Next Phase
Life Science Solutions

Giving a Presentation in an Interview

So, you have made it through to the stage where the prospective employer has asked you to prepare and give a presentation. For some this may be a new or daunting prospect, while for others it may be less so, particularly if you are used to giving presentations in your current position. In either instance, it is very worthwhile reading through these notes to help you become as prepared and confident as possible. Even if you have lots of experience of presentations, you may gain a few new ideas from this document.

While we cannot write your slides and give the presentation for you, it is our job to ensure all goes as smoothly and positively as possible. You are therefore welcome to call us any time on **01403 216 216** if you have any questions or would like advice. Further presentation guidance, creative ideas and typical pitfalls are also available at **nextphaserecruitment.com** and our social media platforms including **LinkedIn**, **Twitter**, **Instagram** and **Facebook**. As the presentation is likely to be part of an overall interview agenda, please also refer to the Next Phase Recruitment Interview Tips document which is available on our website.

WHY DO THEY WANT YOU TO GIVE A PRESENTATION?

The ability to give a good presentation may not be an obvious part of the role you are applying for, whereas for certain roles it may a key element. In either instance, it is worthwhile considering why you have been asked to give a presentation. You must remember that a presentation in an interview is very different to giving a presentation elsewhere. You need to consider what it is that the interviewers will be evaluating, as the aim of your interview is not to sell a service or educate others, but to result in you getting a job.

Perhaps the prospective employer wants to judge:

- Your ability to prepare a piece of work to a specific brief
- Your confidence in communicating to a group
- How well you cope and react under pressure
- A different perspective of your personality
- Your technical expertise and experience
- Your ability to follow instructions (e.g. sticking to a 10 or 15-minute time limit)

It is most likely to be a combination of all these points and your Consultant at Next Phase may be able to give some specific insight into this based on their experience with the company. Whatever the motivations, the presentation is usually towards the end of the recruitment process and will certainly be a major deciding factor in you being successfully offered a role. If you routinely give presentations in your current role, do consider the contrasting context of a job selection scenario versus presenting a product, service, management report etc. It is easy to treat this like any other presentation, but a presentation in an interview is a very different and unique thing.

INITIAL INFORMATION

Firstly, you will need some key information in order to prepare your presentation. This should be the subject matter and/or title, the medium you are required to use (usually PowerPoint; as this guide assumes), time constraints for the presentation and the number of people who will be present. Also, do try and ascertain the why and what questions mentioned above.

PRESENTATION PREPARATION

While there are no hard-and-fast rules as to how your slides should look and what they should contain, the following guidelines are worth considering. If you are stuck or need some initial ideas to get you started, your Consultant at Next Phase is always on hand and can even provide some sample PowerPoint presentation formats to help you get started.

Before starting to develop your slides, ensure you fully understand the subject matter and decide what it is you are going to present. It is worth taking time to consider if you are fully addressing what you have been asked. If you are unsure, your Consultant at Next Phase will be happy to give an objective view. Usually it is a good idea to write down an overview of what you are considering presenting and develop this into a "story", with logical steps that can be readily broken down into individual slides. If your presentation is technical, ensure you have fully researched the facts that you are going to communicate, and that you can reference your sources.

Once you have a clear idea of what you are going to present, decide on an overall theme for your slides that will make them aesthetically pleasing and easily visible. A dark background with light text is often the most visible, as is a font such as Arial (Times New Roman, whilst being the default, is often hard to read from a distance). A general rule is "keep it simple" and avoid mixing too many colours and fonts or styles!

CREATING YOUR PRESENTATION

- Start with an introduction slide displaying the subject title, your name, the company name you are presenting to and the date you will be giving the presentation. The company logo in place of the company name can have a positive impact. You could even consider basing your colour scheme around the company's branding, if you think this would be appropriate.

- Give each subsequent slide a simple, relevant title and make sure you use the same font and size on each slide. It is usually best for each title to be bold and **Capitalised Like This**.

- Avoid long sentences! Use bullet points with short phrases. Your slides should guide the audience through your story and be your prompts for what you are going to say. If you write lots of long sentences / paragraphs, this will generally lead to you simply reading off of the slides.

- Graphics, pictures and animations can be effective; but be very selective as they can be a distraction if used incorrectly. Consider what kind of impression you want to make.

- Avoid cramming too many points on a single slide. If you can barely fit all of your points on a single slide, then it contains too much material. Leaving some blank space on the slide is important in making it accessible to the audience. An often-quoted guideline to measure against is the 6 x 7 rule: 6 lines per slide, 7 words per line.

- Finish the presentation with a final slide thanking the audience for their attention and inviting any questions. This slide enables you to bring your presentation to a logical conclusion and will speak for itself.

- Finally, check your spelling and proofread for grammatical and punctuation errors, as well as review your slides to ensure consistency of fonts, font sizes, spacing and colours.

PRESENTATION DELIVERY PREPERATION

Once you have fully researched your subject and developed your slides, there are now several steps you can take to develop and perfect your delivery. Firstly, ensure you know what you want to say against each bullet point and make notes if necessary. It is a great idea to practice running through your slides as many times as possible using family or friends as an audience. Very importantly, you should time the presentation and ensure you are strictly adhering to any time constraints. Once all is finalised, your Consultant at Next Phase will be very happy to cast a critical eye over your presentation and provide you with feedback and any suggestions.

It is always a good idea to take along handouts in the form of prints of your slides. This shows preparation and can be a useful tool when giving the presentation. Do ensure you take along enough copies so each member of the audience receives one.

Finally, please forward a copy of the finalised presentation to your Consultant at Next Phase the day before your interview. Usually we will forward this to the company in advance of you arriving, so it can be virus-vetted and set up ready for your arrival. Always take along a backup copy on memory stick and remember that your Consultant also has a copy which can be emailed to the client again in the case of emergency.

A GOOD SLIDE

- Short sentences
- Consistent
- Easy to read
  - For example, using a font such as Arial or Lucida Sans
  - Large size
    - 28 to 36 for headings or main text
    - 20 to 24 for subtext

A BAD SLIDE

- Long sentences
- Inconsistent
- Difficult to read
  - For example, using a font such as Times New Roman
  - Small size

THE PRESENTATION

You are fully prepared; your slides are a virtue of textbook presentation prompts, you are fully rehearsed, and your presentation is set up on the company computer ready to go. The rest is very much up to you and your individual style. However, the following are a few tips and ideas which may be worth considering:

· At the start of the presentation, address the audience directly, introducing yourself and your subject and thanking them for the opportunity.

· A good idea, if there are time constraints, is to say something along the lines "as I am limited on time today I will be happy to take your questions following the completion of my presentation". This immediately puts you in control and will hopefully mean you will not be interrupted and so can finish on time. To keep an eye on the time you could place your watch in an easily visible position or use the stopwatch function on your mobile (alarm off).

· If you are providing handouts, you could add "please feel free to take notes. However, I will be handing out copies of my slides at the end of my presentation". Again, this gives you the control and it also shows you are prepared and assertive. Never distribute the handouts before the presentation, as people will start looking at the slides ahead of you showing them on the big screen.

· When delivering your presentation, face the audience and be enthusiastic, make eye contact, smile, gesture for emphasis, utilise silent pauses for effect, and relax. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets, fiddling with any objects, looking out of the window and simply reading the wording on your slides aloud. If it is your style, and you feel suitably confident, you can invite audience participation. If you plan for this, stick to asking closed questions to avoid an outbreak of discussion within the audience.

Another possible delivery strategy is this:

· Introduce what you are going to tell them

· Discuss the points on your slides

· Then summarise what you have just told them

This means introducing your presentation and each segment/slide with an introduction of what you will communicate. Then run through your points and summarise, confirming what you have said.

AFTER THE PRESENTATION

Your presentation should come to a natural and timely conclusion, with you thanking the audience for their time and attention and then inviting questions after passing around your handouts. Be prepared and try to anticipate potential questions based on what you have presented. Very often the presentation will be at the start of a meeting and used as the catalyst for an ongoing discussion. If there are no resultant questions, take this as a positive sign that you have covered your subject thoroughly. Following this, thank the audience again, sit down and relinquish control to the interviewers.

As stated in the introduction, remember that a presentation is usually one item on an interviewer's agenda, so please refer also to the Next Phase Recruitment Interview Tips document. Further advice is also available at **nextphaserecruitment.com**, on our **LinkedIn** page, and you are welcome to call us at any time on **01403 216 216.**