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COACH



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“THE EASY INTERVIEW SOLUTION”

How to standout, survive and succeed through
the job interview process

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First published in 2019 by: James Perry

James Perry FCA, MSc, BSc
accountingexamcoach.com

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/accountingexamcoach>

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamesperrycoach>

Accounting Exam Coach Podcast - available on Anchor.fm, Spotify, iTunes and other podcast platforms



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Introduction

You have worked for hours on your CV, sent it out to recruiters, and managed to line up some interviews. Optimistic or Fearful? Fear not, even the smartest and most qualified job seekers need to prepare for their job interview. Interview skills are learned, and there are no second chances to make a great first impression.

You have heard the good old saying "Fail to prepare, Prepare to fail!" Therefore the REAL way to succeed at interviews is by taking the time to prepare in advance so you can craft the perfect answers, do yourself justice and display your high levels of competence!

I've been in Senior Management in Global Accounting Practice, Industry and Public Sector, Lecturing in University, then leaping into entrepreneurship by setting up my own Global Accounting Coaching Business "Accounting Exam Coach", and my "James Perry Presents" Networking Brand and Public Speaking.

Throughout my career I have applied for several high-level positions, have interviewed lots of people for job roles, dealt with numerous recruiters and have coached clients through the interview process for graduate and professional positions. I have been on both sides of the fence.... "Been there, done that and worn the tee shirt."

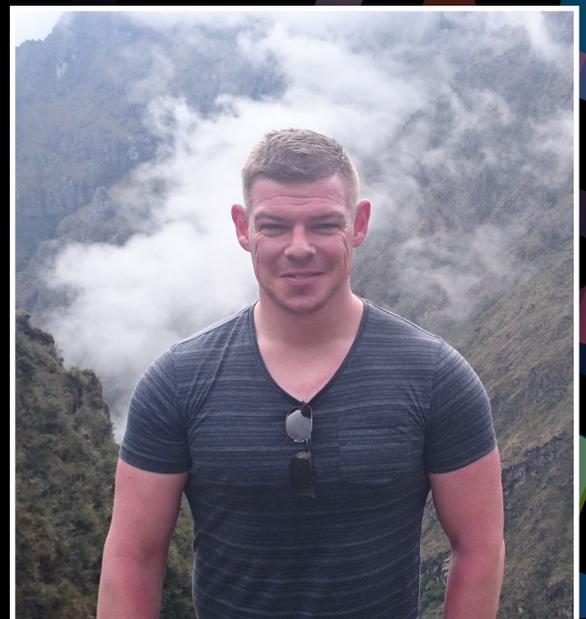
This short book will explain some of my observations as both the candidate and interviewer and will inform you of the initial steps, types of interview, types of questions and top tips to help you obtain that position to achieve a rewarding and worthwhile career in Accounting, Finance or Otherwise!

Reading this book will give you some very valuable and practical insights. As you go through it, I want you to keep at the forefront of your mind the following 2 questions:

- *What preparation do I need to do before the interview?*
- *How do I effectively execute during the interview to ensure success?*

To Your Success and Good Luck!

JAMES



The Preparation Phase – Your Initial Homework

➔ Before the interview, before you script your answers, think of the following:

1. Put yourself in the Interviewer shoes

It's tough being an interviewer, so think about what the interviewer is looking for - experience v qualifications v company culture?

Most candidates, however, only think about themselves, so think about the Interviewers state of mind.

- i. What does the ideal candidate look like and say in their eyes?
- ii. What are the behaviours and personality traits this position requires?
- iii. What type of language would someone in this role use?

2. Do you have all the info to hand?

Job Description, Employee Specification, Your CV, A copy of your Application Form, Location & Time? How many on the Interview Panel?

3. Find out the interview format in advance

Traditional? Competency based? Assessment Centre? Psychometric Testing? How long is the interview?

4. What's your objective?

Why do you want the job? Is it the right fit?

5. Research and Prepare – look at both the company, industry and interview panel

- ✦ Annual Reports
- ✦ Newsletters
- ✦ Press
- ✦ Google
- ✦ LinkedIn
- ✦ Website
- ✦ Call them
- ✦ Interview Panel – Backgrounds, Positions in the company, Any common interests?

6. What are you going to say?

Make a list of the points you want to make -

What examples are you going to use?

What are your strengths?

How does this match to the Recruitment Ad/ Job Description/ Employee Spec?

Do you have to bring a portfolio of your work and/ or qualification certificates?

The Development Phase

- Sit Back and Think

→ After you have done your initial homework, the next stage is to expand your thinking and work on the following...

What Types of Interview?

1. One on One Interview – informal and less stressed?
2. Panel Interview – more formal, more stress?
3. Sequential Interview – One to One conversation with lots of different people – remember they will be comparing notes! Each person will be looking at a different aspect of you!
4. Telephone Interview – keep your CV and application form to hand. Take the call in the quietest spot you can find in private.
5. Competency Based Interview – Becoming the norm! This interview type is meant to test exactly that: your competence. Some interviewers may be more interested in your experience or previous qualifications, what a competency-based interviewer really wants to know is whether you have the right skills to take the position on.

Skills that employers look for when recruiting.

- ❖ Teamwork
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Communication skills
- ❖ Decision making
- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Problem-solving
- ❖ Organisation/ Planning
- ❖ Goal orientation

Make sure your answers are more impressive than everyone else's! Include strong real-life examples – why were you so important in that particular scenario?



These are the most important factors that influence interviewers

1. Personality and how you present yourself at interview
2. Experience
3. Qualifications
4. Background/ References
5. Enthusiasm

First Impressions

Nonverbal cues - Use nonverbal cues to subtly signal that you are a high-value candidate

1. How are you going to dress? What is the dress code in the organisation?
2. Be on time. When you arrive go to the bathroom and freshen up!
3. Stand straight, smile, initial handshake & eye contact – with EVERYONE! From the minute you go into reception!

Verbal cues

1. Polite Conversation - What do you say on way to the interview room?
2. Introduction & Small Talk with the interview panel – what to say? What is your opening greeting? Do not waffle!
3. If you're an introvert, adopt an extrovert persona for an hour or so in order to talk about yourself in a comfortable manner.

Nerves - How does it affect you? Adrenalin or Paralysis? How to manage it -

1. FEAR – how do you cope?
2. Start meditation – you can also do a mini meditation before the actual interview
3. Rehearse and practice – MANY times in advance. In front of a mirror or with family/ friends – get them to make things difficult for you
4. Breakfast before interview
5. If you shake – think about putting hands together during questions. Always ask for a glass of water to stop dry mouth and taking sips of water buys you some time during questions
6. Take deep breaths during the interview process

The Execution Phase - How do you Present Yourself & Answer Questions?

Now the crucial part! How to execute on the big day?

1. **SELL YOURSELF!** Draw up and learn your elevator pitch. A 30-second chat about you, who you are, what you offer, what you can bring to the business, your strengths and skills.

2. **Confidence** – You have done your preparation and research, now go and do yourself justice. Do not have a low opinion of yourself! But there is a fine balance between overconfidence, professionalism, and modesty. Don't be arrogant.

For example: "I don't know, I only used that software it a few months" **MUST** become "I have used that software for a number of months, and I know it well"

3. **Energy** – be upbeat, speak clearly (not monotone), shake hands & eye contact, sit straight, smile, hands in your lap, both feet on the ground. Mirror your Interviewer. Be interested in what the interviewer is saying & don't interrupt the interviewer when they are speaking.

4. **Practice, Practice, Practice** – also practice your pauses & breathing. Have a trusted friend sit down with you for a practice interview. Give them your elevator pitch and get them ask you some typical interview questions, and ask for honest feedback.

5. **Listen!** And only answer the question asked

Let the interviewer know you heard what was said. If you fail to relate to a specific issue, you not only don't answer the question, but you also miss an opportunity to prove your ability and talk about your skills. It's a given that you should use professional language during the interview.

6. **How to craft your responses -**

- ⌘ Before you arrive at the interview, pick out the key skills highlighted in the job description.
- ⌘ Work out potential questions for each key skill
- ⌘ More than 1 pre-prepared example of how you've displayed that attribute.

Find the question behind the question by thinking about;

- i. What is their concern?
- ii. What other information does this question give them?
- iii. Are they testing to see if I'm familiar with the job's responsibilities?

- ⌘ Respond to questions positively
- ⌘ Do not use one-word answers – Use plain English, elaborate, but don't waffle!
- ⌘ Use a wide variety of compelling examples where possible, including during your education, any previous employment or work experience, and in your daily life in general.
- ⌘ Use specific & concrete examples of achievements/ challenges/ successes **RELEVANT** to the job description to back up everything you say.
- ⌘ State facts & be concise
- ⌘ Don't lie. They will ask questions, and any embellishments will be quickly found out.

Using all the above, craft your response to perfection is to add a compelling story. 3 steps to do this –

- i. Start with a broad opening - Set the stage with some high-level background to let the interviewer know what you're going to talk about before diving into the details.
- ii. Then, get really specific - Now, transition into a short story with only the relevant details.
- iii. Highlight the important takeaways
Lastly, get broad again and highlight the key takeaways.

Different Types of Questioning

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1. Hypothetical – “If X happened, what would you do?”
2. Technical – How to tackle a problem/ process
3. Stress – Deliberately put you under pressure

Top 5 Popular Questions

Can you tell me a little about yourself?

This question seems simple, so many people fail to prepare for it, but it's crucial. Give your Elevator Pitch—one that's concise and compelling and that shows exactly why you're the right fit for the job. Start off with the 2-3 specific accomplishments or experiences that you most want the interviewer to know about, then wrap up talking about how that prior experience has positioned you for this specific role.

How did you hear about the position?

This is actually the perfect opportunity to stand out and show your passion for and connection to the company. For example, if you found out about the gig through a friend or professional contact, name drop that person. If you discovered the company through an event or article, share that. Even if you found the listing through a random job board, share what, specifically, caught your eye about the role.

What do you know about the company?

Start with one line that shows you understand the company's goals, using a couple key words and phrases from the website, but then go on to make it personal. Say, “I'm personally drawn to this mission because...” or “I really believe in this approach because...” and share a personal example or two.

Why do you want this job?

Again, companies want to hire people who are passionate about the job, so you should have a great answer about why you want the position. Identify a couple of key factors that make the role a great fit for you then share why you love the company (e.g., “I've always been passionate about XXX, and I think you guys are doing great things, so I want to be a part of it”).

What are your salary requirements?

Do your research on what you should be paid and state the highest number in that range that applies, based on your experience, education, and skills. You're communicating that you know your skills are valuable, but that you want the job and are willing to negotiate.



Top 10 Tough Questions

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1 What's your management style?

The best managers are strong but flexible, and that's exactly what you want to show off in your answer. Think something like, "While every situation and every team member requires a bit of a different strategy, I tend to approach my employee relationships as a coach..." Then, give specific examples.

2 Why should we hire you?

This interview question is intimidating! Craft an answer that covers three things: 1. That you can not only do the work, you can deliver great results. 2. You'll really fit in with the team and culture. 3. That you'd be a better hire than any of the other candidates.

3 What are your greatest professional strengths?

Share your true, specific and relevant strengths, not those you think the interviewer wants to hear. Then, follow up with an example of how you've demonstrated these traits in a professional setting.

4 What do you consider to be your weaknesses?

The interviewer is really trying to gauge your self-awareness and honesty. Strike a balance by thinking of something that you struggle with but that you're working to improve. For example, maybe you've never been strong at public speaking, but you've recently volunteered to run meetings to help you be more comfortable when addressing a crowd.

5 Tell me about a time you exercised leadership?

You'll want to choose an example that showcases your project management skills or one that shows your ability to confidently and effectively rally a team. Show how you were a leader in a particular situation and how it represents your overall leadership experience and potential.

6 How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?

Choose an answer that shows that you can meet a stressful situation head-on in a productive, positive manner and let nothing stop you from accomplishing your goals," says McKee. A great approach is to talk through your go-to stress-reduction tactics (making the world's greatest to-do list, stopping to take 10 deep breaths), and then share an example of a stressful situation you navigated with ease.

7 What is your greatest professional achievement in your current role?

Nothing says “hire me” better than a track record of achieving amazing results in past jobs, so don't be shy when answering this interview question! Use the S-T-A-R method with this one - The SITUATION and TASK that you were required to complete, spend most time describing what you did (ACTION) and achieved (RESULT)

8 Tell me about a challenge or conflict you've faced at work, and how you dealt with it.

This is a behavioural interview question – the interviewer wants to get a sense of how you will respond to conflict. Anyone can seem nice and pleasant in a job interview, but what will happen if you're hired and people start getting in your face?”. Again, you'll want to use the S-T-A-R method (as above), being sure to focus on how you handled the situation professionally and productively, and ideally closing with a happy ending, like how you came to a resolution or compromise.

9 Where do you see yourself in five years?

Be honest and specific about your future goals. An interviewer a) if you've set realistic expectations for your career, b) if you have ambition and c) if the position aligns with your goals and growth. It's OK to say that you're not quite sure what the future holds, but that you see this experience playing an important role in helping you make that decision.

10 How would your boss and co-workers describe you?

First of all, be honest (remember, if you get this job, the hiring manager will be calling your former bosses as references). Then, try to pull out strengths and traits you haven't discussed in other aspects of the interview, such as your strong work ethic or your willingness to pitch in on other projects when needed.



Top 3 Questions You Should Ask

The questions you do/ don't ask can say a great deal about you and have a significant impact – It may tip the balance between you and another candidate.

When asked if they have any questions, most candidates answer, "No." Part of knowing how to interview is being ready to ask questions that demonstrate an interest in what goes on in the company.

Choose 3 of these questions to ask -

- ❖ How would you describe the general culture of the company and the workplace?
- ❖ Why did you choose this company?
- ❖ Will there be any form of training provided?
- ❖ What are some of the biggest challenges/successes facing the department currently?
- ❖ Are there many opportunities for professional development/ promotion within the company?



Assessment Centres - How to Cope?

One of the most accurate predictors of future performance. They typically comprise of

- Initial presentation by the employer
- Case studies
- Group exercises (for example presentations)
- Individual exercises (for example aptitude tests/ psychometric tests/ in-tray)
- Interview (technical or competency)
- Role play and simulation exercises.

Assessment Centre Tips

Preparation Equals Success - Know the company and role inside out

Take every practise numerical/verbal reasoning test you can find on the internet e.g.

- Psychometric Testing
- Verbal Reasoning
- Numerical Reasoning
- Abstract Reasoning
- Inductive Reasoning
- Watson-Glaser
- Logical Reasoning
- Personality Tests

- ❖ Be a team player
- ❖ Speak up, don't be quiet, interact – especially during lunch and dinner!
- ❖ Don't be bossy
- ❖ Be a diplomat
- ❖ Be assertive during group and individual exercises
- ❖ Try to draw others into group discussions.



The Easy Interview Solution Checklist

- ✓ Research thoroughly the company and industry.
- ✓ Be clear on the reasons why you want the job.

- ✓ Practice, practice, practice in advance of the interview.
- ✓ Don't worry about sounding "rehearsed".
- ✓ Have a positive and growth mindset.
- ✓ Bring a copy of your CV to every interview.
- ✓ Take ownership and responsibility for the interview.

- ✓ Have the right body language and tone of voice.
- ✓ Remember the 3 Cs during the interview: cool, calm, and confident.
- ✓ Be polite - Smile, Hello, Please, Thank You, Goodbye
- ✓ Get on the same side as the interviewer – find a common interest.
- ✓ Make the most of the "Tell me about yourself" question.
- ✓ Score a strong answer in the first five minutes.
- ✓ Make sure you "Sell Yourself"
- ✓ Prepare for common interview questions.
- ✓ Anticipate the interviewer's concerns and the potential "awkward question".
- ✓ Prepare your questions for the interviewer at the end.
- ✓ Close on a positive note.
- ✓ Send a thank-you email.

- ✓ Ask for feedback
- ✓ Don't give up!



SO..... WHAT NEXT?

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Whether you are at the first year of your Accounting Degree, sitting your Finals for your Professional Exams, or a seasoned Professional you need to continually improve and develop. The world of Exams, Accounting, Business and even Life changes at an alarming rate and you must adapt with it to remain successful.

The key to your success lies in your own hard work, commitment and resolution. Now that you're supercharged to succeed, you have to do something about it! You must take the first step, put into action what you have read here. The worst thing to do is just to read this and do nothing.

Like I have said a highly credible professional qualification, such as an Accounting qualification will provide you with the opportunity to climb the career ladder, fulfil your professional potential and get what you are worth. It really is your "Career Passport" and I would throw "Life Passport" into the mix as well.

I would love to help you smash through any barriers you many have, through Exam Coaching or Career Coaching. I have been there; done that and worn the T shirt and I completely understand what you're going through and what support you need.

I work with Students around the World at both University and Professional Level who want to make a significant breakthrough in their Accounting exams to enable them to reach their true potential. I also work with Qualified Professionals who want to take practical no nonsense steps to climb the career ladder to the success they deserve.

If you are serious about achieving significant progress in your exams and/ or further develop your career, I invite you to contact me for a free initial consultation. In this consultation we'll explore where you are right now, what is stopping you, and an initial outline of what steps you need to take to ensure your success. I will let you know how I might be able to help you achieve the results you desire.

Why not get in touch and arrange a FREE, no obligation initial consultation with me?

Let's see how I can help you.

JAMES

James Perry FCA, MSc, Bsc
accountingexamcoach.com

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/accountingexamcoach>

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamesperrycoach>

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