

## INTERVIEW MAPPING

Mapping out your intentions for the interview is not just a technique for ensuring that there are no holes in your preparation, it should become the heart and soul of your line of attack. The Map (see next page) starts with *Their Approach*, because without a clear understanding of that, you are very unlikely to succeed at any interview. Only when you complete the sections devoted to their likely approach, can you start thinking about which of your skills and experiences you should include or omit in your pitch.

### OBVIOUS QUESTIONS

The bulk of the questions that interviewers ask are obvious, predictable and should come as no problem to you. The nature of the role and of the organisation will inform your approach for filling out this box. Make sure that you address the old ‘chestnut’ interview questions and the core competencies that the role will require. You can sometimes get a clearer picture of these identified Competencies (sometimes called Job Standards) by phoning the Human Resources department and asking them to send you a Job Description for the role to which you are applying. Changes, shifts or trends in the industry / sector would also come under this category of ‘Obvious’ questions.

### DIRTY QUESTIONS

If you have found out anything about the people who are interviewing you, or even more usefully, the style of interview they tend to use or areas they focus in on, it can help you to anticipate a dirty question. Likewise, if there are *any* skeletons in your closet; start with the assumption that an interviewer is going to raise one of them and determine your best line of answering to kill this subject off quickly and move back to your sales agenda. Interviewers can use this technique purely to put you on the back foot and shake you up a little for another line of questioning and if it catches you by surprise, this can be a very effective approach. You should also be ready for any and all of the awkward and nasty questions listed in the *Questions, Questions* section.

### NUGGETS - ALL THAT GLITTERS ABOUT YOU

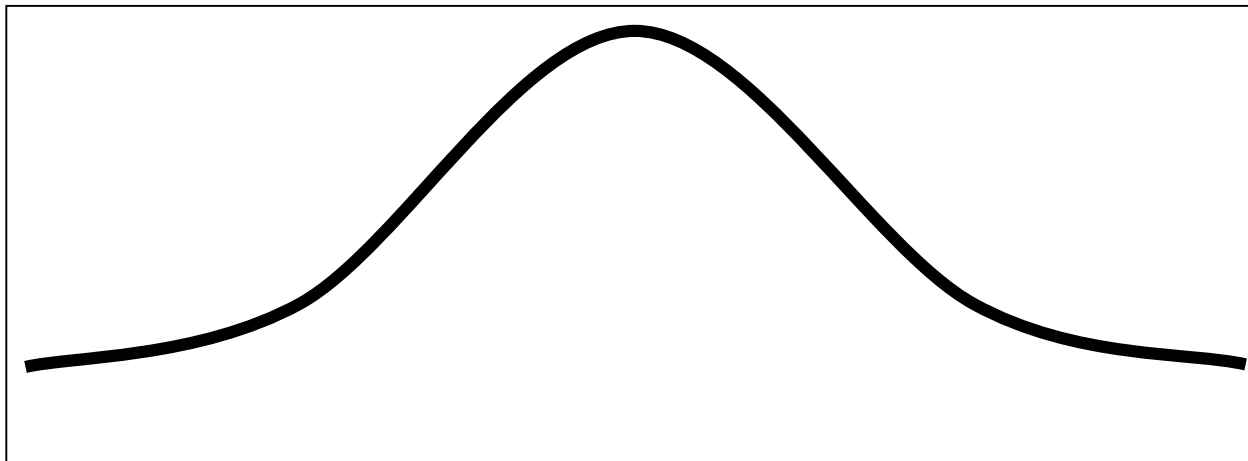
The 360° profiling exercise will provide you with a plethora of good stuff about yourself. But which aspects of your shining brilliance are going to be most attractive to *this* employer? Ideally, there should be 2-3 items / attributes / experiences that *really* distinguish you from the herd and a few more at which you are perfectly competent without necessarily being anything really special. For an interview that is going to last 45-60 minutes, I would recommend delivering no more than 5-7 of these Nuggets. If you are stuck because you have too much good stuff to talk about, start ruthlessly applying the “**So What?**” Rule and whittle it down.

Your Nuggets are your agenda for the whole interview. They are the reasons that anyone would want to meet or hire you, so **GET THEM ACROSS!** If you are going to bring a notebook into the interview (and you should), write this agenda – just 5-7 words – at the top of the page in faint pencil that the interviewers won’t be able to read. That way, you have a constant visual mnemonic as the interview unfolds. In today’s job market, if you walk out of the room having delivered only half of your Nuggets, don’t expect to get hired.

THEIR APPROACH	MY PITCH
<p><b>(I) Questions That I can Anticipate</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> <li>8.</li> <li>9.</li> <li>10.</li> <li>11.</li> <li>12.</li> <li>12.</li> <li>14.</li> <li>15.</li> <li>16.</li> <li>17.</li> <li>18.</li> <li>19.</li> <li>20.</li> </ol>	<p><b>(III) Nuggets</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> </ol>
<p><b>(II) Questions I Hope They Don't Ask</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>(IV) My Supporting Evidence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> </ol>	

## PANNING FOR NUGGETS

“Which Nuggets should I use?” This can be a difficult choice and requires more objective thinking about yourself – but you should be getting used to this kind of self-centred (if somewhat tiresome) methodology by now. Back to school-level Mathematics for this one. Remember the bell curve? Pretty much anything that you can measure in this world comes out on a bell curve distribution – height, weight, visual acuity, intelligence, intimate measurements, whatever.



Most measurable things gravitate toward the big bulgy bit in the middle and you have extremes at the ends. So a bell curve for height in males in the Western world would have a centre point of say, 172 centimetres (5 foot 9 inches) and extremes of 148cm (4 foot 11 inches) and 202cm (6 foot 9 inches). So which elements in your experience, training, personal attributes and education are over there on the right hand side of the curve? Which bits make you memorable, credible, effective, different, *special*? Well, that depends on which elements are of the greatest perceived value to your interviewers.

## SMORGASBORD

The final Nugget selection process comes when you have built up a stronger picture of what the job you are applying for actually entails (see *Research and Networking*). Then you can start superimposing the Key Points you want to make onto that picture. Employers frequently outline their menu of requirements when they advertise for a position. Or they may send you a detailed job and person specification in advance of the interview. If they don't, you should ask for one.

A combination of insider knowledge, research and a dash of common sense will quickly allow you to determine the biggies – the Minimum Entry Requirements for the role and the Nice-to-Haves that the employer is hoping to find in the marketplace.

Rate yourself for each of the items – do it crudely and simply with marks out of 10 or 100. If there are 10-15 items on the list, you should be showing as average to strong average on more than half of them. What are your top three? These are the pertinent Nuggets at the right hand side of the bell curve and they form the crux of your sales pitch for the interview. The 1-2 items on the left are the weaknesses you will need to be ready to address and to provide reassurance on.

## WHICH WAY TO THE EGRESS?

If one of these weaknesses is the core function of the role, you might want to re-visit your thinking about this job. Similarly, if one of those core functions is a major Turn-off for you, it's back to the drawing board.

Example: if you are going to be spending more than 50% of your time influencing others (colleagues, management, customers or suppliers) and you are a strong average in terms of skills for that, no problem there. However, if you have the aptitude, experience and training (you may even have a strong track record in sales) but derive little or no satisfaction from making a sale, that's a great big warning light.