Preparing for your telephone interview
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Workbook

Exercise one: Draw your Life Timeline

Preparing some specific examples in advance can dramatically improve your chance of success in the interview. We find that candidates often focus their interview answers on a narrow range of experiences. In order to give the best answers, it is sensible to think about all the different sources of examples you could refer to.

Complete this exercise to help you identify a broad range of experiences from which to choose answers to questions. Draw your life timeline over approximately the past three years. Plot any experiences that come to mind. In particular, include successes, failures and challenges you’ve faced. These can be in any area of your life e.g. academic, work experience, clubs, societies, sports, voluntary work, hobbies, helping others or personal situations.

Whilst it’s unlikely you’ll be able to answer every question using the life timeline, it’s a useful tool to refer to. Plot your experiences based on:
- Your age when they happened (horizontal axis);
- How enjoyable/Successful versus how unpleasant/disheartening they were (vertical axis).

**Point to note:**
KPMG interviewers focus on examples you’ve had in the last two to three years, so draw from these if you can.

**Example timeline**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Graduation - 2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Ski season - hosted event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>UCLA - second year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Unil - final year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Tempe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Unil - second year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

**Blank Timeline**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Graduation - 2:1</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Tempe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Unil - second year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
Exercise two: Creating a structured interview answer

Now you’ve had an opportunity to think about where your interview examples could come from, it’s time to practice creating a detailed answer to a competency based question.

Pick an example from your Life Timeline to answer the question “When have you dealt with an angry person?”

In our presentation on telephone interviews, we explained the STAR technique. Using this structure, write out your example below:

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Result:

Now compare your answer to our example provided on the next page. How specific is your situation? Did you describe exactly what you did to overcome the issue? How did the other person react?

A word of warning:

Do not read your pre-prepared answers out word for word in a telephone interview. Have some bullet points in front of you, but try to deliver your answer naturally, varying your tone and pausing as you would if it were a face to face interview.
Example answer structured using STAR

Question: “When have you dealt with an angry person?”

**Situation:**
Last winter I worked as a chalet host in the French Alps.

**Task:**
One of my roles was to welcome guests as they arrived from the airport. One week the guests’ flight was delayed by 5 hours. They were very tired and unhappy when they arrived at the chalet. One man got angry and started shouting at me about the delay and the lack of information from our reps.

**Action:**
I asked my colleague to continue welcoming the other guests and offered to show this man to his room myself and to help him with his luggage. This got him away from the other guests. As we walked up the stairs I asked him questions about his journey and sympathised with him about the delays. This allowed him to voice his frustration and after four flights of stairs he had calmed down. I told him I’d investigate the airline complaints procedure and invited him to join the other guests downstairs for a drink.

**Result:**
He relaxed and had such a good week that he booked to come again later in the season. He wrote some very nice things about the service he received from me on our feedback form at the end of the week.

**A word of warning:**
Obviously don’t use this actual example in your interview – your interviewer will not be impressed!

**Exercise three: Career Research**

We want to know that you really understand what being a trainee business advisor entails. We don’t want to take risks on people who have not done significant research, because being a business advisor is tough.

If we are going to invest in your training and development, we need to know you’ll stick at it – not leave because the job or study turned out to be too difficult or not what you were expecting.

What research should you do before your interview?

- Research KPMG itself thoroughly;
- Ensure you are up to date on the profession and industry developments;
- Understand what the role of a trainee and qualified business advisor entails.

Our website has a wealth of information, profiles and case studies. Make sure you investigate this thoroughly. However, there are many other online sources you can use to obtain useful information. Spend 20 minutes gathering specific information from sites such as:

- Accountancy Age
- The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers
- Professional exam bodies e.g. ICAEW, ICAS, CIOT
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Recent press articles
- KPMG Annual Report
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Summarise three facts you found interesting from your research below:

Make sure you use a wide range of sources to find out as much about us and what we do as you can.

Contact Us

kpmg.co.uk/careers
facebook.com/kpmgrecruitment
ukfmgraduate@kpmg.co.uk
twitter.com/kpmgrecruitment

+44 (0) 500 664 665
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