



A4 Plus



**JOB INTERVIEW TIPS AND TECHNIQUES**

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## General

These tips and techniques are provided as general guidance for interviewers and interviewees and predominantly relate to permanent positions as opposed to temporary work assignments. Please bear this in mind when reading and simply utilise the advice you feel most applicable to your situation. Please refer also to our other sections; sample interview questions / answers, sample interview letters / templates and second interview guidelines.

Job interviews are easier for the interviewers and the interviewees if you plan and prepare questions and answers, and use proper interviewing techniques.

Good job interview processes and methods increase the quality of people in an organization. Poor job interview methods result in poor selection, which undermines organizational capabilities, wastes management time, and increases staff turnover.

Many interviewers and interviewees are keenly interested in 'tough' interview questions and certainly interviewees need to prepare answers for 'tough' questions (see relevant section/document). However, from the interviewer's perspective asking 'tough' questions is not usually helpful. Interviews should not place undue pressure on interviewees, because people tend to withdraw and become defensive under pressure. We learn more about people when they relax. It's better therefore to focus on 'good' interview questions rather than 'tough' ones. Good interview questions encourage interviewees to think about themselves and to give the interviewer clear and revealing information as to the interviewee's needs, capabilities, experience, personality, and suitability for the job. The best interview questions are therefore the questions which most help interviewees to reveal their skills, knowledge, attitudes, and feelings to the interviewer.

Effective interview techniques, and the processes surrounding interviews, apply to all situations involving candidate selection, whatever the position and situation.

## INTERVIEW TIPS - FOR INTERVIEWEES

Research as much as you can about the company - products, services, markets, competitors, trends, current activities, priorities.

Prepare your answers for the type of questions you'll be asked, especially, be able to say why you want the job, what your strengths are, how you'd do the job, what your best achievements are.

Prepare **good questions to ask at the interview.**

Related to the above, request a copy of the company's employment terms and conditions or employee handbook before the interview, in order to save time covering routine matters during the interview – check such matters with a member of staff at A4 Plus.

Assemble hard evidence (make sure it's clear and concise) of how what you've achieved in the past - proof will put you ahead of those who merely talk about it.

If you have one other interview lined up, or have a recent job offer, or the possibility of receiving one from a recent job interview, make sure you mention it to the interviewer.

Make sure your resume/cv is up to date, looking very good and that A4 Plus have the most recent edition.

Get hold of the following material and read it, and remember the relevant issues, and ask questions about the areas that relate to the organisation and the role. Obtain and research: the company's sales brochures and literature, a trade magazine covering the company's market sector, and a serious newspaper for the few days before the interview so you're informed about world and national news. Also worth getting hold of: company 'in-house' magazines or newsletters, competitor leaflets, local or national newspaper articles featuring the company. Speak to A4 Plus for some help here.

Review your personal goals and be able to speak openly and honestly about them and how you plan to achieve them.

Ensure you have two or three really good reputable and relevant references, and check they'd each be happy to be contacted.

Get into an enthusiastic, alert, positive mind-set.

Try to get some experience of personality tests. Discover your personality strengths and weaknesses that would be indicated by a test, and be able to answer questions positively about the results. (Do not be intimidated by personality testing - expose yourself to it and learn about yourself.)

Think about what to wear.

### **ASKING FOR THE JOB**

In certain circumstances, especially for sales and commercial roles, there might be an expectation or opportunity for you to 'close' or ask for the job, which is potentially the most powerful question of all to ask.

If you really want the job and can accept an offer there and then, there is often a lot to be gained, and very little to be lost, by asking for the job at the end of the interview, although bear in mind the effect that this tactic has on salary negotiation.

Obviously it's only appropriate in certain situations; notably towards the end of the recruiting process when the interviewers have seen all the candidates, or if the employer has more vacancies than they can easily fill.

Similarly, it's reasonable to ask for a second interview, or to be short-listed, if that's the next stage in the process.

Persistence and determination are highly valued attributes, logically in sales and selling organisations, but also beyond the sales functions. In fact some job candidates successfully take the method to extremes and simply do not take no for an answer, virtually camping out on the employer's doorstep until they are eventually brought in from the cold and offered the job. The decision-maker, typically an owner-manager or CEO in such situations, is finally forced to concede that if the person wants the job that badly then perhaps they'll be rather a good bet after all. This sort of determination is often associated with loyalty and commitment - and uniqueness - which can all create a compelling case for decision-makers who are attuned to this sort of style, particularly if other candidates are thin on the ground.

While these extremes are not for everyone, anyone is entitled to ask for a job that they really want. Plenty of offers are not made because the interviewer doubts the seriousness or commitment of the interviewer. Asking for the job at least largely rules out that possibility.

Added to which, certain types of managers and directors (the ones who would normally ask for the job at their own interviews for example) respond positively when an interviewee looks them straight in the eye, pauses for dramatic effect, and says earnestly,

**“I want this job. Make me the offer and I’ll take it here and now.”**

It’s not really a question, it’s more of a statement of intent, and lots of decision-makers like to hear it.

As ever having other options - other interviews lined up, or even another offer - is helpful and can add an extra bit of pressure to your push.

If you fancy using the ploy, it’s also worth thinking about exactly what you want to say. Decision-makers certainly like to hear that you like their organisation (that you’d not be inclined to be this determined were it any other employer) and that there are one or two compelling reasons for your wanting to do a great job for them, so it’s worth thinking about how you might weave a few simple supporting points into your final coup de grace.

An employer or interviewer who is keen on you, who has satisfied they’ve been through the proper processes, and who knows or believes that you have other options, will sometimes give you the job offer there and then if you ask firmly and professionally for the job. Which of course saves a lot of time for all concerned, so if you feel like asking for the job - any job in fact - the approach is not limited to sales and commercial positions - then go for it.

### **SALARY NEGOTIATION TIPS FOR JOB INTERVIEWS**

A4 Plus will negotiate salary packages on your behalf but include the following as general guidance / information.

The best time to negotiate salary is after receiving a job offer, and importantly before you accept a job offer - at the point when the employer clearly wants you for the job, and is keen to have your acceptance of the job offer. Your bargaining power in real terms, and psychologically, is far stronger if you have (or can say that you have) at least one other job offer or option. A strong stance at this stage is your best chance to provide the recruiting manager the justification to pay you something outside the employer’s normal scale.

If there’s a very big difference between what is being offered and what you want, say more than 20%, you should raise it as an issue during the interview for discussion later (rather than drop it as a bombshell suddenly when the job offer is made). Do not attempt to resolve a salary issue before receiving a job offer - there’s no point. Defer the matter - say you’ll need to discuss salary in due course, but that there’s obviously no need to do so until and unless the company believes you are the right person for the job. “Let’s cross that bridge when we come to it,” should be the approach.

A job and package comprise of many different things - unless the difference between what’s offered and needed is enormous (in which case the role is simply not appropriate) both sides should look at all of the elements before deciding whether salary is actually an issue or not.

The chances of renegotiating salary after accepting a new job, and certainly after starting a new job, are remote - once you accept the offer you’ve effectively made the contract, including salary, and thereafter you are subject to the organization’s policies, process and natural inertia.

A compromise agreement on salary, in the event that the employer cannot initially employ you at the rate you need, is to agree (in writing) a guaranteed raise, subject to completing a given period of service, say 3 or 6 months. In which case avoid the insertion of 'satisfactory' (describing the period of service) as this can never actually be measured and therefore fails to provide certainty that the raise will be given.

If you are recruiting a person who needs or demands more money or better terms than you can offer, then deal with the matter properly before the candidate accepts the job - changing pay or terms after this is very much more difficult. If you encourage a person to accept pay and terms that are genuinely lower than they deserve or need, by giving a vague assurance of a review sometime in the future, you will raise expectations for something that will be very difficult to deliver, and therefore storing up a big problem for the future.

## **JOB PROMOTION INTERVIEWS TIPS**

For interviewers and interviewees, much of the information above is relevant to job promotion interviews.

These tips chiefly focus on interviews rather than group selections. Attending group selections for job promotion is a different matter, which are briefly commented on below:

Group selection enables the employer's selection panel to observe behaviour and interaction in a group situation. Job promotion candidates in these situations should therefore behave in a way that will impress the selection panel, **in areas which the employer logically expects the group selection process or exercise to highlight**. Here are the sorts of behaviours that impress when demonstrated by group selection candidates: responsibility, integrity, leadership, maturity, enthusiasm, organisation, planning, creativity, noticing and involving quiet members of the group, calmness under pressure, and particularly discovering and using other people's abilities in order for the team to achieve given tasks.

The remainder of this item concerns job promotion interview situations.

For interviewees, the same principles apply as in new employer job interviews. Interviewers commonly assess interviewees according to their own personal style and approach - people like people like them. For example: friendly people like friendly people; results-driven people like results-driven people; dependable reliable passive people like dependable reliable passive people; and detailed correct people like detailed correct people.

As an interviewer, when interviewing try to see the interviewee according to their own frame of reference not your own - you will make a fairer assessment.

As an interviewee be aware that even the most objective interviewer - even if aided by psychometric job profiles and applicant test results - will always tend to be more attracted to applicants who are like them, rather than applicants who are unlike them; it's human nature.

When as an interviewee you attend promotion interviews, your answers should be orientated to match the style preferences of the interviewer. Try to see things in the way they see them, and express your answers and ideas in language and terms that they will relate to and understand. Don't distort the truth or make claims you cannot substantiate or deliver - show that you understand how your boss and/or the interviewer sees the situation, and how they see that the job needs to be done successfully.

Rebels and mould-breakers are rarely promoted because they are seen as a threat or liability, so if you have rebellious tendencies it's a good idea to tone them down a little for the promotion interview. In the rare case that a distinctly mould-breaking individual is required for the role, such a requirement will be stated, then by all means go for it, all guns blazing.

At promotion interviews, interviewers particularly expect to hear the applicant's **practical and cost effective ideas and plans** for the new job. As the candidate, be able to demonstrate how well you understand the business and the organization. This requires that you do some research. Avoid the common tendency to think that internal candidates already know what they need to and therefore have a better chance than, for example, an external candidate. If an external candidate has done their research they will impress the interviewer more than an internal candidate who hasn't.

Doing some research - above and beyond your normal sphere of responsibility and operation - demonstrates your potential, and particularly your capability to **make a difference** in the promoted role, which for most promotions is a strong requirement. If it isn't a requirement then it's a big advantage over another candidate who hasn't thought outside of the box, so to speak.

Doing good imaginative research, especially looking at organisational and departmental threats and opportunities, also enables you to prepare and ask great questions of the interviewer, which regardless of the way the interviewer handles the interview, provides you with a great way to show your potential.

If appropriate, your ideas can be fresh and innovative (especially if the interviewer is innovative and creative themselves), but you must above all be able to demonstrate a clear grasp of 'cause and effect', and the importance of achieving a suitable return on investment or effort.

Promotion almost always involves having responsibility for making decisions about the use of time and resources. Interviewers need to be convinced that you understand how to handle this responsibility - to identify priorities, to focus effort in the right direction, to manage efforts productively - as if you were using your own money.

Demonstrating **clear knowledge and interpretation of policies, processes, rules, standards, and a firm and diplomatic style when supervising others**, is crucial for promotion into most first-line management or supervisory roles.

Demonstrating an **ability to plan, organise and achieve effective implementation (of plans, changes and objectives)** is crucial for promotion into most middle-management positions.

Demonstrating an **ability to initiate and optimise strategic activities, giving strong return on investment** is crucial for promotion into most senior positions.

Demonstrating huge personal commitment and enthusiasm, together with complete and utter loyalty to your boss and the organization, are always essential factors for successful promotion interviews. Loyalty and commitment are essential. The interviewer must be able to trust you to the extent that they will stake their own reputation on your commitment and ability.

The ability to adapt and be flexible as priorities and circumstances change around you, is also essential for promotion into most supervisory and management roles. Interviewers will not promote children or people with baggage or issues - interviewers promote mature grown-up people. People who will lighten the management burden, not add to it.

It is important to convey convincingly that **regardless of the challenges that occur on the way, you will always strive relentlessly to achieve your aims and objectives - and that you will never, ever, let your boss down.**

If you really believe it and feel it, look the interviewer in the eye and say: **“Give me this opportunity, and I will repay your faith in me to succeed in this job.”**

## REFERENCES AND CHECKING REFERENCES

As an interviewee it's good to prepare your references in advance, and give the interviewer a list of your referees with names, positions, employers details, and all possible contact details – this is usually performed by A4 Plus. Try to identify (and agree cooperation in advance from) referees who will be happy to give you a positive reference, and in so doing, who will support your personality, skills, performance and job history claims. Provide as many referees as you need to cover the important aspects of your performance and employment history, plus any specific critical requirements of the new job (accreditation, record, training, vetting, etc). A healthy list of referees would normally be between three and five people. It seems a lot, but it's more impressive than just a couple; it shows you've thought about it beforehand, and it builds in a bit of leeway for when people cannot be contacted or fail to respond quickly for any reason.

Generally the more senior and credible your referees the better. It's perfectly acceptable to list one or two referees from your private life rather than work, especially if they have a job or status that carries important responsibility (councillors, police, etc)

If you know that a particularly significant and favourable referee might be difficult to contact, ask them to provide you with a 'to whom it may concern' open reference letter as to your character and history, signed by them, on letterhead - and preferably use and keep hold of the original copy - ask the interviewer to take a photocopy and give you back the original.

As an employer - employers should always follow up and check successful job interview candidates' references. Not to do so is irresponsible, especially if recruiting for jobs which carry serious responsibilities, such as working with children, disabled people, sensitive data, money, valuables, etc.

You must inform or ask permission from the candidate prior to checking their references.

The extent and depth to which references should be checked depend on the situation and the referees given by the job applicant. Certainly make job offers conditional to satisfactory checking of references, and if as an employer you are not happy about the referees provided then ask for others.

Checking references can be a very sensitive area, so care needs to be used. Many referees will not be comfortable providing personal information about a person, not least due to fear of defaming someone and the liabilities concerned. Postal reference checking is an alternative to telephoning, although many referees feel less comfortable effectively making a written record of negative comments, and may be more forthcoming in a telephone conversation.

Refusal by a referee to provide a reference about someone is obviously not a helpful sign, and considerable positive feedback from reliable alternative referees would normally be required to proceed with a job offer following such a response.

Bear in mind also that the referee may have their own agenda. Take care to interpret carefully any personal comments which might stem from personality clash. Try to concentrate on facts with evidenced examples rather than opinions.

References should definitely be checked concerning job-critical areas (relevant to the new job for which serious liabilities might exist if candidate is not telling the truth), as should any areas of suspicion or doubt that cannot be resolved/proven for sure at interview.

And for everyone, irrespective of satisfaction with interview answers, it is important to check some basic facts with past employers to ensure that the candidate has not been telling a pack of lies.

Possible areas to check (a sort of checklist - not a fixed agenda):

CV/career history, dates, salaries.

Qualifications and training.

Personal details, age, etc.

Claims about achievements and performance in past jobs.

Personality and relationships at work.

Domestic situation, financial situation.

Seek local qualified advice from your HR department or advisor if in doubt, and also if you want to use a postal reference checking method, since most HR departments will already have a standard approved document for this purpose.

### **TIPS ON WHAT TO WEAR FOR INTERVIEWS**

You'll see various research and general advice concerning what best to wear for job interviews. The sort of clothes, styles, colours, shoes, make-up, accessories, etc., are likely to have the best effect. Standard rules for dress code at interviews are mostly common sense: be smart, coordinated, clean, tidy, relatively under-stated - however you can go further than merely adopting the standard recommendations to wear blue or grey suits, black shoes, white, cream, pale yellow and pastel colours for shirts and blouses; and to avoid black (too funereal - unless your interview is with an undertakers), bow-ties, Elton John specs and deer-stalker hats.

You can take a more sophisticated approach to your choice of dress and style at job interviews. Your best choice of dress, clothes, colours and style at interview should actually depend on the role and what surrounds it.

For example, blue is thought by many people to represent formal business professionalism, which is fine for 'professional' job opportunities, but a smartly pressed blue business suit and crisp white shirt and tie won't help you much in an interview for a role requiring care and compassion, working outdoors in all weathers, managing down-to-earth labourers, being bubbly and creative, or teaching disaffected kids.

What we wear should be an extension of our personality of course, but also importantly, **indicates to the interviewer our ability to recognise what the employment situation and job requires.**

No-one ever got a job because of the way they dressed whereas lots of people fail to get jobs because 'something' about their appearance put the interviewer off - maybe just a bit - but enough not to get the job.

Dress in a way that projects your personality, sure, but not to the extent that your appearance is inappropriate to the situation. For adventurous dressers, especially going for jobs that might call for a spark of individuality, it can be a fine judgement. A lot depends on the interviewer too - innovative interviewers in industries that are amenable to flair will respond more positively to people who look different. But process-orientated decision-makers in structured environments will prefer people who look safer. If in doubt err on the safe side.

Employers want people who can do the job - that's a given - but they also badly need people who will 'align' and fit in - people who can 'get the beat' of the organisation and department. Empathy, trust, rapport, are all built on this initial platform, and what you wear and how you style yourself provide a great opportunity to start putting these foundations in place with the interviewer. Your interview dress code and visible styling help you show the interviewer (it's a conscious and unconscious effect) that you understand the organisation's style and how to fit in with it; that you can adapt appropriately to your environment - it's a valuable ability and there's nothing to be achieved by creating doubts in this area.

So when you next prepare for a job interview, try to orientate your choice of clothes and style to that of the employer, and also to the way the interviewer perceives the role. Consider also the type of job and the service sector, and particularly the personality, skills and behaviour that is required in the role: For example is the role mainly extravert or introvert, detailed or conceptual, creative or processing, conforming or innovative, etc., and how does this affect the way you should be styling yourself and dressing for the interview?

If it helps you decide what to wear, think about how the existing employees dress. Does the employer have a conservative attitude and culture regarding dress code, or is the culture more modern and relaxed. It is as unhelpful for you to be dressed too conservatively and professionally as it is to be dressed not professionally enough. Try to get an idea of what people wear in the organisation so that you can reflect, within reason, the tone and style that fits in with the employer and the interviewer's expectations. Do the men wear ties or not? Do the women wear suits? Do they 'dress down' on Fridays? (This is particularly relevant if you happen to go for an interview at their offices on a dress-down Friday, when prior knowledge will help you to tone down a little and avoid sticking out like someone who doesn't fit in because they've not had the sense to find out before-hand.) Go see or ask if this will help you to feel more confident.

On the point of going and seeing, especially if you know very little about the organisation, it's often helpful to get a feel of the place and the people before deciding that the organisation is actually worthy of your talents and commitment. If you live close enough to the organisation's offices or site it makes good sense to visit their reception or sales office as part of your pre-interview research, when you can pick up a few brochures, feel the atmosphere, and form a view of staff attitudes and style, etc. This will also give you a good indication of their dress code, especially if you visit when people are arriving or leaving work. Lunch-time visits are interesting too - at the start of breaks and when people return to work. It's amazing what you can hear and learn sometimes, simply sitting in a busy reception for a few minutes or approaching a reception desk and asking for a brochure.

As regards your own appearance for interviews, consider any jewellery and other bodily adornments too. No-one ever got a job because they wore an outrageously big fat diamond ring, or a nineteen ounce gold chain over their shirt, but I bet there'll have been plenty of people who've not got jobs because they've erred on the wrong side of this particular judgement. For the same reason, the number of body piercings displayed at interview is generally inversely proportional to the chances of successfully attracting a job offer, unless the job happens to be in a body piercing studio.

Tattoos are another interesting area. Attitudes to tattoos are certainly more tolerant than twenty years ago: even main board directors these days commonly will be hiding a little dragon or butterfly somewhere intimate on their person, however, given two equally-matched candidates at a job interview or group selection, the one with the short sleeves and naked ladies up each forearm is unlikely to get the nod. Safest bet - especially for customer-facing jobs (literally face-to-face) - is not to show too much tattooed skin at interviews unless you are very confident of yourself indeed.

The reality unfortunately is that most people, including interviewers, will tend to judge you with their eyes, not least because interviewers know that their customers and staff will do too. And, like all business decisions, recruitment decisions reflect on the people making them. Therefore when you are being interviewed the interviewer is not only deciding whether you can do the job, they are also deciding whether choosing you will reflect well or not on their own reputation. The less you challenge this area the more likely they'll feel comfortable deciding in your favour. Use your common sense.

So, if the role and the organisation calls for someone to conform and behave according to strong corporate style and expectations then dress accordingly. If the role and the organisation calls for individuality and fresh ideas then you have more licence to dress more individually, but still beware. It remains that most employers and interviewers, whatever they might say about welcoming fresh blood and challenging new ideas, will always tend to err on the side of caution. Interviewers generally don't knowingly take risks - they prefer safe options - safe non-threatening people, who appear and dress in a safe and non-threatening way.

I'm not saying you've got to become a de-humanised clone for the interview, or that there's no place for individuality, on the contrary actually - you've got to look good (and extremely smart too if it's called for) - and aside from this there certainly is a huge need for individual thought and behaviour and innovation in all organisations - but that's **after** you've got the job and settled in. You've got to **get the job first**, and you'll do that most easily by appearing immediately like someone who'll fit in rather well, not by looking like someone who marches to a different tune or has no idea how to adapt to their environment.

Clothes, style, colours, jewellery, hair, like anything else that represents you as the applicant (just as the quality and presentation of your CV for example), should project the 'fit' and congruence between yourself and the employer and the interviewer's requirements for the job, and also show that you can understand different situations and behave accordingly. Individuality is great, but the job interview is not really the best place to start displaying a highly individual dress style, unless the role specifically calls for it, which in truth is very rarely indeed.

Look good, but under-stated. Project yourself and your personality in what you wear, but above all show that you are aware of what's going on around you, and that you can adapt to the situation and present yourself appropriately.

### **DO YOUR RESEARCH BEFORE ALL JOB INTERVIEWS**

A final note about the importance of researching the employer and their markets and issues before interviews.

First, research can enable the least qualified, least favoured, least likely applicant to succeed and beat off the most likely interview opposition candidates. Doing good relevant research is the single most powerful thing you can do to improve your chances of getting the job. It's that important. No research, no views. No views, no value. No value, no job. It's simple: Do your research and apply your experience, capabilities and thoughts in preparation for the interview and you will have good views that will be valued. If you offer good value you'll probably have the job.

Second, the above applies to **any** organisation or employer with whom you have an interview; any size, any sector, commercial, not-for-profit, even the corner shop. **If you want the job - do the bloody research.** This is not to say that people who don't do their research don't get jobs, but the fact is that any person who's done good research and thinking will virtually always get the job over someone who has not bothered to.

If you are an external applicant bear in mind that you are likely to be up against at least one good, favoured, known internal applicant, who already knows and understands a lot about the organisation. Your aim is to present yourself as a more attractive option than the internal applicant. You will do this by researching the employer organisation so well that you know it better and more incisively and more strategically than the best of the internal applicants. Your objectivity and neutrality, and your external experience, will enable you to see many things that even the best prepared internal job applicants cannot see. Use this opportunity to make a great impression on the interviewer or panel.

If you are being interviewed for an internal job promotion, bear in mind that the best external applicants will be doing all they can to demonstrate that they have a keen knowledge and appreciation of the employer organisation and its markets, etc. If you are complacent and think that you know it all already then you will be bitten on the bum. Someone from the outside will impress the interviewer more than you because they will seem keener, and will be seen by the interviewer to have a fresh pair of eyes too, which can be very appealing to recruiting organisations. When preparing for an internal job promotion interview or groups selection you have a great opportunity to ward off any threats from external well-researched applicants by doing lots of your own research and thinking. This will put you ahead of external applicants because you will also have the internal political and systemic insights that are so difficult for external applicants to discover.

Internal or external job interviews - whatever - do your research.

Doing plenty of good quality creative research on the employer organisation, their history, market sector, products and services, people issues, organisational priorities, strategic challenges, competitors, threats opportunities, challenges, etc., helps enormously to convince an interviewer that you are the applicant who wants and deserves the job more than anyone else.

Imagine you are a strategic advisor - remove yourself from the detail and grind of the job role basics. Go deeper - think about what's going on in the department or organisation at a higher strategic level, or whatever aspect of performance that your capabilities can best understand and influence - think about and be prepared to talk about how you can bring **best possible benefit and value** to the situation.

Interviewees who possess good knowledge and understanding are able to ask really good questions about the role and the organisation. They can discuss how to develop and improve performance, how to exploit opportunities, diffuse threats, and to help the department and the organisation meet their aims.

You will be asked questions, obviously, many of which will invite you to demonstrate all the fantastic research and thinking that you've done, and the ideas that you have for helping the organisation and its people to perform well and improve.

If the interview is for a customer service or management role particularly, then having some first-hand experience as a customer or prospective customer yourself (if only from the point of view of having made a tentative 'customer enquiry' or requested a brochure) will often provide you with lots of ideas for commenting helpfully on how the organisation performs, and potentially for improving services and quality, or morale or competitive edge - whatever your research and thinking and expertise lead you to conclude. This applies just as much to internal applicants as external interviewees - don't assume you know it all. See things from the outside. See things from the perspective of the customers or clients of the organisation.

All this is part of very necessarily researching the organisation before attending the interview. Interviewers love to meet people who are passionately interested in their business and have taken trouble to do some homework and thinking. If you an external applicant, doing good research before the interview gives you your best opportunity to demonstrate what you can bring to the role, and that this is more than the internal applicants can bring. If you an internal applicant, doing good quality research and meaningful thinking, especially from an outside perspective (no-one else on the inside will be doing much of this I assure you) is your greatest opportunity to surprise and delight the interviewer about your terrific capabilities and potential, and leave them wondering why you weren't promoted a long time ago.