



Crossing Thresholds Module 3

Succeeding at Interviews

Agenda

Day 1

Morning:

- Individual progress updates
- Developing your unique personal brand
- Interview tips
- Structuring your answers

Afternoon:

- Interview practice and coaching
- Practice interviews in small groups
- Peer feedback
- Next steps and review of the module

Suggested activities in addition to your self-directed day resources

Individual Activities

Update your CV or résumé using the principals you learned in the facilitated day, adding your personal brand.

In Peer Groups

Share your personal brand with each other and develop further.

Refine and develop your brand statements, and practise with your peer group different ways of talking about your strengths.

Go through the sample questions and think of headline statements for each.

Give each other feedback on your CVs.

Think of questions you haven't answered well in past interviews, and share ideas for how to answer them more effectively.

When you have time

Talk to senior people about what things they are looking for in interviewees and what kinds of questions they like to use when interviewing others. Also, what tips they have when being interviewed.

These are our suggestions – if you have other ideas, either individually or as a Peer Group, please feel free to pursue them

Five Achievements

List your 10 most satisfying achievements ever (personal and/or work related).

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

From these 10, pick the five which you are most proud of. Write a short description of each below. (Think about not just what you did but how and why you did it.)

1
2
3
4
5

Working in pairs - use this page to take notes about your partner

Listen to your partner's descriptions of the 5 achievements she has chosen to write about. As you listen, make notes below of what you are hearing (words or phrases) about her skills, personal qualities, behaviours, values and any other observations she might find helpful:

Once she has described all 5 achievements, feed back to her, based on your notes above and agree together three distinct words or phrases which capture her unique approach:

1

2

3

Use the space below to take notes of your partner's comments about you:

Use the space below to develop three distinct words or phrases which capture your unique brand:

1

2

3

Five Achievements Activity

Set up

The facilitator will put you into pairs

The Activity

- Listen to all of the other person's stories
- Make note of the personal qualities, attributes, skills, traits, values and behaviours you are hearing about
- When all stories have been told, describe what you have heard, especially common themes or distinct messages
- Swap roles



Developing Your Personal Brand

What are the three distinct statements that best capture your personal brand?

Take the three words or phrases you identified in the 5 Achievements activity and develop them into three statements. Think of phrases or sentences, e.g. **“I bring out the best in the people who work for me”**; **“I can take complex concepts and make them easy to understand”**; **“I have a structured and methodical approach to my role”**; **“I can be relied on to deliver on time and within budget”**; **“I stay focused on the long-term goals”**; **“I’m known for my ability to create high-performing teams”**; **“I remain calm and focused when things don’t go according to plan”**; etc. Then elaborate as appropriate – here are some phrases to help you: **“By this I mean...”**, **“What this looks like with me...”**, **“The way I put this into practise...”**, **“How I do that is...”**

Statement 1:

Elaboration:

Statement 2:

Elaboration:

Statement 3:

Elaboration:

Preparing for Interviews

3 Top Tips

How to stand out from the crowd at interviews

1 Inhabit the role you aspire to

- Imagine yourself in the role and describe what you see from the inside looking out rather than from the outside looking over/up. If you can see yourself in the role it is more likely that the interviewers will be able to as well.
- Use declarative rather than tentative language. Be able to describe your vision for what you would want to achieve in this role, and what you see as the key challenges.
- This positive frame of mind will convey a level of confidence which is reassuring to interviewers.

2 Take responsibility for getting your story across

- Don't leave it to the panel to draw out your story - have a clear and coherent narrative about why you are the right person for this role. Convey your strengths and attributes (your 'brand') in a matter-of-fact way.
- You know what the questions are going to be about - use each one to build up a coherent picture of your fitness that differentiates you from others. Practise your answers with a mentor or colleague, and use their feedback to hone your story.
- Have strong, relevant examples and back up every assertion with evidence. Don't just talk about what you did - talk about the result/outcome and the difference you made.

3 Hand it to them on a plate!

- Make the implicit explicit! Rather than simply giving an example (however good) tell your audience what this illustrates about your skills and abilities.
- Demonstrate how transferable these skills and experiences are to the role you are interviewing for. Show how the past relates to the future and translate the specific examples into generic qualities, insights and behaviours: "This example demonstrates my ability to...", "From this I learned..."
- Help your audience to join the dots - make everything you say relevant to the role you are interviewing for.



Interview Question

Imagine that you are in an interview and you are asked this question:

"Tell me about a time when something didn't go according to plan and how you dealt with it."

Write down the **first sentence only** of your response to this question.

Structuring Your Answer

How do you put these tips into practise? Here is a simple way to structure your answers that can transform your responses and increase your impact.

Headline

A high-impact statement which summarises your typical approach to this situation

Example

- Situation
- Objective (what you were trying to achieve)
- Action (in particular what you did)
- Result

Elaborate

3 Key Points

Relevance

Making sure the interviewers understand the relevance of your answer and examples to the job you are interviewing for. (E.g. “And this illustrates how in any situation I am able to.....”)



Interviewing for Your Ideal Job

What's the job you want to practise interviewing for?

What are the three key priorities/challenges of this job?

1

2

3

What relevant attributes would you bring to address these key priorities/challenges?

1

2

3

Why Do You Want this Job?

Use HER to structure your answer, with a **Headline**, **Elaboration (3 key points)** and **Relevance**

H

E

E.1

E.2

E.3

R

Prepared Question

What example question would you like to be asked in your practise interview?

Practise your answer using **Headline**, **SOAR** (Situation, Objective, Action, Result) and **Relevance**:

H

E

R

Sample Questions - Behaviours

Seeing the Big Picture

- Tell me how you have brought your vision to life in your work area?
- Tell me about a time when you responded to a challenge to the business direction/ strategy, in a way that made you feel really on top of things?

Changing & Improving

- How have you overcome challenges you have had introducing something new?
- Tell me about creative, different solutions you have tried. How did this work out?
- How would you remain resilient if your work suffered several setbacks?

Making Effective Decisions

- Talk me through a mistake or something you did wrong in your previous job
- Tell me about a time when you used analysis to inform decision making?

Leadership

- Tell me about a time when you felt you'd really achieved something as a leader
- How would you make others feel confident in your abilities?
- How would you go about motivating a demotivated team?

Communicating & Influencing

- Do you communicate differently with different people?
- Tell me how you would ensure that complex messages are understood by all?
- How would you overcome challenges of working with colleagues who disagree with your viewpoint?

Working Together

- Tell me about a time when you have successfully negotiated a mutually positive outcome?
- How would you go about building an inclusive team?

Developing Self & Others

- How have you built a capable team, using all its combined talents?
- How would you deal with a member of staff who was struggling to learn the job?

Managing a Quality Service

- What achievements have you made with regards to service improvements?
- Tell me about a time when you have prevented service slipping when resources were tight?

Delivering at a Pace

- Tell me about a time when things went wrong and how you approached this?
- How would you remain focussed if deadlines were moved up and you had to deliver much quicker than you were originally expecting?

Sample Questions - Strengths

Strategic (Seeing the Big Picture)

- Are you someone who considers themselves to be strategic?
- 'Being strategic is one of the most important elements of leadership' to what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Problem Solver (Changing & Improving)

- Do you enjoy being presented with tricky problems?
- 'It is better to solve problems quickly rather than procrastinate' to what extent do you agree with this statement?

Analytical (Making Effective Decisions)

- Would other people say you are good at using evidence to make decisions?
- 'Decisions are only effective if they are approached in an analytical way', to what extent do you agree with this statement?

Inclusive (Leadership)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement 'You need a variety of talents, experiences and backgrounds to make a good team'?
- Do you enjoy getting to know people who are very different to you?

Explainer (Communicating & Influencing)

- Imagine you need to explain a complex rule to a customer, how would you go about this?
- What kinds of information do you find difficult to communicate?

Relationship Builder (Working Together)

- Imagine that you had to work with someone where the relationship had broken down. How would you rebuild trust?
- Are you someone who considers yourself to be good at building relationships?

Learner (Developing Self & Others)

- Are you someone who enjoys learning about new areas of work?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement 'It is essential to always keep learning, otherwise we stagnate'?

Organising (Managing a Quality Service)

- Are you someone who considers yourself to be organised?
- Imagine you need to plan a piece of work. How would you go about this?
- Do you enjoy setting goals and checking progress against plans?

Adaptable (Delivering at a Pace)

- How easy do you find it to embrace change?
- What kinds of situations lead you to be inflexible?
- What did you do the last time the goal posts shifted significantly on a piece of work you were working on?

Interview Practice in Small Groups

Set up

- 1 The group will decide the order in which you will be interviewed.
- 2 The facilitator will be the **interviewer** and interview everyone in turn.

The Interview

- 3 The **interviewer** will ask questions to allow you to practice the learning from today, asking:
 - Why do you want this job? (Headline, Elaboration [3 key points], Relevance)
 - Example question(s) (Headline, Example [SOAR], Relevance)
- 4 Everyone else should take notes about how the **interviewee** has put the tips and HER structure into practice during the interview.

Giving Feedback

- 5 We will always start with the **interviewee**.
- 6 The facilitator will invite one piece of positive feedback from each member of the group.
- 7 Feedback could include using the HER structure, successfully getting their brand across to the panel, using declarative language, inhabiting the role, taking responsibility for their story or handing it to the interviewer on a plate.
- 8 The facilitator, starting again with the **interviewee**, will ask everyone for one piece of feedback on how the **interviewee** could have an even greater impact.
- 9 The **interviewee** should take notes on all feedback provided.



Feedback

Name:

What worked well:

Areas for development:

Name:

What worked well:

Areas for development:

Name:

What worked well:

Areas for development:

Name:

What worked well:

Areas for development:

Name:

What worked well:

Areas for development:

Name:

What worked well:

Areas for development:

