

Interviewing:

Entry Point
Into Your Profession



Pacific University
Career Development Center

TIPS AND TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

“The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing in the right place, but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.” Dorothy Neville

TIPS ON INTERVIEWING

- Be prepared and do your homework!
- Practice, but don't memorize
- Be sincerely interested
- Be “real”
- Have a sense of humor
- Have an opinion
- Be an active listener
- Inquire into the mission of the organization
- Know what type of interview will be held

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are different types of interviewing that can take place. There is a big difference between interviewing one on one and a panel interview. Be prepared and find out who will be around the table before you enter the interview. You can gain this information by calling ahead and speaking with the interview coordinator.

Screening

Allows an employer to screen out candidates who aren't the right fit and screen in candidates who may be. Usually used if the employer has determined a pool of qualified candidates, but wants to meet candidates in person to gauge their fit to the position and the organization.

One on One

Provides an opportunity for an employer to learn more about your experience, skills and personal interest in the organization. Usually used if the employer feels you are qualified, but wants to determine your fit to the role and the organization.

Panel

Several employees gather to question one candidate to determine fit. This can include potential peers, supervisors, subordinates, and sometimes the stakeholders or clients are present.

Job Fair

Provides an opportunity to explore various organizations and positions, get in front of recruiters, size up the applicant competition, and begin to develop a network.

Group

Provides an opportunity for the employer to place several candidates into a competitive interviewing situation to see which candidates will make the grade and have the right fit. Usually used if hiring for several positions at a time.

Marathon

Provides the employer an opportunity to have you spend an extended time at the organization with a cross-section of people to determine if you have the right fit. Also provides an opportunity to assess your genuineness and enthusiasm for the position in comparison to other candidates.

Informational

This type of interviewing is very different from a job interview in that you the jobseeker have made the arrangements. This provides an opportunity to get your foot in the door (skills, résumé, interest) and to learn more about a profession, organization and/or industry. Initial appointment scheduled by phone, e-mail or letter with an in-person meeting.

TIMELINE CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE

- Assess your interests, values & skills
- Research industry, profession, organization & position
- Practice but don't memorize
- Make copies of your résumé
- Know who will be conducting the interview
- Dress the part
- Get directions & parking details

DURING

- Get there early
- Bring copies of your résumé
- Practice professional etiquette towards all you meet
- Answer questions with examples and evidence
- Be an active listener
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Demonstrate a true interest plus a keen sense of curiosity

AFTER

- Send thank-you note/s
- Follow-up with more research
- Determine if the site, job, and culture are a good fit
- Evaluate what went well and what to improve
- Continue your job search (don't sit around waiting for “the call”)

TIMELINE CONSIDERATIONS: PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

Know Yourself

Know the Profession

1) KNOW YOURSELF

Take some time before the interview to do some introspection and self-evaluation. Working through the following exercises is a positive way to transform the “before interview jitters” into constructive activity. By completing this worksheet, you are preparing to answer a broad range of questions rather than a few specific questions. Resist the temptation to memorize “pre-recorded” answers—they will sound contrived. The value of these exercises is to consider your assets and shore up your deficits. As you work through this line of inquiry you will develop a stronger sense of all you can do and what is important to you.

Working through this worksheet is basically a solitary exercise, however if you get stuck, consider asking a friend or family member to give you feedback. Pull out some of your old syllabi or refer to a catalog to remind yourself of skills learned in the classroom. Retrieve old job descriptions to recollect responsibilities and duties performed. Also consider scheduling a time to meet with a career advisor to take an inventory to clarify your interests, skills, values or personal preferences. Call x2916 to schedule an assessment. Another effective way to prepare for the interview is to schedule a mock interview and gain helpful feedback from a career advisor. Call x2845 or x2916 to schedule a time.

INTERESTS ~ Would the work keep your attention?

Rate the following interests with 1 being high and 4 being low (state a brief reason for your interest):

____ helping, serving, informing, caring for, or instructing people

Reason for interest:

____ working with facts, numbers, files, accounts, or business procedures

Reason for interest:

____ developing insights, theories, and innovative ways of doing your work

Reason for interest:

____ operating machines, tools, or materials such as wood or metal

Reason for interest:

APTITUDES ~ Do you have what it takes?

What skills does this particular position require?

Which of these skills do you have?

What evidence can you provide to demonstrate your abilities?

What skills are missing?

Strategies to shore up weak area:

VALUES ~ Does the work have meaning for you?

Would you value group work or autonomy? Why?

What type of work environment would you be most productive in?

Do you enjoy solving problems under pressure?

Would you avoid pressure and lean towards a more tranquil work environment?

Would you value a job that generates respect among friends, family and community?

Do you value a high or low degree of activity and novelty in your work environment?

When you get up in the morning, what type of work would move you quickly toward the door?

At the end of the day, what do you hope to have accomplished?

PERSONAL PREFERENCE ~ *Would it be a good fit?*

List inter-personal skills you have developed
communication style

learning approach

role as team member

Consider your personality
what motivates you

how you solve problems

how you approach projects

what energizes you

list personal strengths
no modesty allowed—be honest and let your good works shine!:

list personal weaknesses
appropriate disclosure—no reason for interviewer to run screaming!:

describe strategies to overcome weaknesses
lessons learned or reframe weakness:

2) KNOW THE PROFESSION

Research done prior to the interview can make the difference between a job offer and no offer. One of the most common recruiter complaints about candidates is that they didn't know much about the broader industry, the profession in general, their specific organization, let alone the position at hand and didn't take the time to find out. The good news is that research done prior to the interview will make you stand out as a candidate and there are many resources to help you in the process.

Utilize internal and external sources of material. Internal resources are those documents the organization produces; it is what they have to say about themselves. This includes company website, employee handbook, company newsletter, brochures or recruitment video's. External resources are what outside sources have to say about the industry, profession in general, the target organization and/or the job at hand. This includes newspapers, professional journals and association websites. Word of mouth is an effective resource as well ~ talk to professors, alumni, friends and family.

INDUSTRY CONCERNS AND FRONT PAGE NEWS

What pressing issues are facing the larger industry?

How might demographics impact the organization?

What technological advances are anticipated?

How might current political and social trends affect the profession?

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETIES

What research is "hot" within the profession?

Who are the thought leaders in the field?

What are the current areas of concern to the professionals?

What are the average salaries of professionals (beginning wage vs. experienced)?

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND MISSION

What makes the organization distinct? What is their "brand"?

What is their mission?

What does the ideal candidate profile look like?

What is the reputation of organization within the larger community?

What are the formal and informal lines of communication: written or oral tradition?

Who are the leaders within the organization?

How do evaluations take place and what do they address?

JOB DESCRIPTION AND DUTIES

Hierarchy: What is the organizational structure and how does this position fit in?

Supervision: Who is your direct supervisor and do you supervise others?

Peers: Who do you work with to get the job done?

Clients: Who are the recipients of the service/product?

Stakeholders: Who are the people to whom the organization is accountable?

Benefits: What are the perks and how long does it take to get them?

Responsibilities: What are the daily, monthly, quarterly, yearly duties?

Skill Set: What does the description say about required and preferred skills?

Success: What does it take to be successful in the position?

TIMELINE CONSIDERATIONS: PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

Mock Interview Feedback

Meet with Career Advisor

Non-verbal communication:	Observation
Expression	
Eye Contact	
Energy	
Body Movement	
Attentive Listener	

Communication Skills	Observation
Voice Quality	
Speaking Rate	
Expressiveness/Clarity	
Grammar	
Pauses/Silence	

Content	Observation
Stresses positives and strengths	
Relates self to program	
Examples, descriptors, statistics	
Provides relevant information	
Demonstrates knowledge/interest	
Handles liabilities/weaknesses	

TIMELINE CONSIDERATIONS: DURING THE INTERVIEW

Stages: A Natural Progression

While not all interviews will follow the exact stages as laid out in this chart, the interview will consist of a beginning, middle and ending. Most hiring decisions are made during the first five minutes, so don't minimize the introduction stage—first impressions do count! During the middle stage you will most likely discuss education, experience and/or goals in any order or sequence. You can count on being asked where you have been (education) what you have done (experience) and where you are going (goals). Naturally there will be a time to discuss the position at hand. This is where all your hard work preparing for the interview will pay off! Close by noting specific information on the hiring timeline and leave on a positive note.

STAGE	POSSIBLE TOPICS	INTERVIEWER CONCERNS	YOUR PART
Introduction (bonding/impression) many decisions are made during the first 5 minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Small talk • Build Rapport • Opening question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image compatible with profession • Poise, manners, ease in social situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate dress • Well groomed • Firm handshake • Eye contact • Friendliness
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason for choosing school/profession • Areas of interest • Special achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of education to program • Sufficiency of training • Breadth and depth of knowledge • Intellectual capability • Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate key aspects of education • Emphasize skills gained (problem solving, leadership, etc. • Give examples
Related Experience/internship/field work/ summer jobs/part time work and other relevant experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of experience • Level of responsibilities • Major accomplishments • Problems faced • Work preference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of experience • Basic work ethics • Realistic awareness of strengths and weaknesses • Productivity • Energy level • Interpersonal skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match skills to program needs. • Build bridge - past experience. • Examples emphasizing strengths • Evidence based responses
Career Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short & long term goals • Understand profession • Motivation • Desire for further training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of goals • Seriousness of purpose • Career oriented • Interest in profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear about goals and how they relate to position at hand • Relate how they will benefit the organization
Discuss Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities • Current and future trends • Opportunities within organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation • Knowledge of position • Interest in learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to ask informed and relevant questions • Be careful not to ask questions in literature/web • Provide evidence
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss deadlines and process • Parting ways on a cordial note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize and end the time together. • Final appraisal of candidate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive and don't over stay your welcome • Note hiring timeline • Observe "ending" cues • Thank you

TIMELINE CONSIDERATIONS: AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Lessons Lived

Lessons Learned

Answer these questions immediately after the interview. Most folks forget 80% of the content within 48 hours after the interview. Seize the opportunity to glean the lessons learned from the experience.

Things learned about the position/organization:

Things you learned about yourself:

What were the questions they asked:

What went well:

What you would do differently:

What needs to be done next:

Write note of thanks

Research topic

Decision date

Contact person

Contact referral

Tally Ho! Move on to the next job lead. For good mental health, don't sit around waiting for "the call". It may never come. Most organizations will contact the people they don't hire. However some (less civilized) organizations never take the time to let you know they have hired someone else. Keep your job search moving forward until you have a bona fide job offer in hand.

It could have been a spectacular interview from your perspective, but for one reason or another, they chose another candidate. Don't get discouraged and don't take it personally! There are many reasons why an employer chooses one candidate over another that may have absolutely nothing to do with you; the boss's niece applied, they hired someone who talked like, smiled like (or smelled like) the previous valued employee. You won't know why, and they would never admit the true reason. Pack your job search bag, hit the resume road, and keep up the good work. The best position may yet to be discovered. As you move away from one more *no*, you are getting that much closer to the big *YES!*