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Interview Guide

The interview is an exchange: the employer is evaluating you, and you should be assessing the employer. Making the most of an interview requires research and preparation, a strategy during the interview, and appropriate follow-up after the interview.

Types of Interviews

Screening/Phone:

The first discussion you have with an employer is typically a 30 minute conversation. At this stage, the conversation is general and often via phone. The recruiter's task is to reduce the candidate pool to a manageable number. Your tone of voice, conversational style, and energy level are especially important during a telephone interview as the employer cannot see your positive body language. Be sure to make the call in a quiet location where you won't be interrupted and where cell phone reception is dependable. Also have your resume and questions handy. Consider sitting at your desk so that you can simulate a face to face interview and project your voice.

Zoom/MS Teams Interviews:

Here is a checklist for ensuring a successful online interview.

- Exchange emails and links and know who is connecting with whom, and send your cell to the interviewer.
- Be sure the Internet connection for your interview location is reliable.
- Do a test call the day before your interview to ensure good connection.
- Log in to the site prior to the interview so you are ready to go at the scheduled time.
- Should something go wrong, check all connections and remember to stay calm. Don't let this throw you off.
- Be sure there are no distractions around you during the interview especially loud noises.
- Be sure you have sent the interviewer your most recent resume.
- Dress professionally from head to toe. Even though they can't see you in person, this is important.
- Make sure the interviewing area where you are sitting is clean and organized.
- Interview the way you would if you were face to face.

Formal Interview:

Interviewers at this stage are typically those who will directly supervise or work with you. Keep in mind that your audience has changed. Depending on the situation, the employer's objective at this stage is to identify a few (2-5) finalists for the position or to make a hiring decision. This interview typically takes place on-site at the employer's office and involves several interviewers. Questions are a bit more penetrating, often requiring you to apply your experience to job-related situations. You will be expected to ask more sophisticated questions given all you have learned from your previous interview. Often, second interviews include a meal with your interviewers. Do not mistake it as less important than the other conversations during the day. Decline alcoholic beverages even if those interviewing you order them.

Group:

You may be interviewed by a group of individuals, perhaps a search committee or management team. The challenge here is to connect with all interviewers by maintaining eye contact with each member of the group as you respond to the questions. Bring several copies of your resume so that each interviewer can have a copy and do your best to obtain a business card from each interviewer. If you aren't able to do so, you may have to call the administrator to ask for an individual's email as you write your thank you notes.

Types of Interview Questions

Résumé Based:

Resume based questions are most common and are based on specific components of the résumé. These questions are often phrased as "Can you tell me about what you did (at your internship)?" or "What responsibilities did you take on as (Treasurer of your club)?" To prepare for these, think about each item on your resume and what was important about each. What did you learn? How did you grow? What skills did you gain? Use specific examples from your experiences to answer these questions!

Theoretical:

Questions such as "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" or "How would you describe yourself?" are also very common questions. You can best answer these questions by anticipating questions based on the job description and preparing some responses, citing examples from your resume. It is important to give tightly-focused, concrete answers to even the vaguest of questions. Accomplish this by relaying real world stories as examples.

Behavioral:

This type of interview question is based on the theory that past behaviors predict future behaviors. These questions will often be phrased as "Tell me about a time when (you had to be creative to solve a problem)." When answering these questions **describe the specific actions that you took to impact the situation. Don't focus on what others did and be sure to stress the results of your efforts.**

Preparing for Interviews

1. Research yourself. Identify your strongest skills and think about how they apply to the specific position.
2. Research the contacts. Before the interview, you should know as much as possible about the background of those you will interview with including their career path and background. You will impress the person with your knowledge and preparation.
3. Create a list of questions to ask. You do not want to appear as though you are reading from a script, but you do want to make sure you have questions prepared ahead of time.
4. Another great way to conduct research is to speak with alumni/ae or others who work for the employer. Ask about the current interview process and keys to success.
5. "Tell me about yourself..." Almost every interview starts with this question. As you prepare for your interview, consider how you will answer this question including
 - Where you are from
 - Your choice of USJ and your major
 - Significant events that have impacted your direction
 - How your education has contributed to your career direction
 - What you are looking for

The Day of the Interview

1. Review your interview packet. Be sure you have all the materials including extra copies of the resume.
2. Dress for the interview one step up from what you believe employees wear on a normal day, and always err on the conservative side.
3. Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
4. Remember to be friendly and courteous to every person you meet
5. First impressions-smile, eye contact, handshake
6. Listen carefully
7. Be positive and confident
8. Be sure to get the interviewer's business card

Review the Interview Questions and Legal sections that follow and map out a strategy for the questions you would consider most difficult. It is important to practice and prepare but don't memorize your answers.

Questions Recruiters May Ask

Many of these questions are taken from or based on information taken from publications of the National Association of Colleges and Employers

1. Tell me about yourself

2. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
3. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
4. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
5. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
6. How has your college experience prepared you for this career?
7. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful here?
8. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
9. Why are you interested in this field? What do you know about it?
10. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
11. Why did you select your college or university?
12. What is the most challenging situation you have ever faced?
13. What do you like to do when you are not working?

14. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic abilities and work ethic?

15. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
16. How do you work under pressure?

17. Why are you interested in ABC organization?

18. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
19. What have you learned from your mistakes?
20. Where else are you interviewing?
21. Tell me about a difficult situation when you needed to keep a positive attitude. What did you do?
22. Give me an example of a time you had to make an important decision. How did you make the decision? How does it affect you today?
23. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation?
24. Discuss a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work?
25. Give me an example of a time you had to persuade other people to take action. Were you successful?
26. **Why should I hire you? What sets you apart from other people who want this job?**

Questions You Might Ask

Asking questions is viewed positively as showing your interest. Ask questions that will add to your knowledge base, not questions that should have been answered through basic research.

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1. What qualities are you looking for in a candidate for this position?
2. Where is the last individual who held the job working now?
3. What is your organization's biggest challenge?
4. What role would I have in addressing this challenge?
5. Who are the other people with whom I would work?
6. What are going to be my most important relationships: clients, customers, other employees?
7. What is the work environment/culture like?
8. What professional development opportunities are there?
9. What does it take to be very successful in this company?
10. Can you describe a typical workday?
11. What question do you have about my qualifications or background that would be helpful to clarify? (Asked near the end of an interview)
12. **Can you tell me the next steps in the hiring process?**

Legal Issues

Federal regulations prohibit interviewers from making hiring decisions based on age, national origin, race, gender, religion, citizenship, sexual orientation and disability, unless it is directly relevant to core job functions that cannot be accommodated in a reasonable way. If asked a question you are not comfortable answering, you have 3 options- answer it directly, deflect the question or tell the interviewer you are not comfortable answering it.

If you think you have been asked a discriminatory question, notify a CDC staff member to discuss the circumstances.

After the Interview

You should send a unique thank you to **all** individuals who you have interviewed **within 24 hours of the meeting**. By writing unique letters to each interviewer, you have the opportunity to reference specific discussions or points brought up in each interview. If you did not obtain each person's business card during the interview, contact the employer's administrative assistant to verify the spelling and titles of individuals you met with.

Information to Include in Interview Thank You Letter

Heading/Contact Information: Same as cover letter

First paragraph: Cite the day on which you interviewed. Express your appreciation for the interviewer's time and your interest in the position and organization.

Second paragraph: Use this paragraph to make one or two final points about your qualifications and interests based on the interview. Underscore one or two of your most relevant skills or experiences. Highlight skills or experience which you did not (for whatever reason) focus on during the interview, but which you know will be key consideration factors. Although you need to make sure you express these ideas clearly and fully, this paragraph should be **brief and to the point!**

Final paragraph: This is a good place to restate the timeframe the employer gave you, to express your appreciation again for the chance to meet with her or him, and to affirm your continuing interest in the job and company/organization.

Sample Thank You Email

Email Subject: Rogers Interview Thank You

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to interview me on Wednesday, June 27. I found our discussion extremely informative, and it further solidified my desire to work for *ASPEN Magazine*. I was particularly struck by the enthusiasm you displayed as you reflected on your experiences working as an editorial assistant at *ASPEN* and your movement up to the position of Editor-in-Chief.

I look forward to the next step in the interviewing process, and will call your assistant, as we discussed, in one week to follow-up. I look forward to speaking with you again soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Follow Up

If the interviewer tells you they will be making a decision in the next 2 weeks, call then in 2 weeks and 1 day. Simply state that you had been told that a decision would be made in two weeks, that you remain interested in the position and are calling to follow up on the status of your application.