile! Don't forget to smile!!!
- Don't stay too quiet - be present and always try your best to reassure the interviewer that you are listening.
- Technical difficulties should be addressed immediately, you may need to end the call and redial.



Who are we?

Parity Consulting is a specialist recruitment consultancy, providing recruitment solutions across Product, Marketing, Communications and Digital functions. Building strong networks and relationships with both our clients and applicants, Parity Consulting was founded on the principle of equality between all partners in the recruitment process. Parity's consultants offer refined, specialist industry knowledge and well-established networks, providing personalised recruitment solutions across the Banking, Asset and Wealth Management, Financial services, Commerce, FinTech and Software industries. Corporate members of the RCSA and awarded BRW's Top 100 Fastest Starters in 2015, Parity is dedicated to contributing to its community with its *Parity Plus* offering of exclusive events and initiatives.

Parity Plus is a value-add initiative designed by Parity Consulting to contribute to our clients and applicants skills development and industry knowledge. We regularly partner with industry leaders and specialists to provide opportunities to engage with and learn from market leaders at the cutting edge of industry transformation. This series is a complimentary service for our clients and loyal applicants who are also dedicated to investing in their own professional development and that of their teams and is the first of its kind facilitated by an Australian based recruitment company specialising in Product, Marketing, Communications and Digital.

Meet our consultants

Are you looking for new opportunities?

Our team of consultants at **Parity Consulting** would love to hear from you.



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