

Career Advice

What happens at an assessment centre?

Assessment centres have always had a place in recruitment; traditionally they were used for bulk recruitment campaigns at graduate or junior level. More recently, there has been a trend towards applying the same techniques to more senior positions. So what can you expect when you visit an assessment centre? .

Role play

- Typically based around a scenario related to the role being recruited, for example, a fact find and negotiation exercise for sales professionals.
- You will typically be given a strategy paper thirty minutes prior to the role play exercise, assessing your ability to prioritise and manage your time effectively.
- Role play often involves you and two assessors
- It may take the form of two meetings, giving the candidate thirty minutes between the role plays to interpret and apply information gleaned from the first meeting
- This exercise tests your ability to perform in the role for which you have applied

Group exercise

- Candidates are asked to work together as a group towards a stated end goal as the assessors watch and listen
- Each individual may be given a different objective or piece of information to ensure that the exercise does not become too collegiate
- The assessors will be looking for candidates to take control of the situation, draw opinions from the other delegates, keep the group to time, stand their ground (without becoming argumentative) and successfully take the group to its stated goal

Behavioural event interview

- You will be asked to discuss 2-3 specific events in your career to date, that is, either key successes or events that didn't have the desired outcome
- The assessors will then ask questions to probe around these events evaluating your approach to planning, risk analysis, decision making, developing solutions, seeking information, developing others, customer focus, building relationships and so on
- You are typically assessed against a list of pre-agreed competencies

Biographical interview

- Used to give an indication of your ability to process both verbal and numerical information while working to a time limit.
- These tests are conducted either prior to or on the assessment day, on or offline.
- You are often given your mark as a percentile rather than a percentage. A percentile allows your result to be compared against an appropriate control group where 1 is the lowest and 99 is the highest.

Verbal and numerical testing

- Used to give an indication of your ability to process both verbal and numerical information while working to a time limit.
- These tests are conducted either prior to or on the assessment day, on or offline.
- You are often given your mark as a percentile rather than a percentage. A percentile allows your result to be compared against an appropriate control group where 1 is the lowest and 99 is the highest.

Psychometric testing

- These are used to help assess your culture fit and psychological make-up
- There are no right and wrong answers on these tests.
- You should answer questions honestly as opposed to trying to second guess what the client wants to hear.

Presentation exercise

- You are typically asked to pre-prepare a presentation, often based around a proposed business plan for/approach to your first 6 months in the role that you are applying for.
- While the quality of the slides and content is important, of more importance is the delivery of the presentation and your ability to think on your feet when fielding questions.

- You should run through your presentation as many times as possible using your recruitment consultant to either cast a critical eye over the slides or by coming into the office to present to him/her.

Other tips include

- Ask whether the client is willing to fund transport/ hotels. Often travelling down the night before and staying in a local hotel will mean you are fresher and therefore perform better on the day.
- Arrive within plenty of time on the day. There's nothing worse than running in late when the day has already begun- these assessment days run strictly to time.
- Use all coffee and lunch breaks to speak to assessors and create an impact. Ask intelligent questions and show an interest in them and their business.
- Remember that you are assessed across a number of exercises. It is rare that any candidate performs well in all of the exercises so accept that some parts of the day will go better than others. Do not crumble if one exercise goes badly.

We wish you the best of luck in your interviews.