

# MASON ALEXANDER

## Mason Alexander Insights Series

Interview Processes and Candidate  
Experience

HI 2019



[masonalexander.ie](http://masonalexander.ie)

# Introduction

I am delighted to present to you the results of our HI 2019 survey results from the candidates of Mason Alexander and their experience of the interview processes they were involved in with our clients. At Mason Alexander, we are committed to ensuring the best possible customer experience and as part of this, we survey every single candidate that interviews through us on the placements we make with our clients. Our surveys cover two key areas – their experience with Mason Alexander and their experience of with our clients.

Our results are split by sector and three organisation size classifications:

- **SME** – Irish small and medium size businesses
- **Large** – Large indigenous businesses (may have an international presence)
- **MNC** – International organisations

Overall, the results show that SME businesses lag behind the other two sectors in terms of overall experience. As we are entering near full employment and significant competition from international and growing businesses in Ireland, it is important for SME businesses to ensure they are putting the best foot forward during interview processes. The amount of time and money that can be saved by businesses by ensuring they get the right candidate at the outset is significant and this can only be achieved by investing in the recruitment process.

In terms of sector, there is, in general, a consistent positive performance across sectors. However, of the 10 industry sectors covered in the surveys, three – Banking, Construction and Finance – scored below average on the candidate's Overall Experience assessment.

There is a clear theme running through the results, whether you are an SME or in the Banking sector, candidates are disappointed by the lack of what they perceive to be inadequate feedback post interview. At Mason Alexander, we are committed to working with our clients to understand this further and ensure that we working to deliver a positive experience for candidates and ultimately for the brand and reputation of our clients.

We hope you find the results and subsequent interview tips insightful and helpful and the MA team are always on hand to help and advise you with your hiring process.

Thanks,

**Andrew Lynch**

CEO



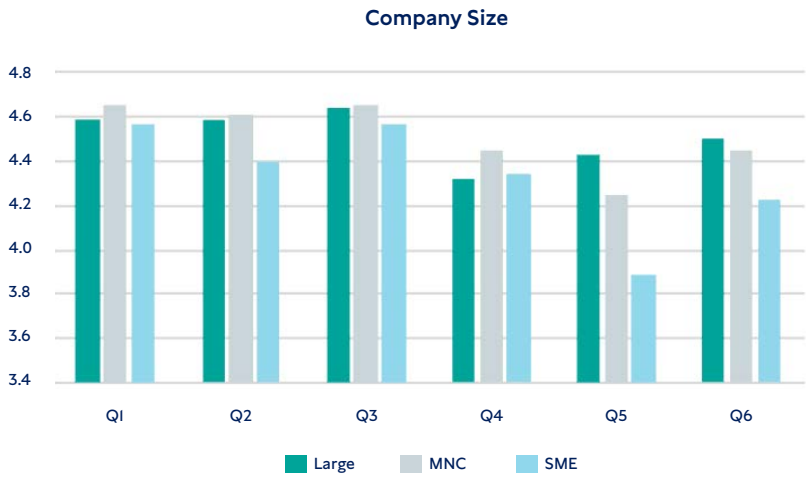
# The Questions

Candidates are asked 6 questions and asked to provide a rating from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). The questions are based on the following:

- 1. Interviewers left the candidate with a positive impression of the company.
- 2. They got a good sense of the culture of the company from the process.
- 3. That they felt the interview was fair and balanced.
- 4. That they left the interview with a strong understanding of the role and expectations of them should they be successful.
- 5. That they received adequate feedback from the company (via Mason Alexander) following the interview.
- 6. That overall, it was a positive experience.

# The Results

When it comes to the size of the company, it's clear that SME businesses are falling short when compared to Multinationals (MNC) or Large businesses. In particular, we are seeing this in the area of adequate feedback.



Indeed, in all questions, SMEs lagged their larger or international rivals with the exception of the communication of the role and expectations (Q4) where they were marginally ahead of Large companies. Interestingly, the second weakest question for SMEs was that of company culture and candidates getting a good sense of this during the interview process. In order to win in what is a very competitive environment for talent, we are seeing that companies who ensure that candidates meet multiple people from various departments, not just potential colleagues from the hiring team as well as companies who ensure that substantial time is spent on articulating the type of work environment and the vision of the organization during the interview process, are winning the candidate race. The hard facts of salary and remuneration are only a factor in the overall decision-making process of a candidate. Exposure, new learnings and the ability to be involved in decision making are all exciting sells for candidates in today's climate and SMEs are perfectly positioned to offer this but they are often falling short in terms of its delivery during the early stages of recruitment.

While on an overall experience, Large companies edge out their MNC counterparts, on average across all questions, Large and MNC deliver the same average score of 4.5. Furthermore, MNCs outperform Large companies on all questions with the exception of post interview feedback. From our experience, the success of MNCs is in part down to the investment that larger organisations can put into their hiring and recruitment processes. They have the ability to develop and continue to evolve their hiring processes as well as establishing clear structures to help support their hiring managers and this is all done on a global level. However, sometimes this can lead to a one size fits all approach and certain structure don't necessarily conform to local culture and expectations – something which indigenous businesses can win out on. For example, hiring processes and decision making in MNCs will often be slower than in an SME and in a market where first mover advantage is real, this can be a key differentiator.

A positive for all size companies, was the fact that interviews were perceived to be fair and balanced. This was the highest scoring result for all size businesses and this was closely followed by interviewers delivering a positive impression of the company. Clearly, businesses of all sizes agree that first impressions count and are conscious of this when meeting potential new employees for the first time.

In terms of sector, Construction and Banking delivered an Overall Experience ranking of a 4, the two lowest sectors. A positive was to see results that traditional sectors such as Manufacturing and Insurance are able to compete successfully against Technology and Online companies when delivering on candidate experience.



# Interview top tips for a positive candidate experience

We live in the age of social media – people can be quick to post their opinions and that hard-earned employer brand and reputation can very quickly become damaged. It's vital that all candidates you engage with are left with a positive impression. A regretted candidate could, someday, become a customer or a competitor of your business and its best to have them thinking positively of their engagement with you and your company. Here are Mason Alexander's 20 tips to a positive interview experience:

1. Try and be **flexible** with dates and times for interviews, especially with senior candidates.
2. Be clear as to the **format** of the interview ahead of time, competency based or technical interviews are very different to a standard conversational interview.
3. Ensure a candidate has something to drink and don't dive straight into questions, **put them at ease** – you'll gain some insight into their personality by doing so!
4. Make sure to introduce yourself and give an **overview** of the company, it's strategy and where this role fits into that.
5. Outline how the interview will be **structured**, areas to be covered or if others will join later and if so, who they are and why they are meeting the candidate.
6. Focus on the **role specific** questions early and focus on company culture at the end – remember you are trying to impress so end on a positive message that you control.
7. Be conscious of using internal **acronyms** that candidates wouldn't understand.
8. Open ended **questions** are best – it allows you to learn more about them.
9. Take **notes**, you might pick up on areas you may not have considered and you can return to these later in the interview or the process.
10. Make sure you ask for **real life examples**, "tell me about a time when..."
11. Always be prepared with a **follow up question**, a simple "what happened as a result" or "why" will give good insight into the candidate's communication skills.
12. Stay **engaged**, if you are waiting on a call, text or email, say it at the outset.
13. Make sure to allow time for the candidate to **ask questions of you**.
14. Remember that you are wanting to **learn** about the person in front of you, if you are speaking more than the candidate, you are speaking too much!
15. Make sure to outline the **next steps** in the process, who will be involved and the timeline.
16. If possible, bring the candidate on a tour of the office, show them where they would sit – be proud of the **work environment**.
17. Make sure to always provide **feedback** at each stage, even after a first round moving to second, e.g. "We are bringing the candidate back because of X but we had some concerns around Y that will need to be addressed."
18. Provide **constructive feedback** to regretted candidates and do it as quickly as possible once you have decided.
19. Speed – where at all possible, make sure and only begin a **hiring process** when you are committed to it and ensure there aren't weeks between interviews.
20. If there are delays, make sure to **check in regularly**, the candidate may decide to take something else if not.