



## A personalised service from industry experts

### Top Interview Tips for Account Executives

As we recruit many Account Executives nationwide, we thought that it may be useful if, alongside our 'general' interview tips, we produced some specific advice to assist you when applying for this type of role.

Given the current level of competition (particularly where there are clients to inherit), any application will require greater focus if it is to stand out from the crowd.

These tips have been compiled as a result of genuine feedback from our clients, and we hope that you will find them useful when considering your application for an Account Executive role.

#### **Research Your Prospective Employer/ Interviewer**

Before you do anything else, you want to make sure that the brokerage in question is going to suit **you**. Take the time to understand the markets in which it operates, so that you can match your strengths and experience accordingly. Look at the profiles of your interviewer(s) and the key people in the business, to see if you can find some common ground.

#### **Know Your Book**

Specific enquiries regarding your current book of business are inevitable, and yet we find that a surprising number of applicants are unable to answer key questions surrounding this. It is understandable that you will not want to give specific clients' details away, however, you should ensure that you can demonstrate a certain 'expertise' in your field. Make sure that you are able to provide accurate details about the industry sectors that you deal with, the individual commission incomes of your clients, retention rates, and the overall size of your book etc.

#### **Provide Accurate Details About Your Performance vs Targets**

You should be able to explain clearly how you have performed in the past, and are currently performing against targets such as new business, cross-selling and retention. You should be able to annotate any issues/ third party matters that have affected the results – positive or negative. All successful sales people know their figures in detail.

#### **Have A Clear Plan**

We strongly recommend that you thoroughly research and plan how you will transfer your existing book, or develop new business, in the event of a move. If you take a business plan with you to your interview, it shows to the hiring manager that you have given serious thought to your future career and profitability, which will definitely appeal to them. Many Account Executives are unsuccessful at interview stage because they are unable to demonstrate a clear plan going forward. Without one, employers are unlikely to hire you, as your employment will be little more than a 'gamble.'

### **Be Realistic With Your Predictions**

Brokerages will instantly recognise any forecasts that are wildly over-optimistic. If you are making big claims, then you should be able to fully support these with a detailed explanation of how you intend to achieve them. If in doubt, we strongly recommend that it is better to be conservative in your predictions, or you may cause various pitfalls for yourself:

- Your claims may be dismissed as exaggerated and then, in turn, your application.
- Your claims may be wholly accepted, leaving your potential employer with high expectations of you. This can, in turn, lead to unrealistic targets being set, or unnecessary pressure.
- If you have previously had access to markets/ schemes paying high commissions, take this into account with your predictions; particularly if your prospective employer does not have access to the same facilities.

### **Restrictive Covenants**

Firstly, if you have a restrictive covenant, make sure that you understand it, as you will definitely be asked about this. Most commonly, you will not be able to deal with any of your clients for 12 months, so your prospective employer will be looking for reassurance that you will be doing all that you can to at least cover your costs in year one. Think carefully about how you will achieve this.

### **Demonstrate That You Are Proactive**

Provide examples of successful prospecting that you have done, clever marketing initiatives that you have instigated, networking events that you have attended, associations that you are affiliated with, or any schemes that you have set up. Be sure to talk about any introducers that you have forged relationships with; for example, Accountants or Solicitors. Equally, talk about any strong insurer relationships that you have proactively forged and developed.

### **Achievements**

Talk passionately about any personal new business achievements, or impressive client retention successes. Prospective employers want to see that you genuinely enjoy what you do, as people who enjoy their jobs are far more likely to succeed in them.

### **Resources Required**

You should be clear about the resources you would need to achieve your goals. For example, if 90% of your leads have historically been generated by a Telesales team, or perhaps via expensive marketing campaigns, then you should make it very clear if you require these going forward. This will potentially avoid any nasty surprises on both parts, if you are successfully appointed. When a brokerage says that they 'provide some leads', seek clarification during the interview to make sure that you both understand what is meant by this.

### **Compliant Broking**

Demonstrate that you are committed to remaining fully compliant. With the FCA putting more and more pressure on brokers, the hiring managers need reassurance that their sales people (who are often working remotely) remain focussed on quality, as well as 'bringing in the business.' Take examples of your work to the interview. Obviously, you will want to remove confidential details, however, if you can provide examples of high quality reports/ letters that you have produced, then this should stand you in very good stead.

### **Testimonials**

If you are going to be inheriting a book of business, or servicing accounts moving forward, the prospective employer will want to know that you are able to manage long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. They will potentially be passing on long-standing, valued clients, and will only want to share these with a trusted Account Executive. Seek to reassure your prospective employer that their clients will be in 'safe hands' by providing them with testimonials from your satisfied clients.

### **Professional Insurance Qualifications**

If you have been doing your job for a while, without having studied for professional insurance qualifications, then be prepared to be asked 'why not?' during an interview. Whilst not every insurance brokerage places the same amount of importance on professional qualifications, firms (in particular those with Chartered status), increasingly seek to employ qualified staff. If you are not currently qualified, but applying for a role with a company that values relevant qualifications, then you may need to show a willingness to study.

### **Personal Presentation**

During the interview, present yourself well (refer to our general interview tips), demonstrating high levels of professionalism at all times. As you are applying for a client-facing role, your prospective employer will be imagining you in front of their key clients at a new business/ renewal meeting. It is therefore extremely important that you make an excellent first impression.

We hope that you have found these tips useful, however, if you require any further information, then please don't hesitate to contact us.

Best of luck.

