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<http://www2.ucsc.edu/careers/>

## **EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES**

### **KNOW YOURSELF**

- Your personal values
- Your interests
- Your abilities and skills
- Your qualifications for a job
- Your career goals and employment preferences

### **RESEARCH THE COMPANY, AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION**

- Who is the employer? What is their mission?
- What is their product or service?
- What has happened recently? Mergers, deregulation?
- What is the company climate/environment like?
- General industry trends?
- What/who is their competition?

This will allow you to relate your assets to the organization and position and to ask your own well-directed questions during the interview.

### **RESOURCES TO HELP YOU RESEARCH COMPANIES & ORGANIZATIONS**

- The **UCSC Career Center library** has information:
  - On companies and salary scales (In the Job Search section of the library).
  - Profiles of companies who participate in On-Campus Recruitment (Employer Information section)
  - Directories of professional associations (Job Search section)  
Members of the associations can provide information on career fields and companies.
- **The Career Advice Network (CAN)** is a network of UCSC alumni and other professionals who are willing to talk with students about their profession and organization. Use the CAN database in the Career Center.
- Review the **companies' web pages** and their annual reports.
- **Contact the hiring organization** and ask to be sent information
- **McHenry Library** contains information on companies including: *Dun & Bradstreet's Million*

*Dollar Directory; Moody's Industrial Manual; Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations,  
Walker's Manual of Western Corporations.*

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## PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Attend the Career Center's *Interviewing Techniques Workshop*.
- Watch the video tape The Career Center also offers about how to succeed in a job interview.
- **Review questions you are likely to be asked by an employer.**

There are a number of questions commonly asked during an initial employment interview. Be aware of these questions, and develop well thought-out, concise replies. (Sample questions attached.)

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- 1. Screening:** The screening interview is the first interview of a series with the main purpose to screen out inappropriate candidates. It will often take place over the telephone and includes verification of resume information or requests additional information. Screening interviews also may take place during job fairs or on-campus recruitment. The screening interview saves a company considerable time and expense in eliminating weak candidates. Be prepared. Keep a copy of your resume and the job description by the telephone. Research the company and prepare for interview questions as soon as you submit your resume and cover letter.
- 2. One-on-One:** The one-on-one interview includes an employer and the candidate with an exchange of questions and answers.
- 3. Panel Interview:** In the panel interview you are interviewed by several people at the same time. The panel interview is often used to see how you would fit in with the group. It is easy to be intimidated by a panel interview, however, relax and focus your responses on all panel members.
- 4. Group Interview:** Although not common, group interviews are sometimes conducted. In the group interview you are interviewed with several other applicants. In the group interview, the employer will observe interpersonal communication skills along with problem solving skills.
- 5. Series Interview:** In the series interviews, you meet with several individuals within the same organization - one at a time. This is particularly true for high level positions and academic faculty positions. The interviews may take place over 2-3 days. Although you may be asked the same questions several different times, it is important to respond enthusiastically and treat each interview as a single opportunity.
- 6. Stress Interview:** In this interview, the employer asks situational questions which test your ability to handle stressful situations. Recruiters for sales and marketing positions often use this interviewing technique.
- 7. Teleconferencing:** In this day of high tech, many companies are conducting interviews via teleconferencing. By using innovative telecommunication systems, employers can interview a candidate miles away from the company. In this situation, face the camera and respond as if you were talking with an actual person.
- 8. Information Interviewing:** This interview is initiated by the job applicant and is not conducted to obtain a job. Candidates interview professionals in the field *to find out more about careers*. See the Information Interviewing handout in the Career Center for protocol and hints on conducting this type of interview.

## STAGES IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

- 1. First impressions:** Introduction and greeting. Small talk about traffic, weather, etc.

2. **Instructions:** Employer informs applicant of interview process and summarizes the job description.
3. **Interview:** Questions and answers.
4. **Wrap-up:** Applicant has opportunity to ask questions. Employer informs about next stages of the hiring process.
5. **Follow-up:** Applicant follows-up with thank you letter.

## **SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING TIPS**

### **I. PREPARE BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

- Perform a thorough self-evaluation. (Know your strengths and weaknesses.)
- Research the position, the organization and the community.
- Be prepared to discuss how your background can benefit the organization.
- Know your overall and major GPA
- Advise the appropriate people that you would like to use them as references
- Have a professional telephone greeting on your answering machine.
- Rehearse...Rehearse...Rehearse

### **II. DRESS FOR SUCCESS**

- Take time to be well-groomed, have neatly trimmed hair, moderate makeup, be well-groomed and clean.
- Dress in business attire (See handout)
- Look professional. You are more likely to be heard in the interview and employers will be more likely to assume you can perform the job.

### **III. PREPARE TO MARKET YOURSELF**

- Know the points you want to make
- Create an outline of the strengths, skills and assets you have to offer and want to communicate in the interview.
- Develop examples or “stories” that demonstrate in some detail how you have applied these assets. Describe the situation, action and outcome.
- Prepare intelligent questions you want to ask the employer

### **IV. MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION**

- Arrive early.
- Bring extra copies of your resume.
- Be courteous to everyone you meet: receptionists, etc.
- Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile. Be sure you know the correct pronunciation & spelling of the name.
- Shake hands using a firm, but not too firm, grip.
- Show enthusiasm and confidence in your voice and, posture.

### **V. PAY ATTENTION TO BODY LANGUAGE**

- Watch your posture; sit up straight, don't slump
- Rest your hands on the table to help ensure correct posture
- Avoid fidgeting
- Avoid excessive hand gestures
- Make good eye contact and maintain it throughout the interview

### **VI. DURING THE INTERVIEW**

- Listen attentively to the questions
- Use professional language; avoid slang.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question
- Give complete answers and use specific examples and accomplishments whenever possible
- Use illustrations, descriptions, statistics and testimonials to support your claims

- Answer questions with honesty and sincerity
- Be aware of the time allocated
- Speak loudly and clearly enough for the employer to hear you
- Don't criticize former employers faculty or associates.
- Avoid talking about personal problems

- Ask when you can expect to hear back from the employer and the next steps in the process.
- Thank the interviewer and collect a business card or get the person's name, phone and email.

## **VI. THE END OF THE INTERVIEW**

- If the job interests you, ask for the job. For example: "After hearing more about your company and the position I am even more interested in the job. I hope to be working with you soon".

## **VII. FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- Take a moment to make some notes after each interview
- Write and send a thank you letter that same evening
- Forward any requested material promptly
- If you don't hear from the company within one week, contact them about the status of the position

## **TOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**The following are top interview questions from the country's leading employers (compiled by MonsterTRAK.com).**

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you know about our company?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What unique qualities or abilities would you bring to this job?
- What are your major strengths and weaknesses?
- How long do you plan to stay at our company? Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Tell me about a time when you failed at something, and what you did afterwards.
- Describe a time when you worked on a team project. What was your relative position on the team? Were you satisfied with your contribution? How could it have been better?
- Why did you choose your school and course of study?
- Think back to a situation in which you had to resolve a conflict. Tell me how you did it.
- Tell me about a project that you had either at work or school. Describe in detail how you managed it and what was the outcome.
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What salary are you expecting?
- What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?
- Have you any questions for us?

## **Behavior-based interview questions (compiled by the National Association of Colleges and Employers)**

- Describe a situation in which you had to use reference materials to write a research paper. What was the topic? What journal did you read? (research)

- Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker or classmate criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others? (communication)
- Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity. What did you do? (initiative)
- Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor or professor on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result? (assertiveness)
- Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? (commitment to task)
- Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your company or class was facing. What was the challenge? What roles did other play? (creativity and imagination)
- What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in building and maintaining successful business relationships? Give me examples of how you've made these work for you. (relationship building)
- Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome? (teamwork)
- Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn? (time management)
- Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer or professor. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome? (decision making)

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS IN A JOB INTERVIEW**

- Why is the position available?
- What are you hoping a person in this position will accomplish?
- What are your expectations for new hires?
- What types of assignments/projects may I expect the first six months on the job?
- What personal qualities will make someone successful on this job?
- What will my responsibilities be as far as \_\_\_\_\_?  
(Ask about any areas not clear from the job description)
- Can you give me an idea as to what percent my time will be spent \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you have a detailed description of the position for which I am being considered?
- What is the greatest challenge facing your staff (department, or organization) right now?
- What are your company's (or department's) goals for the next two to three years?
- How would you describe the corporate culture?
- What are some characteristics of your company that make it attractive (or different from other companies)?
- What do you like best /least about working for this organization?
- What are the possibilities for job advancement and promotion? or Is it organizational policy to promote from within?
- How large is the department?
- Whom will I be working with?
- Will I be working on a team or in a group?
- Who will my supervisor/supervisors be or whom would I report to?
- What hours will I be working? Is overtime expected? If so, how much?
- Is there a probationary period?
- Is there training provided on the job?  
How long is the training period? Who will be training me?
- Do you financially assist employees with the costs of any college classes or job related training courses? or  
What are the advanced educational opportunities with XYZ company?
- Is relocation likely or required? Are relocation expenses covered?
- Will I be required to travel? If so, how often?
- Do you do formal evaluations of your employees?  
Who conducts these and how often are they done? Is the evaluation put in writing?
- When can I expect to hear from you? or When should I check back with you?
- When will an offer of employment be made and how?

## **QUESTIONS NOT TO ASK**

- What is the salary?
- What are the benefits?
- How much vacation/sick time will I get?
- Questions about the organization that you should research before the interview:
  - The hiring organization's services or products.
  - Where it is located. (including branch offices, etc.)
  - How long it has been in business
  - How many people does the company employ?
  - Who is in charge of the company/organization?
  - Who is in charge of the department you want to work in?
  - Who are the company's competitors?
  - What has been its growth?

What are its prospects for the future?

What are the entry and top level salaries and positions?

The hiring organization's recent history, competitors, mergers, acquisitions, etc.

The general job responsibilities.

**Schedule a regular or video-taped mock interview with a UCSC career advisor to improve your interview technique.**

## **THE BEHAVIORAL QUESTION**

Many employers are asking behavioral questions. You won't get the typical "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses" questions in a behavioral interview. Instead, you'll be asked to provide specific examples highlighting skills that are necessary for the job. Here are some examples of behavioral interview questions:

1. Describe a time when you tried to persuade a person or group to do something they didn't want to do.
2. Give me an example of a time when you faced a lot of obstacles to achieving a goal.
3. Talk about a stressful situation you've experienced.
4. Describe a time when you had trouble seeing eye to eye with a colleague.
5. Tell me about a project or role that you've taken on that is outside your job description.
6. Give me an example of when you worked with a group or team of people to complete a project.
7. Talk about a time when you were faced with a difficult decision and describe how it turned out.
8. Describe a time when you had to cope with strict deadlines or time demands.
9. Give me an example of a time when you were forced to make an important decision without all of the necessary information.
10. Tell me about a time that you made a presentation at work that received a significant amount of critical feedback, much of it negative. How did you handle the situation?

### **Sample Behavioral Question**

Career counselors recommend you use the "STAR" method to answer these types of probing questions. That's ST for situation/task, A for action, and R for result. Bill Byham, author of "Landing the Job You Want," gives an example of a successfully answered question:

**Question:** Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to satisfy a customer.

**Situation/Task:** I was working in the production department of a large publishing company. We received a letter from a 9-year-old girl who was unhappy because the gold design had worn off the cover of a book we had published. She wanted a refund. My boss gave the complaint to me to handle.

**Action:** I immediately requested a refund check from our accounting department. I also called our printer, who investigated and identified one run of books in which the covers had been improperly printed. I obtained a copy of the book with a properly printed cover, and sent the book, the refund check and a personal letter to the girl, thanking her for pointing out the problem and apologizing for the inconvenience.

**Result:** The girl's mother called me to thank me for the response. She told me that she was going to recommend our books to all her friends with children.

### **Preparing for the Behavioral Interview**

1. Think about a situation which matches the questions listed above.
2. Write about your experience using the STAR method.
3. Practice talking about the experience. You may wish to tape yourself.
4. During the interview, answer questions succinctly. Avoid rambling.

From "The New Job Interview" by Sherri Eng, San Jose Mercury News