Welcome back everyone, to our connecting to people series. We're completing our interview today with Steven Hoban, the service director of commercial services, group recruitment division. Last bit, we're discussing how to stand out in your CV and in person. So if you missed it, you should catch up on some valuable info.

This week though, we're moving on to interviews. If we have successfully pieced together, all the advice you've given us, Steven, then we should have a strong network of connections, a good looking and effective CV. And we're standing out of the crowd. This should lead us to an interview. When you get that interview, do you have any practices or tips, for before that interview to settle, any nerves?

Interviewing, I suppose, in, in a fear level is tamped them out to public speaking. Um, and I think one thing that is. Very important again, is, is that preparation? So, and there's a belief probably that, oh, I've no idea what they're gonna ask me. And you, you, you might even hear the term competency based interview. You know, you're gonna attend a competency based interview. So usually the job description will.

Tell you, the, the competencies are, if you're working through an agencies, it's absolutely nothing wrong would say at the agencies. You know, if it's gonna be a competency based interview, can you find out from what the competencies are? Um, so then between the job description and the competencies, which are usually the softer skills teamwork, for example, you can start to get a feel for how, how the interview might go.

You can't necessarily adapt straight away for. Style will be, whether it'll be, you know, a dragons den style interrogative interview, or whether it'll be much more informal interview, but what you can do is start to understand, well, I understand what the job is, and I understand the top four or five job will do.

And I also, from the job description, I understand. The key competencies they're looking for. So in the same as everything you can prepare for that. Now that's not to say there might always be, you know, a curve ball or there might be something else, but you, you generally know that their questions one way or another are gonna be about those first five or six things that the job description outlines.

And at some point they're probably going to cover. Can you give me examples of, and then go through what the competencies are. So you can practice and mentally rehearse the laws and mentally rehearsing them inevitably leads to a better performance on the deer. So you could, for example, if you were not so senior and you were entering the water place for the first time, try and find, uh, an adult or someone in a position of authority, or even if not, then a friend, uh, who you can.

Go through a mock interview scenario with, and, you know, get used to that idea. They can almost even ask them to be a little bit awkward, be a little bit obtuse, you know, ask them to push you a little bit further and, you know, going through those things, practicing 1, 2, 3, 4 times, you will inevitably get better at your answers.

Um, the, if for more experienced people, then certainly you. Even then you might find someone who's had a, a really, um, solid career with one employer, for example, and then just finds through redundancy or GE location that this is the first time they've attended interviewing X number of years. It could be equally, um, nervewracking for them, regardless of, you know, their perceived experience and the amount of times they might have done this.

And again, even at that level, Rehearse rehearse and practice, you know, understand that. What they'd be looking for you to do is, is answer the question concisely. If you don't understand the question, there's absolutely nothing wrong and it's not a sign of weakness and it certainly shouldn't be held against you to turn around to the interview and say, sorry, I don't really understand what you're asking me.

Is there any chance you can clarify the. Or repeat the question if you didn't quite get it and they should do that. Absolutely happily. Um, likewise, in terms of just trying to keep yourself under control, particularly when, if you do find this sort of interview, public speaking type thing, very nerve wracking, then answer the question and then.

Clause that down by saying, has that answered the question or would you like me to go into more detail because there's nothing worse and it's very easily done if people are nervous, is that they, you know, well, we'll just talk and talk and talk after being asked a question and they might have answered the question relatively quickly, but you don't need to answer every question with a, you know, a 20 minute, a 20 minute response.

So again, just trying to think. You know, can I be, can I be concise while still making sure I've answered all the points the individual wants to? And that again, to some extent, comes down to rehearsal a particular technique. I always like to adopt or have adopted in the past is I answer, I always view the question from a.

A larger environment to specifically what I did. So one of the things people often do is answer with, we have done this, or we have done that. And, and obviously the client wants to know that, but they also particularly want to know what you've done. So you may, for example, if you're talking about a project.

So it may be that you turn around and say, as part of the project team, we implemented a new recruitment, uh, customer relationship management tool. We had multiple work streams and we delivered it on time within budget. My specific role as part of that project team was to manage the trans, the transition of the data from the old system to the new system.

And I worked with a small project. Team that I managed to deliver that on time. So again, you've gone from a kind of, this is what we did in a macro sense down to a micro of what I did and that wholes true, really with competency based questions. So if somebody says, for example, uh, can you, can you give me an example of where.

You've demonstrate a teamwork and you might turn around and say with our, within our organization, we work on multiple projects simultaneously, and we are often members of different teams to deliver that. One of the biggest projects we delivered is, and I would go on and see a customer relationship management tool.

Again, my specific one, and that was actually pulled together. And manage a small team of individual that responsible for transfer in the work and this involved managing individuals who were on multiple locations were in different hours across different time zones to make sure the work was delivered.

So that's to get an example of how you would adopt an overarching view and then a, a specific as to what I did. So that kind of speaking in the first person about what you specifically did is something definitely to bear in mind.

Fantastic. Thank you. Before you've interviewed anyone. Are there qualities you are hoping to see? What are the first things that you notice about candidate?

See, if I imagine this scenario in an old school environment where someone's attended the office, if you like, and maybe it'll be the future again, who it was. If, if somebody had arrived 10, 15 minutes earlier, when I went to collect them from the waiting room or the meeting room or wherever they were there.

That, that would be the first thing you would notice. Again, body language is important. Um, but you know, not everybody loses confidence, not everybody swaggers into the room and you know, it probably wouldn't be appropriate if everybody did. I mean, you may, for example, Expect a, a sales guy to do it, but would you necessarily expect, um, perhaps I dunno, an auditor or a finance business partner to come in with the same swagger?

Um, so that confidence certainly needs to be there, but it doesn't need to be over the top, but yes, approaching somebody. With a welcoming smile, you know, a nice handshake, not a wrist breaker, but you know, a good firm handshake, uh, a warm greeting, you know, thank you for your time or hi. Hi Jeff. It's really nice to meet you.

Thanks for taking the time to do, um, those sort of things do do inevitably made people relax more. Um, and, and oddly enough, the more nervous the. The candidate looks then, then almost in many ways, the harder the interview becomes because you know, you can almost feel like you, you, to some extent, want to take it easy on that candidate because they're clearly very, very nervous, so tricks that candidates can learn to try and hide their nerves.

Is is just working on, um, many the way you see, you see politicians that will, you know, mixing with their hands are CASP in front of them when they're delivering awkward messages or whether they'll, you know, mixing whether they hold their fingers and thumbs together, as they point forward. And, and politicians have been ed for many years as to hide micro behaviors in their hands of body language.

Now I'm not suggesting that we all need to become body language experts, but it is worth being aware. Of, you know, sitting up straight, for example, uh, if you do fidget with your hands, then put your hands somewhere that will help you stop fidgeting. That might just be resting them on your knees that might be placing firmly together.

Um, Brando, for example, my daughter was born for a. Uh, an interview just for, for one of her colleges and she has a, a, she, she rings her hands together. So, you know, I've kind of explained to her to just try and make sure that she might just keep one hand on her ring and, you know, turning the ring in her finger, for example, might replace the, the general fidgeting of our hands.

Um, so it's, it's kind of just thinking, well, how can I, you know, what can I do that might just stop me moving around? You know, sit, sit firmly in the chair, get comfortable, try not to move around once you've adopted a comfortable position, put your hands somewhere where they're not going to be, you know, overly fidgety.

If that's something that you do. Likewise, if you find. You are, you know, a bit more theatrical, the nature and your arms fly all over as you're talking then gesticulating with your arms is absolutely fine, but just be aware if you do it too much and try and minimize those sort of things. Um, but no, generally speaking it's about the warmth of an individual people do, do like confident people.

And, you know, being warm and friendly goes a long way upon that first, that first interaction. It's an old adage really, but you know, a really wide smile and, and looking like you're happy to meet. Somebody's probably about the most important thing after being on time. I think.

Great. Thanks. So we've all felt the sting of not getting a job that we felt we were certainly qualified for. Did people get rejected in this instance because they simply didn't come off too friendly or persuasive enough in the interview. Ultimately what affects yours or others' decision for who gets the job?

I mean, this is very tricky. I still, I still think that how people interact with people plays a key role in whether they secure the role or not.

I think there's a lot of work being done in the sector to minimize things like unconscious bias that we, we, we know we all have. Um, but we're not there yet. And I think how you are perceived, unfortunately. Is is still really important. People who are perceived as warm, open, friendly, perhaps more relaxed and more confident.

I would bet probably perform better or, or are more likely to be offered the job than someone who was clearly a. Very nervous or, or clearly unprepared. Now that seems very harsh on, on people who don't find being confident naturally. And you know, there there's a caveat here, I suppose, that it's probably not that what I've just said.

Probably isn't true. In a case where there's a high level of technical capability to a role, you might just find that you've been picked to the post by someone who either had a broader range of technical skills or. One specific skill in more depth and only really by, by requesting feedback. And you find out, you know, if, if you've gone, for example, I can't think of one, but there might be an example where an it programmer for example, is just, there's another, it programer, that just is better at that particular software or has been using it longer or has been using in an industry sector.

Exactly the same as this one, where another candidate is using in a different sector. So, so everything I've said about confidence doesn't really apply maybe in there's highly technical roles, but where it's less technical. So see a general office administrative work or, uh, customer service type work.

Then these things really do stand out. So while it would seem unfair, perhaps on people who are a little. Little more reserved then I think, you know, the idea is there is that that's something that they would really be consciously trying to work on, um, and trying to improve in terms of more time rehearsing interviews, pulling yourself in situations where, you know, you can run through dry runs or rehearse.

Um, I think employers, uh, are definitely trying to get better to take aware decisions that would unfairly. People and advantage of the job. And ironically, when I mentioned that, you know, it's, it's very difficult to have direct conversations with, with companies directly. Now, then most people have applied for a job fire.

A company will see that their portal is, is almost designed to do that. Uh, and I think the idea is that the CV presented to the hiring manager doesn't. Unconscious bias and all of those things in, but right now, you know, it, it, it's still very prevalent in what we do and how you present yourselves important and should, you know, the, the right time and preparation should be given, particularly if you're going for a job that you think, you know, I really want to get this job.

Um, should you find it hasn't gone the way you wanted and you weren't successful. I, I don't think there's anything wrong at all with asking for feedback. Um, I think there's, there's an added point as well that, you know, while you're not right for that job, I think asking for feedback will also show the, the particular hiring company or whatever that, you know, you are committed and serious about, about applying for their role.

So, you know, there's always the chance it might lead to something else. Uh, but trying to follow up with that conversation and dropping again through a polite message to. The talent acquisition team or the recruiters say, look, appreciate I didn't get the job fully understand. Is there any chance that I could just have some feedback that'll help me improve on my, my performance going forward when I apply for similar roles.

Um, but right now there shouldn't really be any, you know, fundamental decision for who, who gets the role other than, uh, that performance at the end of year and their technical ability to do the role. Really

Amazing. Thank you. Final question from me, then you've already covered the dues for interviews and then some, uh, are there any major don'ts though?

Well, I think again, you know, I'm speaking of a certain age and maybe things are, are slightly different, but I, I always feel it's. Better to approach an interview fairly formal. Initially you never really know the audience of, or the style of the audience that going to interview you. And it's very difficult to move from informal to formal, whereas it's much easier to move from formal to informal.

So I would always work on the basis that you're going to have quite a formal interview approach. You know, it isn't, um, it, isn't a wise strategy to assume, uh, a super relaxed position and open with anecdotes about, you know, how your football team did it the weekend until you've established that that's the sort of audience you are, you are involved in.

So I, my Dawn would be, don't be late. Don't turn. Super informal. And also I think there's a fine line between the confidence as well. You know, I think there's nothing wrong with a little bit of, well, there's nothing wrong with confidence at all. And in certain roles, there might even not be anything wrong with a little bit of arrogance, but there's a very fine line between that and, you know, making an organization FA well, unless you've got a skill set that absolutely backs it up, but you know, to sit there and almost adopt an attitude of.

You tell me why I should come and work for your company. Um, me work in rare situations like dragons den, for example, but probably wouldn't be the best strategy for most interviews. Um, in, in terms of other daunts, uh, I would say there's nothing wrong at the end of the interview asking when you might hear, but it certainly wouldn't be appropriate probably to cheer up directly with the client.

It certainly like in terms of a ridiculous short notice period, as in, you know, email that when you get home, um, it certainly wouldn't be appropriate to go. Back to the client for feedback you're being represented by an agency. Uh, you know, you should go back to the agency that represented you. And by all means contacting to say, could you just let, uh, Anne know that I've, you know, I've thoroughly enjoyed the interview.

I'd likely thank you for a time. I look forward to hearing Jim course. There's nothing wrong with that. But, you know, chasing up and saying, when will I hear, have I got the job or chasing up multiple times in a short period of time, probably, you know, won't help your case. Um, daunting interviews, I suppose.

The other thing is it never really looks good if you sit there and. Just absolutely speak incredibly negatively about your current employer. You may be unhappy for a number of reasons in your current employer, and there's nothing wrong with politely outlining some of your disgruntlements, but to sit in, you know, just.

Just highly criticize your, your previous employers or bosses or that sort of stuff really doesn't come. Doesn't really give the right impression if you know what I mean. You're sort of, there's a way to discuss those things and, but, but not necessarily turn it into just the sort of victimization of other people.

Um, and that that's about it really. I suppose the only other don't I can think about. Is kind of the similar thing, really, you know, what will put somebody off is if, if every reason you left, every role you'd ever had was always somebody else's fault or reason because ultimately it sounds like, you know, you go to bit the common denominator, that scenario.

So, you know, if, if you are moving to a new role or you've been interviewed because you, you are a bit disgruntled where you are probably how you package that is. You know, without being dishonest, of course, but, but at the same time, how you package your packaging tactfully will probably work better for you than seeing, you know, my current bosses are, are a bunch of whatever and I'm, I'm looking cause I kind of stand working there a minute longer.

Um, but again, it's just a sort of packaging presentation thing. Really

Brilliant. Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

The, the key things I would say through it all is, is really take it seriously, you know, and not just for each job you go on or some people might only, uh, you might only find themselves looking for jobs once or twice in, in their career, if they're really lucky and, uh, that's fine in those people are indeed very lucky.

But I think the new norm is that, you know, if somebody's been in a. But most people, I think move somewhere between two and three years, um, for various reasons. But I think if you, you know, if I had my time again and I was starting out again, then, you know, I'd, I'd pay a lot more attention to how seriously I took ownership of my career from, from start to finish going right back from, you know, the beginning of this conversation about really understanding.

The role of, of my personal brand and network and how that plays in starting your career and developing your career right through to each job I went for, you know, really taking the time to prepare that application. Uh, I think we can all look back on things where, you know, we saw something and we, we popped the CV through, cause it was a.

You know, cause it was quick and, and looking back, you think, well, if I'd have just, you know, maybe just taken overnight to, to spend a little bit more time, maybe I would've, you know, been called for that interview when I wasn't at the interview, same as everything to do with public speaking. If it isn't something you're really comfortable with, then practice, practice.

Um, you know, take the time to understand and get feedback from somebody on dummy runs. Somebody will fade back, honestly, you know, someone who might turn around here and say, well, actually, you know, it's very difficult to concentrate cuz you were looking all over the room or someone might turn around and say, I was getting put off because you know yeah, you were fidget with your trouser leg all the time.

So, but if you get those. That feedback. And you're aware of that feedback. Then you can start to, you know, look into tools that, that prevent you doing those things. And you only really can get that by feedback. Cuz most of these behaviors, you don't even know you're doing them, you know, because the bad ever in nurture they're, they're sort of, you know, their behaviors we are aware of.

So again, I practice and then when you've got the interview prepare, you know, um, treat the organization. The respected deserves that are taking the time to see you. I'm not saying be overly subservient, be absolutely aware of what you are bringing to the table and be confident in that. And the interview should be a two-way street, but, you know, prepare, learn a little bit about the organization, about the individuals who are interviewing you about, um, you know, what sort of.

What they do for a living, what, what the business is about, and, you know, then prepare questions towards the end of that. Prepare to how you're going to answer questions. You might not get every question they're gonna ask you, but you know, if you feel comfortable answering 80% of the questions. Then, you know, you can address the, the, the 10, 20% that, that have come at you from nowhere.

Um, thank them for their time. Be sensible about how you seek feedback, both in terms of time skills of, of knowing the outcome of the interview, but also then following up for that in terms of trying to get feedback, if you weren't successful and fade that feedback into your learning for the next, you know, the next, um, Then the next time round, but you know, always remember that sometimes if you didn't get the job, um, without sounding too cliche, it might not have been, it genuinely might not have been the right job or sometimes as is the way these days.

Um, you might have just been pick of the post. By someone who was either just a bit better on the day, or, you know, might, might just have a little bit more experience, but it shouldn't put you off continuing through the process, but you know, my top tip would be, you know, take, take your career seriously and give each of the stages the sort of time, time they deserve really .

Thank you so much for doing this interview with me, Steven.

No, no problem. Joel. It was a pleasure to talk and, uh, thanks. Thanks for inviting me.

I know I certainly learned a lot from it and I'm sure our audience can say the same. I hope that your Jordan is on the podcast. Again, some. And thank you audience for listening.

This was the final part of the interview with Stephen Hoban, but we will be releasing the full uncut episode next week. We hope you enjoyed see you next time.