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A Practical Approach to Present-day Seafarers' Interview

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Abstract

An interview is, by all means, a very stressful situation which people, irrespective of their backgrounds or level of knowledge, dread and would rather do without. It is common knowledge that the fear of public speaking triggers much more anguish and stress than death itself. When faced with speaking in public people tend to shy to the point of forgetting everything they know or have previously prepared. Having a conversation should not be such a big deal though since human beings are known to be social beings by excellence and communication is to them a key component of their lives enabling them to express their personality and feelings. Sadly enough, the interview trends in the maritime industry have come to be psychologically based to such an extent that cadets must by all means be provided with the necessary training prior to sitting for an interview be it face-to-face or over the internet.

The paper addresses alternative approaches and ideas as to how to deal with every step of the interviewing process from the point of view of the interviewee. The purpose of our research was centred on the idea that maritime cadets must have a starting point, a reference grid to use as a template and source of inspiration. Before going to attend an interview any candidate should be trained as to what information to include in the answers to the questions, what type of questions to expect, which aspects are better to avoid and ultimately be fitted with the proper knowledge of useful vocabulary and accurate pronunciation.

Key words: maritime interview, socialization, human interaction, effective interviewing strategies

1. Interviews and the Maritime Sector

When people are asked to speak about themselves they feel an inexplicable urge to provide the interviewer with many details and information related to their personality. This is the worst possible approach to this task. Because what any hiring agent looks for a very brief presentation, a sort of intro or bio which will indirectly provide the reasons why you (and not other person!) are the perfect candidate for the job.

So, when you prepare yourself for the answer to this question, try to keep it simple and clear, give short and appropriate examples and focus on the relevant information from your background and experience.

When an interviewer says “Tell me about yourself” they do not mean “Tell me your life story”. All they are interested in is to figure out which are those features that make you the best and the fittest for the job requirements.

An interview in the maritime industry is slightly different altogether. The main reason stems from the fact that the maritime industry is divided into many categories and the potential candidate has to decide first which category best fits their skills.

During the interview some difficult questions might arise and the simply desire to become part of the maritime field is not enough any more. Appropriate answers must be provided tailored to the needs of both the interviewer and interviewee.

In the maritime field, interviews are conducted using a qualitative method. Most of the times, crewing agencies apply pre-structured in the sense that the set of questions to be asked is already conceived and approved by human resources officers and psychologists of employment assessment. It is common knowledge that the qualitative feature of an employment interview is provided by the fact that is a mutually enriching experience for both interviewer and interviewee. Both parties involved in the process of an interview enter this interaction with their own set of values and beliefs, their own perceptions and theories about things of life and most importantly of their profession.

If a candidate is selected for an interview, they should perform a research to ensure that they are thoroughly prepared. “According to Livecareer (2019), as a candidate walks through the door, an applicant should be in interview mode.” (First, they should take into account that the interview may be carried out in four different ways: face-to-face, over the telephone, over the internet (by means of Skype or any other online meeting platform) and at an assessment center. It is of utmost importance that the candidate perform research in advance about the company history, about their fleet, their job offer and the job description criteria and so on. This approach will surely corroborate the candidate’s genuine interest in the company and their desire to become part of their payroll.

It is implied by the very nature of the seafaring profession that the role that a seafarer plays is crucial in making sure that a ship at sea is operated safely and efficiently. Consequently, any potential employer will definitely target the skills, competences, abilities and dedication to the job that are considered to be the requirements for a successful maritime operations.

In a world dominated by globalization looking for a job might prove to be a horrendous task as the labor market triggers a migration across national borders and it is all but natural for employers to have common level expectations from their potential employees.

What really happens during an interview is that both participant, interviewer and interviewee they communicate, exchange information, and negotiate with a view to the future.

The maritime field has been tremendously impacted by globalization because, on the one hand the international shipping industry is unquestionably global by definition and on the other hand because present-day crews are multi-national crews made up of individuals belonging to different cultures and traditions. “Personal interviews are utilized by all employers and organizations to pick their employees in a corporate context. One of the most essential phases in the employee selection process is the interview. The interview is essential since it links both employers and job seekers. It aids companies in picking the best candidate for the position. It also assists job searchers in presenting their job abilities and obtaining a desired position based on merit.” (Akrani, 2011)

An interview may be conducted on a competency guideline with a view to assessing a candidate’s theoretical knowledge required for the position or on a simulator-based guideline meant to assess the practical skills and competencies required for the job. Both approaches are effective enabling candidates to prove themselves and show off their abilities. Sometimes, the simulator type of interview

provided by the crewing agencies for the seafaring personnel interested in working on board a ship can clearly identify the theoretical and practical skills of the candidate best for the job.

2. A Practical Approach to Interview Questions

The mere thought of being in front of a board of interviewer can prove to be psychologically devastating for anyone. Candidates usually feel intellectually challenged about having a conversation on a topic they know so little about such as the maritime industry.

Consequently, a checklist with the most important tips meant to ease the pressure of an upcoming interview would be more than welcome.

Whereas many candidates for a maritime career have a nautical family backgrounds, stepping in some family member's footsteps, a significant other great number do not have any connection whatsoever with the seafaring profession.

Either way, the above-mentioned checklist would be highly beneficial.

The first thing to do is to carry out a research on that specific company objectives, their set of values, and, last but not least, their vision upon the maritime sector and its further development. Being updated and thoroughly informed about the company will be an irrefutable proof of a candidate's genuine interest in the company. The reason for doing this is that in doing so the interviewee will manage to convey a more powerful message regarding their work potential and suitability for the job.

When sitting for a maritime interview it is crucial for the candidate to highlight their passion for this trade. Consequently, studying for the most common interview questions will be more than appropriate and provide the candidate with a feeling of familiarization with the upcoming verbal encounter.

One aspect worth mentioning is that, contrary to what many maritime students might think, not all interviews conducted in this field are made up of questions related to ships or shipping and seamanship. One of the trickiest questions which definitely require beforehand thinking and answering is "Can you tell us about your strengths and weaknesses?" The best approach to this question would be to already have in mind two or three positive features and three negative ones which should in theory bear out the candidate's set of skills and abilities which make him/her fit for the job position applied for. Every candidate should bear in mind the idea that they are selling themselves and they should do it as profitably as possible.

Likewise, candidates who ask questions themselves are appreciated and deemed inquisitive and prone to self-improvement quicker than others. Asking questions seems to provide an excellent opportunity to prove one's genuine interest in that specific job position. The set of questions may range from the most basic ones such as the standard workload, the job description, what the company offers as future career prospects and personal growth in the field.

Another beneficial piece of advice would be for any candidate to stay confident and always try to turn any negative implication of a statement in a positive feature. Sometimes, stalling would be the solution out of such a nerve-racking situation and asking a question as "Could I have one minute to think about the answer?" would gain some precious thinking time.

Truth to tell, all tips and tricks related to the notion of how to ace your interview in the maritime industry are common knowledge and there is no such thing as a standard cheat sheet for all interviews. But preparation is key. Therefore, practicing on the possible answers the most common questions might be the only way to approach this.

The recruitment process of seafarers is centered upon the interview and, consequently, the approach adopted by the interviewer should be a comprehensive one, skillfully planned in advance for the purpose of objective evaluation of the seafarer's abilities, competencies, character and potential.

According to all researches on the topic of interview techniques, it has been demonstrated that the process of skill assessment is always profitably supplemented by candidate written resumes which should include both strong skills (job-related) and soft-skills (personality-related). Similarly, skills connected to critical thinking would be a plus when attempting to draft a comprehensive personality profile. The purpose of such an assessment process is obviously targeted at identifying the necessary

skills that seafarers must possess in order to become efficient and effective workers in the maritime industry.

Interviews in the maritime industry have a structures approach consisting of a set of standardized questions meant to apply the same criteria to all candidates enabling a very objective comparison among them.

3. Preparation is the Key to Acing Your Interview

Prior to having an interview, any candidate should prepare. To this aim, a database of internet resources might prove useful. Among the many online sites providing information about job interviews we have selected the following:

- Learning English with Adrian - Episode 2 . Preparing for an Seaman's interview- <https://youtu.be/rD1JIONvNP4>
- Common Shipping Company Interview Questions and Answers for CADETS 2020 - <https://youtu.be/sPbRt9eOtdg>
- Job Interview Conversation in English | Job Interview Question and Answer in English - <https://youtu.be/ZOLCMA2QbdE>
- How to succeed in your JOB INTERVIEW: Behavioral Questions <https://youtu.be/6aO6cGTcnUg>
- 5 COMMON Interview QUESTIONS and ANSWERS! - <https://youtu.be/QuRNEMBwqh8>
- Top 10 Job Interview Questions in English- <https://youtu.be/jaxgeXPgAz0>
- 08 common Interview question and answers - Job Interview Skills- <https://youtu.be/1mHjMNZZvFo>
- Job Interview Conversation - ALL you Need about Interview Question and Answers in English- https://youtu.be/_2UIT1pMWfs
- "What Are Your Strengths?" INTERVIEW QUESTION (7 ANSWERS!)- <https://youtu.be/bpjD2Osnivw>
- English Job Interview Tips and Tricks - How to Answer Job Interview Questions in English- <https://youtu.be/nhTcuUvLGOE>
- Tell me about yourself! Introduce yourself in English with EASE!- <https://youtu.be/Tj1w86bw4EM>
- <https://www.meditatorengleza.com/interviu-in-ingleza-intrebari-raspunsuri-si-sfaturi/>
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- <http://ro.talkenglish.com/speaking/interview/intbasic1.aspx>
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- <http://www.gramatica-limbii-ingleze-online.ro/Ghid-de-conversatie/la-interviu-conversatie-ingleza.php>
- <https://youtu.be/glBGzRw1rWw> - Have better conversations using the FORD method
- <https://youtu.be/iqeghm8Uut8> - Job Interview Skills - Questions and Answers
- <https://youtu.be/R3KeD06ti6c> - 50 Advanced Adjectives to Describe Personality | Positive & Negative English Vocabulary

Conclusions

Standardized questions provide a structured approach to evaluating candidates, ensuring that all candidates are evaluated using the same criteria, making it easier to compare candidates.

It is self-implying that the purpose of any recruitment process and of any interview as means of filtering candidates is to recruit the best people for the job. To serve this purpose, the interview in the maritime industry must be structured or at least semi-structured in order to facilitate the verbal encounter for all seafarers irrespective of their speaking skills or innate gift of the gab. Standardized questions alongside with an objective assessment of the candidates' theoretical and practical knowledge assist ship operators in selecting the best candidates, make the most researched decisions and help build a full-fledged seafaring workforce.

Interviews in the maritime environment should be flexible, have a high degree of adaptability to change, tailored in conformity with the various cultural backgrounds. The ideal would be to be able to apply a standardized interview structure designed to simplify the verbal exchange and create a veracious profile of the job applicant.

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