

Assessment Centres



It is becoming increasingly common for companies to run a series of extended selection procedures, including assessment centres, each lasting from half a day through to two days or more. Usually these act as the first round of a selection process with those who pass being brought back for a final, more formal second interview although sometimes interviews take place prior to assessment centres.

Why Are They Used?

Assessment centres provide the chance for a number of different assessors to get to know you over a longer period of time than an average interview slot. Potential employers get to see what you can do rather than what you say you can do as it is likely an assessment centre will include some form of hands on work rather than just talking. It also provides an opportunity for you to learn about the company and get a taster for what the position would involve.

Different Types of Assessment Centres

Social/informal events

Where you meet a variety of people, including other candidates, the assessors, recent graduates and senior management. It provides a great opportunity for you to find out about the organisation and to ask more questions. Although these events seem informal, remember to remain professional and act in a positive manner throughout.

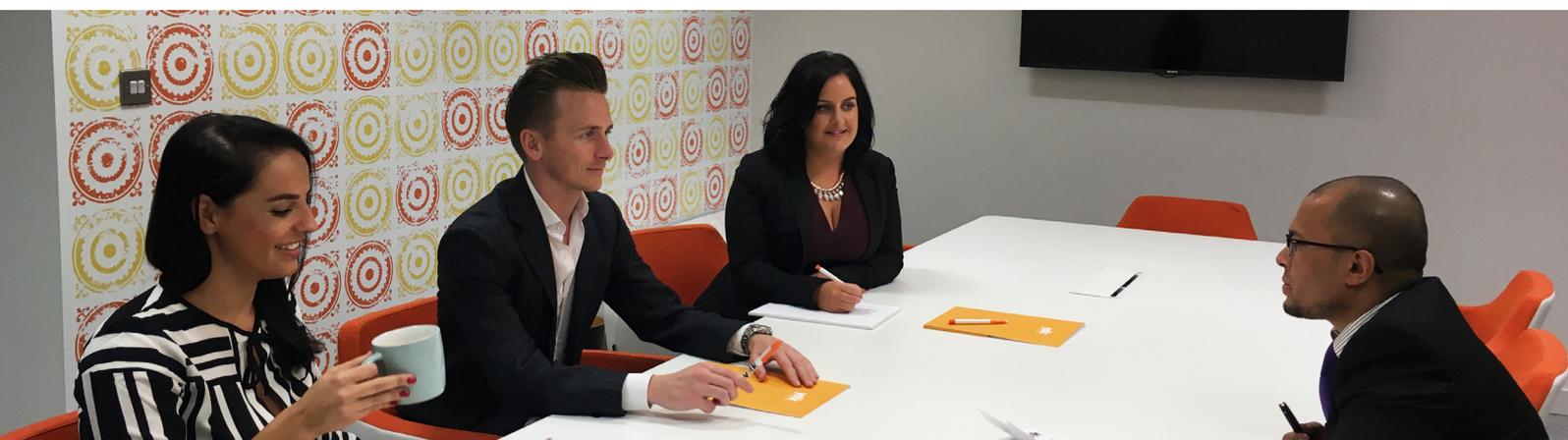
Information sessions

These provide more detail about the organisation and the roles available. The information provided to you is likely to be more up-to-date than your own internet research and may include future plans for the business.

Tests and exercises

Designed to reveal your potential and test you. Assessors measure you against a set of competencies and each exercise is designed to assess one or more of these areas. These may be individual or group exercises where you have to work alongside other candidates. If it is a group exercise remember to be respectful of others in your group and try not to focus on 'winning' the task, the assessors will be looking at how well you work in a team environment more than how well you complete the set task.

- ! Most assessment centres will include a mix of the above usually with some time set aside for a more social
- element alongside more formal group exercises.



A Typical Assessment Day

Each assessment centre varies greatly in content, length and activity – it depends on the company's own requirements and the job or jobs available. Below is some general advice about what to expect and the preparation you can do beforehand.

Preparation

- Visit the company's website and read up on what they do, the clients they deal with and any future plans they have. If they have social media have a read through that as well, this will often be more informal and give you a better idea of what it's really like working at the company.
- Draw up a list of your proven achievements in your career to date.
- You may be asked about your strengths and weaknesses, prepare a few answers for these in advance thinking about how you can link your answers back to the job description.
- Think of questions you want to ask about the organisation that reflect your interest and your own career aspirations.
- Plan your journey so you know where you're going and time manage effectively to ensure you are there early. If you are driving ask in advance if there is parking available or organise where you are going to park in advance.
- Unless advised otherwise treat it like a formal interview in terms of what how to present yourself, ensure you are well turned out and wear attire appropriate for the business.

What to expect

Assessment centres can range from small groups with four to six candidates right through to much larger groups. Even if you are part of a larger group day you will be split into smaller groups for the activities. Remember how you interact with other candidates on the day, even during the more social times such as lunch, will be evaluated so remain professional throughout.

You will be interviewed and asked to take part in a number of exercises which is likely to include a numerical reasoning test. Typical exercises include an in-tray or case study exercise, a presentation and a group discussion or task.

At the end of the assessment, you will be asked for feedback on the process. This will not impact on any decisions that are made about your performance and honest comments are encouraged.

Your performance

It is difficult to prepare anything specific for an assessment centre so don't worry too much about this unless informed otherwise - you are not being assessed on what you know but on how you think.

Try to interact with other candidates, this will help you with group exercises later on and show that you are a team player.

Listen carefully to the instructions given to you at the start of the day and always read the information you are given thoroughly.

You are not expected to be good at every exercise – an assessment centre gives you the chance to show your strengths on numerous occasions.

Your level of motivation will be assessed throughout the day so ensure you remain focused and on it!

Criteria

Your performance will be assessed against predetermined criteria that have been identified as being important in the organisation. These often include skills in team-working, communication, leadership, motivation and enthusiasm, decision-making skills, and creativity. Try not to be too disheartened if you don't pass the assessment centre, the organisation will be looking for a very specific skill set or personality type, it might just be that you don't fit that exactly rather than not being good at your job.

Follow up

After the assessment centre ring your recruitment consultant to let them know how it went. They'll be able to tell you what the next steps are and when you can expect to hear the results from the day.

Try not to worry too much prior to the day and if possible enjoy the experience. If you are feeling nervous have a chat with your recruitment consultant, it is likely they have had candidates attend assessment centres with this company before so they'll be able to give you more exact information on what it entails.