OVERVIEW AND GOALS OF INTERVIEWING

Interviewing is a mutual exchange of information with a specific focus and should be viewed positively. Prepping before the interview is absolutely essential. Be sure to know (1) yourself and your unique qualifications, (2) what jobs match your qualifications, and (3) about the hiring organization.

Candidate Goals:
- Communicate your qualifications for the position by answering questions
- Obtain information about the position and organization by asking questions
- Impress the employer with your communication skills, knowledge, and overall presence
- Determine if the position matches your needs
- Learn about the job responsibilities, organizational culture, and management style

Employer Goals:
- Gather information about you by asking questions
- Provide information about the position and organization by answering questions
- Promote the organization and attract the most appropriate candidate
- Determine which candidate will best fit with the organization
- Learn more about the candidates’ work history, educational background, accomplishments, transferable skills, personality traits, and other qualities

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Phone or Internet: Often used by recruiters to reduce the pool of applicants. They tend to be highly structured and seek clarification of information on the resume.

Individualized: Traditional face-to-face interview between the candidate and the employer.

Panel: The candidate is interviewed by multiple individuals from or associated with the organization at the same time.

Group: The candidate interviews alongside his/her competition.

QUESTIONS THE EMPLOYER MIGHT ASK & HOW TO ANSWER THEM

- **Tell me about yourself.** This is a common opener and an invitation to “sell yourself.” Develop a brief summation of your background (an elevator pitch) leading into your interest and desire to work for the organization as well as your qualifications for the position.

- **What do you know about our organization?** Demonstrate that you have taken the time to do some research, but don’t be a know-it-all. “In my job search, I’ve investigated a number of companies, and yours interests me because…”
  1. Age of the organization and reputation
  2. Services or products
  3. Sales, assets, and earnings
  4. Size/Growth patterns
  5. Philosophy and mission
  6. Number of employees
  7. New products/projects

- **Why do you want to work for us?** Your homework should include learning enough about the company to answer this question in regard to their interests. When appropriate, indicate that you share a mutual appreciation for the things they hold in high regard.
• **What can you do for us that someone else can't?** Toot your own horn and be confident when answering this question. Use your experience as ammunition to create a favorable impression.

• **What do you find most/least attractive about this position?** State three or four attractive factors; don’t dwell on least attractive factors too long.

• **Why should we hire you?** Talk about your experience/classes/internships, etc. and about what you can do for the company.

• **What do you look for in a job?** Keep your answer oriented toward opportunities at the organization rather than your own personal security.

• **How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our company?** Be realistic. Don’t promise the world too soon. Let them know that you would be ready to pull your own weight from the first day, and you would be ready and willing to learn anything to help make a contribution as soon as possible.

• **In your last position, what factors did you like the most/least?** Be positive. Describe more features that you liked than you didn’t like. Don’t cite personality conflicts, as they can be red flags.

• **Why are you leaving (did you leave) your last position?** Be brief and to the point. If you were laid off or terminated, say so. Otherwise, indicate that the move was your own decision, the result of your actions. Do not mention personality conflicts. Remember that your references are likely to be checked, so don’t concoct a story for the interviewer!

• **What are your long-range goals?** Relate your goals to the company. “In a firm like yours, I would like to….”

• **How successful do you think you have been?** Present a positive and confident picture of yourself. Be careful, however, not to overstate your case. It may cause the interviewer to wonder if you are trying to fool him/her or yourself.

• **What would your salary requirements be?** Salary is a delicate topic. In your homework, try to find out if there is a salary range attached to the position. Based upon the reasonable range that you identified in your preparation, say: “I know that the standard range for this type of position is $(fill in the blank) to $(fill in the blank); naturally, I’d prefer to be at the high end.” You will have made it clear that you have done your homework and, while stating your preference for a high salary, you have not drawn any lines in the sand.

**MORE QUESTIONS THE EMPLOYER MIGHT ASK YOU**

• Why are you interested in this position and/or organization?

• Why did you choose the college you attended? Are you happy with that choice?

• What was your major and why did you choose it?

• What kind of grades did you have in college?

• How did you balance your studies with other activities in which you participated?

• What is your career objective now?

• What is your most significant accomplishment?

• Give me an example of how you handle working under pressure.

• Have you ever worked long hours?

• What is the toughest decision you have ever made?

• What is the hardest work you have ever done?

• Tell me about your leadership experience.

• Why do you want a career in this field?

• What is your major strength/weakness?

• What type of career opportunities do you expect?

• Where do you see yourself three years from now?

• How would you describe your personality?

• How do you plan on reaching your career goals?

• Give me an example of a time you worked in a team/group and the role you played.
S.T.A.R. INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE
Interviewers are asking more behavioral questions these days; that is, they are asking how you have acted/reacted in past circumstances because past behavior is a good indicator of future behavior. To prepare for these types of questions, you must be ready to recall experiences and how you handled yourself. Examples of behavioral interview questions include:

Tell me about a time when you…
- Worked effectively under pressure
- Were creative in solving a problem
- Were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours
- Handled a difficult situation with a co-worker
- Had to make an important decision with limited facts
- Had to handle an irate customer

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is the STAR technique, as outlined below, adapted from “How to Interview Like you Mean It” produced by Mr. Donald Asher.

Situation or Task
Describe a specific situation, event, or task that you experienced—not a generalized description of what you have done or tend to do. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. As appropriate, you may reference a job, a class, volunteer work, co-curricular or athletic involvements, etc.

Action
Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did—not the efforts of the team. Don’t tell what you might do, tell what you did.

Results
What happened? How did it end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

EXAMPLE

ST: Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, The Beacon, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

A: I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of The Beacon circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set up a special training session for the account executives with a Graham School of Business professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

R: We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent over the same period last year.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK ON THE INTERVIEW
The interview is a two-way street; it is intended to be a dialogue. Remember that while the interviewer controls the pace of the interview, you play a large part in controlling both the content and the tone of the interview. You can do this by asking clarifying questions, which shows that you are actively thinking about the interview. You also should have 7-10 questions prepared to ask the interviewer; for example:

- What would be the typical career path for someone who starts in this position?
• What positive changes and signs have you seen in this organization during the time you have worked here?
• What is your (the interviewer’s) background and how did you progress into the position you currently hold?
• What are some of the things this organization is doing to stay competitive?
• Could you further elaborate on X responsibility? (You should know the responsibilities but you may want to key in on one to get more information)
• How is the department organized?
• What will be the first projects that I should expect to tackle?
• What is the day-to-day work environment like?
• Is there a training and or cross-training program?
• What skills/attributes are important to succeed in this position?
• What are the department’s/organization’s goals for the year? In three years?
• How is job performance measured?
• If hired, would I report directly to you or to someone else? If someone else, can I meet him/her?
• Could you give me a brief tour? I’d enjoy seeing where people work.
• What is the next step in the process? When can I expect to hear from you?

**SALARY NEGOTIATION TIPS**

- Understand what your education and experience are “worth”. Utilize online databases such as [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com), [www.salaryexpert.com](http://www.salaryexpert.com), and [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com) to research salary statistics and ranges associated with your credentials.
- Be aware of your financial situation. Calculate how much you would need to effectively cover your expenses. Also consider cost-of-living differences in geographic areas and cities.
- Do not discuss salary until the second or third interview. Use the first interview to increase your understanding of the position and, consequently, get a better idea of salary expectations.
  - A second interview is a sign that the employer is interested in you for the position. You may discuss salary and benefits at this point, but be tactful during this stage.
  - Postpone negotiating a final figure until a job offer is extended.
- If you are asked about your salary requirements, you may say that salary is negotiable. This will give you time think or allow the employer to offer numbers first. Using the aforementioned resources will allow you to approach negotiation with an informed, reasonable salary range. Be sure that the lowest figure can cover your expenses.
- If an employer’s salary offer is too low, reference the statistics you researched and reiterate why you are qualified.
  - Look beyond salary and review health benefits, profit sharing, insurance options, vacation, parking, overtime, bonuses, etc. Such benefits can balance a lower salary.
- Always be professional and undemanding about salary.
- Expect to earn an entry-level salary as a new graduate but also recognize how your education and experiences (e.g., internships) contribute to your ability to negotiate.
The importance of appearance can’t be overemphasized. Some interviewers form their opinion of a candidate within the first few minutes of the interview. The first impression you make is crucial to the tone you hope to set for the rest of the interview. Don’t skimp on your clothing budget—plan to get the best you can reasonably afford. Better materials look nicer and wear longer. Whatever you decide to wear, be sure it is clean, neatly pressed, and well-tailored to you. A good fit can make even a bargain suit look great. It is always safe to go a little conservative too; you can make your fashion statement after you get "Employee of the Month"!

The following is a quick guide to a conservative, well-put together business outfit. Remember to research proper attire; many companies may be more or less conservative than this. See our Dressing for Success packet for more tips!

**WOMEN**

Suit  
Solid colors give a more polished impression than a combination of solids and patterns. Blouses should be simple—without lots of ruffles, patterns, or busy details. Midsection should be completely covered.

Hemline  
Just below the knee to no more than two inches above the knee is best.

Hosiery  
Black or other neutral tones that match your skin tone.

Shoes  
½ - 2 inch heels, closed toe pumps with little detail; must be shined and heels must be in good condition.

Purse  
Try not to carry a purse if possible; rather, consider only a portfolio with extra copies of your resume, paper for notes, and a pen. If you must carry a purse, it should be a subtle color that corresponds with the rest of your attire.

Jewelry  
Don’t wear large dangling earrings or chunky or noisy bracelets. Try not to wear more than two rings and a conservative necklace. Try to only wear 3 items of jewelry at once.

Hair  
Clean and well groomed are the key components here. Go easy on the perfumed hair sprays and don’t get too poufy!

Makeup  
Go for the natural look here. Avoid perfumes and leave your candy colored nail polishes at home.

**MEN**

Suit  
Black, dark gray, navy, or brown are the best colors; pinstripes are fine.

Shirts  
White or light blue cotton shirts with long sleeves ending just below the wrist bone.

Ties  
Not too narrow nor too wide; select one with evenly spaced small patterns or stripes. Stay away from flashy ties.

Hair  
Avoid beards, goatees, sideburns, etc. If you do wear any of these, keep them well trimmed. Also, it is a good idea to get a haircut a few days before the interview.

Socks  
Dark shades that match the color of your suit.

Shoes  
Black or brown shoes with leather soles coordinated with your suit color. Have shoes with shoelaces rather than loafers. Make sure shoes are shined.

Jewelry  
Only wear one or two rings. Earrings and other types of jewelry are best removed.
Before:
- Get plenty of rest to help present yourself in the best light.
- Practice interviewing and answering sample questions. Schedule an in-person mock interview or use the mock interview module in Spartan Career Path.
- Anticipate the interviewer’s questions and conduct the necessary company research to provide an informed, professional response.
- Be on time! If possible, arrive 10-15 minutes early. Take a dry run the day before. You will never know when construction may become an issue or if you will have to pay to park!
- Go to the interview alone. Do not bring your spouse, family, or children.
- Create a good impression when you arrive. Be polite and courteous to the receptionist.
- Always prepare extra copies of your resume, even if one has already been sent.
- Always have your list of references prepared and take extra copies with you to the interview.
- Bring your portfolio if you have one. Have a pad folio and pen/pencil with you.
- Develop 7-10 questions that you would like to ask the employer.
- Pay close attention to your appearance. Look polished, groomed, neat, and clean.
- Be prepared to take a computer or written test. Leave yourself extra time for a test or company tour.

During:
- When you greet the interviewer(s), smile and introduce yourself.
- Shake hands firmly and calmly with each person in the room.
- Show enthusiasm. Be cheerful, friendly, and confident by maintaining good eye contact and smiling.
- Pay attention to what the interviewer is saying. Don’t daydream or think about your next comment.
- Make eye contact with each person in the room as you answer the questions.
- Body language is key! Sit up straight, look alert and confident.
- Speak up! Keep the conversation moving.
- Be tactful. Always have a positive statement regarding former employers.
- Honesty is the best policy. Remember…employers do check references.
- Emphasize your strengths, but do not brag.

Towards The End:
- Ask questions. Demonstrate your verbal communication skills. Come prepared with a list of informed questions to ask the interviewer(s).
- The interviewer should be the one to initiate the discussion of salary. If the subject is not brought up, do not ask how much you will be paid. Generally, salary is discussed during the job offer process after your references are called.
- Reiterate your interest! Don’t plead, but make it clear that you want the job. Say how interested you are in the position and find out when you will be notified about the results of the interview and hiring process.
- Make sure to ask for a business card of each person that you meet with. If the individual does not have a business card make sure to write down their name and position title in your pad folio before you leave so you may follow up with a thank you letter.

After:
- Send any requested information to the company (health forms, transcripts, etc.)
- Remember to send a thank you letter. It will set you apart from the crowd and show that you are really interested in the job.
- If your first attempt does not end in success, do not be discouraged. You have gained experience and skills that will help you in your next attempt.
THANK YOU LETTERS

Thank you letters should always be sent within 24 hours after an interview. They can be handwritten, typed or sent electronically. The letter does not have to be lengthy, but needs to thank the person for his/her time, re-emphasize your particular skills that will be assets, and re-state your interest in the position. Thank you letters make a very favorable impression upon employers and should not be overlooked!

LETTERS OF ACCEPTANCE/DECLINE/WITHDRAWAL

You may need to respond positively to a job offer in writing. This should be typed and should express your enthusiasm for starting your new job. You may need to confirm starting dates, salary, benefits, etc., in this letter, but you should discuss these with your future employer before you actually sign your name to anything.

You also may find yourself declining an offer for a position. This should be typed and should thank the employer for the offer. You should give one or two reasons why you are declining the offer, making sure to keep them professional. Don’t burn any bridges—this could be a future employer or client of yours. Short and simple is best in this situation. It is also appropriate to notify a prospective employer of your decision to withdraw from the selection process.
3420 Last Tree Lane  
York, PA 17403

DATE

Mr. Gary Employer  
Verizon Communications, Inc.  
3407 W. MLK Jr. Blvd.  
York, PA 17403

Dear Mr. Employer:

*Opening – Restate the position you are looking for and where you met with the person*

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me to discuss the customer service and marketing trainee position. I certainly appreciate your time and attention in the midst of so many candidates seeking jobs.

*Tailor the following paragraphs based on the organization*

You were extremely thorough in explaining the position. I enjoyed meeting the team members and was highly impressed by their collaborative and positive work environment.

I want to reaffirm my interest in the position and my desire to contribute to your customer service department. My solid education in York College of Pennsylvania’s Marketing major and the fact that I have worked my way through college demonstrate work ethic and determination—two qualities that you said were important to success at Verizon.

*Conclusion*

Thank you again for your time and consideration of my qualifications for the position. You may reach me at 717-123-4567 or at ccandidate@ycp.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Candidate

8/2015