Interviewing: Best Practices to Land the Job

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Interviewing

- Strategies for success
- Tips and etiquette
Strategy

2

3

5
The 2 fundamental questions any potential employer is trying to answer during an interview

The 3 key things you want the interviewer(s) to know about you by the time you walk out the door

5 common questions to prepare for
2 fundamental questions

Your potential employer wants to know:

- Can you do the job?
- Will you be a good fit?

(You want to know this too!)
Can you do the job?

- You have the most control over answering this question
  - Strategy: continue making the case you started in your cover letter and resume, giving clear examples of times when you have demonstrated success performing key aspects of the job
- Story telling
  - Being able to provide concrete examples in the form of a story is more memorable and convincing
Will you be a good fit?

- You have somewhat less control over the outcome to this question—it’s more subjective
- Strategy: present your best self
  - confident
  - comfortable
  - enthusiastic
  - articulate
3 Things About You

- What 3 things do you most want the interviewer(s) to know about you by the time you walk out the door?
- Brainstorm your key qualities as they relate to this job
  - narrow down to 3
  - develop 2-3 examples from your work and/or volunteer experiences that demonstrate each of these 3 qualities
- Write these three key words or phrases down and bring to interview as a reminder for yourself
Brainstorming

- Who are you and what are you like?
  - Characteristics and traits you possess that will be an asset to the company and the position

- Can you do the job?
  - Experience, education/training and skills that make you qualified for the position

- Will you fit the culture of the organization?
  - Your ability to function as a team player and generally fit in to the organization
During the Interview

- For any question you are asked, consider pivoting to one of the three things

- Whether an interview is
  - very informal and chatty
  - very formal and rigid
  - or somewhere in between...

...you know what you want to get across, so find ways to work these three things in!
5 COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for our organization?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What are your greatest weaknesses?
- Tell us about a time when...
“Tell us about yourself”

_In other words…_

“Walk us through the _highlights_ of your resume”

**DO:**
- Highlight recent and relevant work history and activities
- Use one or two of your three key points as a focus

**DON’T:**
- Go through your whole resume or life story
- Feel bound to follow chronological or reverse chronological order
“Why do you want to work for our organization?”

In other words…

“What do you know about us?”

This is your opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the company/organization

- overall mission
- place within the industry
- reputation and work atmosphere

End your answer with your desire to bring your skills and experience to their mission/company/team
“What are your greatest strengths?”

In other words…

What makes you a good match for this job?

- Work in 2-3 of your key points
- Remember the job description
  - Give additional examples of the strengths you focused on in your cover letter
  - Focus on one or two points mentioned in the job description that you didn’t fit into your cover letter
“What are your greatest weaknesses?”

In other words…

“Are you self-aware, and can you change your behavior as needed?”

- Change the language to “challenge”, and use the past tense
  - “In my first management position, delegating tasks was a real challenge for me….”

- Discuss how you became aware of the problem (self-analysis, feedback from boss?) and how you worked to fix it (be specific!)
  - “I talked it through with my manager, and we agreed that weekly check-ins with each of my direct reports would assure me that the work was getting done.”
“Tell us about a time when...”

In other words...

“How well do you handle problems and obstacles?”

- These are often referred to as *behavioral* or *situational* questions
- Work in one or more of your key points
- Prepare 3-5 examples about times you successfully handled problems (difficult people, change in deadline, unexpected developments, etc.)
BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

- **Situation**
  - Briefly describe the circumstances.

- **Obstacle**
  - What was the specific problem?

- **Action**
  - What *you* did specifically to resolve the problem.

- **Result**
  - What was learned, what was changed because of this experience.
Interview Tips and Etiquette

- “Interview Mode”
- Research
- Preparation
- Presentation
- Following Up
Interview Mode

- You should be in it as soon as you send your resume and cover letter out!
- All representations of yourself that are accessible must be professional
  - Voice mail greeting
  - Email address
  - Social media
    - Search yourself on the internet to see what comes up
Research Tips

- **Company**
  - Learn about the company’s history, specialties, areas of service, what makes them unique, etc.
    - company website
    - LinkedIn
    - glassdoor.com
    - media coverage

- **Position**
  - Familiarize yourself with the job description and review the job’s standard description on O*NET.
Research Tips

- Interviewer(s) and format
  - Ask for the details in advance!
  - Look up the people you will be interviewing with on the company’s website and LinkedIn to familiarize yourself with their role and background.

- Questions
  - Check glassdoor.com for others’ interview experiences
  - If the specific company or organization does not come up, enter industry or firm type for some general information
  - Ask your network for the oddest/hardest interview questions they’ve been asked
Preparation Tips

- Choose what to wear in advance, making sure it both looks and feels good
  - Rule of thumb is to dress a step above the everyday norm for the company/organization/industry

- Bring a padfolio or a nice folder
  - copies of your resume and references on resume quality paper
  - your three key attributes
  - questions for the interviewer(s)
Preparation Tips

- Plan your route to arrive early to the area, but wait to check in at actual location until 10-15 minutes prior.

- Accept/ask for water so you can take a sip as you gather your thoughts to answer a difficult question, or if you just feel nervous in general.
Presentation Tips

• Act the part!

• Exude the characteristics of the profession:
  • Engineers: Innovative, Tenacious, Detail Oriented
  • Writers: Artistic, Curious, Creative Thinkers
  • Consultants: Work well under pressure, Critical Thinkers, Leaders
  • Teacher: Concern for others, Independent, Persistent
  • Check O*NET profiles for more of the above
Presentation Tips

- Regardless of the field, you should always present in an interview as
  - Eager
  - Energetic
  - Interested

- Show the above qualities by
  - Being knowledgeable about the company and position
  - Expressing and explaining your excitement and enthusiasm
  - Be ready to discuss ideas you may have to bring to the job or team
Body Language

- Firm handshake
- Good eye contact
- Sit up straight, lean in at times as you answer
- Minimize “tics”, both verbal and physical
Asking Questions

- Always ask questions!

- Standard questions
  - What is a typical day like?
  - Can you tell me more about the responsibilities of the job?

- Deeper questions
  - If I were to be offered the position, what would you like to see me accomplish within the first 3 months of my employment?
  - Tell me about some recent successes of the company.
  - What is the overall structure of the company and how does your department fit into that structure?

- Organic questions that arise during the interview
  - “You mentioned staff retreats. How often do those occur, and what is the goal?”
Thank you notes

- Send notes within 24 hours of the interview
- Send notes to everyone you met at the interview
  - Obtain business cards while there, or call the office afterwards to confirm correct names, spelling, and titles
- Email versus snail mail
  - Email has become accepted and you should definitely use it if the timetable is tight
  - Handwritten notes do stand out
Following Up

- At the end of the interview, ask about their time frame for making a decision
  - If you don’t hear back from them within that time frame, call or email to check in
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Tip sheets on interviewing
  - Barnard.edu/cd > students> tip sheets>interviewing

- Interview Preparation with myself or another counselor in the office
  - Brainstorming and refining answers to common interview questions
  - Mock interviews
    - On-camera option!

- JobInterview
  - e-learning course by Barnard alumna
  - 50% discount available to Barnard alumnae through March 30, 2015
  - Further information on alumnae resources page: http://barnard.edu/cd/alumnae/resources
Questions?