

Interviewing for Success

Career Lab
Lucina Hall Room 235

Goals of the Interview

Today's employers are committing considerable time and resources to recruiting and interviewing. They need to quickly identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities candidates have to help them be successful on the job.

As a candidate, your goal is to demonstrate how your knowledge and experiences can benefit the employer. You can do so by describing times when you've been successful in using the knowledge, skills, or abilities required for the job. If you've been successful in using these skills in the past, you're likely to be successful in the future as well. Examples of past performance may come from work experience, internships, hobbies, volunteer work, family life, and other activities.

Typical Interview

Most one-on-one interviews follow a standard outline:

- Greeting and small talk to put you at ease and break the ice. (The interviewer may give you a preview of what will occur during the interview.)
- The employer may give you a brief overview of the position or additional information about the organization.
- You respond to questions. (If it's a good interview, this is the longest segment and you should do most of the talking.)
- You ask questions of the interviewer. Have at least five or ten questions prepared.
- The interviewer closes the interview and explains the next steps in the process. Be sure to thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration.

What Employers Evaluate

Employers usually evaluate three skill sets:

Content skills are related to performing a job in a particular field, profession, or occupation and are acquired through reading, specialized training, internships, academic degree, and on-the-job training. Examples include programming computers, word processing, teaching, and bookkeeping.

Functional skills are characteristic ways of working with people, information (data), or things. They are often referred to as transferable skills. These skills are applicable to a wide variety of jobs or situations and may be acquired almost anywhere. Examples include managing, operating, calculating, coordinating, building, and reading.

Adaptive skills are rooted in temperament and personality and are acquired during one's early years among family, friends, and peers. They're often referred to as self-management skills since they describe how you operate as a person. Examples include being assertive, careful, dependable, honest, introspective, industrious, open-minded, punctual, and tolerant.

Preparing for the Interview

- Analyze the type of positions for which you're applying. What skills are required by the employer?
- Analyze your own background. What skills do you have (content, functional, and adaptive) that relate to your job objective?
- Identify examples from your experience where you demonstrated these skills. What stories can you tell about your use of particular skills or knowledge?
- Whenever possible, quantify your results. Numbers illustrate your level of authority and responsibility.
- Before starting the interview process, identify two or three of your top selling points and determine how you can illustrate them during the interview.
- Think about how you can describe your experiences and skills to an employer in the form of a story. Explain the situation you were in (or the problem you were facing), tell what action you took, and list the results. Successful candidates can demonstrate "hands-on" action with results. Prepare three or four stories about how you've used each of the key skills you have identified. For example, if an employer asks about your marketing or promotional skills, you might say,

Advertising revenue was falling off for the student paper; many long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts. I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet comparing the benefits of the paper's circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set up a training session for the account executives with a professor who discussed competitive selling strategies. We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and 5 for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent over the previous year.

Resources

For more information about the topic covered here, be sure to visit the Career Lab in Lucina Hall 235. These are a few of the items available:

- *101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions*
- *201 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview*
- *Ace the Corporate Personality Test*
- *Boost your Interview IQ*
- *Employment Personality Tests Decoded*
- *Great Answers! Great Questions!*
- *How to Ace the Brainteaser Interview*
- *I Can't Believe They Asked Me That!*
- *Keywords to Nail your Job Interview*
- *Nail the Job Interview!*
- *Preparing for the Behavior-Based Interview*
- *The Quick Interview & Salary Negotiation Book*
- *Savvy Interviewing: The Nonverbal Advantage*
- *Win the Interview, Win the Job*

Websites

- Career Center: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers>
- Great Links to Explore: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/links> (Scroll down the page and click the category Interviewing and Salary Negotiation.)

- Quest: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/quest>
- Career MAP (Career Management Action Plan): <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/cmapp>
- CollegeGrad.com: Interviewing Information <http://www.collegegrad.com/intv>
- Nail the Interview Interactive Game: <http://nailtheinterview.info/nailtheinterview/>
- Professional Image and Etiquette Handbook (Ball State University Career Center): <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/publications> (Scroll down the screen and click Professional Image and Etiquette Handbook.)
- Quintessential Careers Behavioral Interview Questions: http://www.quintcareers.com/sample_behavioral.html
- Quintessential Careers Job Interview Resources: <http://www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html>
- Riley Guide: Evaluating and Negotiating Job Offers: <http://www.rileyguide.com/offers.html>
- Riley Guide: Interviewing <http://www.rileyguide.com/interview.html>

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