

## I'll be your rep

In the second part of our guide to making a career move, Drew gives us some tips on how to succeed in an interview. Thankfully it's better than the old chestnut 'imagine the panel in their underwear'. Fine if you're going for a job at Victoria's Secret or the Dream Boys but not so good for actuaries.

The exams went without a hitch for me. OK, so I got locked inside the exam centre after the end of my last one, but as over a hundred other candidates managed to leave in the normal fashion I suppose I only have myself to blame. However, if any of you did have problems, or you have any issues with other aspects of being a student, then please let me know. I'll be attending the next Student Consultative Committee on 11 November and shall be happy to raise anything on behalf of those of you who don't have your own rep.

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# Preparation is the key

In the second part of our guide to making a career move, Drew Grosskreutz shares tips for interview success.

**P**REVIOUSLY WE RAN THROUGH the first steps in making a career move. This time our focus will be the interview and the preparation, research, and personal attributes that are needed to guide you successfully to the final stage.

You are over the first hurdle – you have been informed that a company would like to meet you to discuss its vacancy and assess how you may fit into the business moving forward.

- ◆ **Time to start your research** – Research the firm where you are being interviewed by looking at recent press coverage. You need a comprehensive insight into the business, such as the culture within the team, background of the hiring managers and staff, and also other recent hires – why they were chosen. This is where a good consultant adds value.
- ◆ **Find out who you are meeting** – Try a search for them on Google. You may be lucky enough to find a quotation or even a photo of your interviewer. The ideal result would be meeting your interview panel and shaking the boss's hand first. It's all part of your first impression.

### TOP TIP\*\*\* People often hire in their own image

This can be the physical presence and stance, confidence in communication, or even a similar educational background. You may have studied at the same university or completed the same course. Even if you just play the same sport this is an ideal basis for an initial conversation and will help to relax both parties.

You have to be able to differentiate yourself from the other people applying for the job. Ideally you need to be able to demonstrate the tangible benefits of your joining the team. Be prepared to elaborate on your current situation in a personal environment as well, because it is not only the technical business ability you bring, but also your presence in a personal sense that will help you land this new role.

### ◆ Strategic fit – illustrating your strengths

Match your skills to what you know about the role and

give examples of how you have achieved similar results in the past. This is a fundamental part of selling yourself successfully; ideally you will have prepared this prior to your interview so that the examples flow naturally.

### ◆ Personality and enthusiasm – when to let it out

As actuaries, a lot of humour is thrown around involving personality – or lack thereof! We all have a confident, outgoing side, notwithstanding those who are too confident or lack the common sense needed in situations such as an interview. Picture this: your interview is like a new business sales pitch, so be assertive and take action like a professional would. Have questions prepared, and prepare for what questions could be thrown at you. Sell yourself.

### TOP TIP\*\*\* Frame of mind – keep it positive

If you are chosen to go to an interview, it is because the interviewer believes you have the skills they are looking for. They will give you opportunities to demonstrate your suitability; they are not judging you and there are no preconceived ideas, just your CV and the information they have been supplied about you. Approaching the situation with this frame of mind from the outset will help boost your confidence.

### ◆ Personal presentation – first impressions are very powerful!

It takes you longer to undo the damage done than to put in an extra ten minutes' thought on how you present yourself. Check your suit/outfit the day before and polish your shoes. A good comedian will use their best joke at the start of the act, and will finish with their second best; you too need to make good first and strong lasting impression.

Next time we shall look at the final stages of a successful move – choosing offers and resigning gracefully.

*Drew Grosskreutz is in the actuarial team at Hanover Search, heading a panel consulting across all actuarial disciplines and specialising with nearly/newly qualified individuals*

## 60-SECOND INTERVIEW



Sara Brenwald is an Actuarial Assistant for Liberty Syndicates in Minster Court, London.

**What would you do if you heard the four-minute warning?**

Ring as many of my friends and family as possible.

**What was the first record you bought?**

Rick Astley – 'Never Gonna Give You Up'. I even went and saw him in concert when I was seven!

**What was your last triumph at work?**

Making a round of drinks for my team without having to be asked!

**Which Spice Girl would you be?**

Geri of course.

**What would you be if you weren't an actuary?**

A celebrity or a hairdresser.

**If you were a biscuit, what biscuit would you be?**

Pink Wafer!

**Greatest personal achievement of late?**

I recently did a 60km walk for the Breakthrough to Breast Cancer Campaign – I managed to raise £1,750!