![Sourced - We get people.]

Interviewing in the Information Age

If you've recently applied for an IT job, chances are you've done so expecting an invitation for an interview. Being prepared is the best advantage you can have before walking into the interview room. With so much helpful information now freely available, you're undermining your own chances by not taking advantage of this accessibility and finding out as much as possible.

Although being prepared to respond the employer's questions is crucial, your research can also help you find out whether the organisation is one you want to devote a major part of your life to. That should be a huge motivation to spend some time doing your research, no matter whether you've applied for the job or if you're being presented with a job opportunity by a Recruiter.

What Company Are You About to Join?

Obvious resources, like company website, should serve as the first source of information. Besides core business related information, bigger companies often have careers sites where you can find all job-related information: current job openings, perks and some of the key few people representing business (not necessarily the board members, but people who may be your managers or others you might interact with on a daily basis).

The problem is, a static company website only tells Although these resources can be useful, the issue is that they only express what the company wants to tell you. Ideally, what your future employer claims reflects what they actually do. But how can you look behind the public persona to find out what everyday life in your future workplace looks like? If you're lucky, you can find some company reviews on Seek, Indeed and Glassdoor.

However, bear in mind there aren't many of these yet, as these reviews are quite new to NZ (although you might expect IT companies would be amongst the first ones to appear there). Another way you can get a broader view of the organisation is to find out about their presence in the wider IT community. One way to do this is by seeing whether they feature in any mainstream IT related news; whether that's as a thought leader in the industry or due to other initiatives they're involved in. The likes of Computerworld, CIO and even the Technology section of the NZHerald or the Central Canterbury News are good places to start your search.

Social media is another basic source of information that can give you an insight into your prospective employer. When searching for information about the company, don't stick to what they post. Invest your time into scanning the comments that the company's users (customers) leave. The overall impression customers get, and the way company responds to them, may give you an interesting perspective on your future employer's company culture. While these responses are often carefully crafted by a marketing department, the way the company deals with their customers often reflects how they interact with their employees too.

What Exactly Are You Going to Do?

Before the interview, ensure that you know the job advertisement inside out and you're aware of the job requirements. What technologies, systems, methodologies, application servers and platforms are you going to encounter? What's the level of process automation? What database servers do they use? These are critical IT questions that may be important to you. You probably don't want to join a technology dinosaur and deal with technologies that should've been forgotten by now. Thorough information about your future job is usually hard to get unless you know somebody from the company. If that's not the case, IT related forums like Geekzone, might also be of help.

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If you're working with a Recruiter, you'll get a detailed brief either in person or by phone, highlighting the exact requirements of the role, both technical and non-technical as well as further insight into what they're looking for in a candidate. As they already have a relationship with the organisation, Recruiters will also often be able to give you the inside word as to how the team works, what the culture is like and the opportunity the role presents to you.

Who Are the People You're About to Meet?

No matter how much autonomy you may have in your new role, or the degree of isolation, your future colleagues matter. Your Managers and the people you work alongside can make your 9-to-5 job a pretty good place to spend your day or ruin it completely. Nowadays, you no longer have to wait for the interview to get an insight into your future Manager. Take on the role of investigator (but not stalker!) and do some research beforehand about your hiring Manager, for example; who they are, what they've done throughout their career, what they do in their spare time to see if you share any interests or industry involvement. You'll then have advantage of approaching the interview as a discussion between real people rather than simply names and titles, which can help to build rapport early on in the interview process.

Sometimes, obvious resources like Google, LinkedIn and other social networks or company websites (although all of these are a great place to start) don't tell you all that much. Not all people share their lives (both professional and personal) with the rest of the world. Local technology events such as IT conferences, meet-ups or workshops may sometimes serve you as a useful resource as you may find the person among speakers or attendees; and you may meet other employees of the company at these events who can answer your questions and create a clearer picture of the work environment.

Summary

Research takes effort, but done right it will reap huge benefits. You will end up with useful information to help you feel more confident within the interview, and enable you to make a well-informed decision about your working future. If you're struggling to find information in this digital age, this absence of

information could also tell you a lot about the company and its current requirements or its future direction. Don't forget that the interview itself is also a good space to find out more about your job and team. Here are some great questions to get you started or you can always contact our team at Sourced for up-to-the-minute market advice.