Successful Interviews

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Successful Interviewing

Who would like to have an interview for your dream job right now?
Good Experiences in your program

Good Experience Definition:

SOMETHING:

• You feel you did well
• You enjoyed doing
• You feel proud of
The Silent Question

...is the one question behind all questions that employers ask.

“How are you valuable to me/organization?”
YOUR VALUE

YOUR VALUE =

• your strengths, skills, talents
• Your education
• Your experiences
YOUR VALUE

Clarity about YOUR value enables you to answer the silent question:

HOW ARE YOU VALUABLE TO ME/ORGANIZATION?
Employers Perspective

• 20% of interviewees clearly state their value
• 80% do not 😞
• This puts employers in position of having to “guess”
Do You Know Your Strengths?

- If not, spend some time getting clear about them
  - Complete the “Explore Your Strengths” exercise
    in the Career Guide (pp. 5 – 8)
Employers Perspective

Employers want to know:

- Can you do a great job?
- Are you a good fit for our organization?
- Will you be a good colleague?
Preparing for the Interview

• Study the job description and organization
• Know what specifically makes you a good “fit” for the position
• Focus on both hard and soft skills you bring
Preparing for the Interview

• Anticipate questions
• Identify examples of using skills/strengths-
• Use S.T.A.R. method
The STAR Method

S = Situation
- The context (project, paper, research, event, position...)

T = Task(s)
- The goals/objectives (what you were supposed to do)

A = Action
- How you went about achieving those tasks/goals (in detail!)
- What was most difficult and how you addressed it
- What was exciting/fun!

R = Results
- The outcomes (tangible & intangible)
- If result wasn’t entirely positive, say what you learned or would do differently next time
Preparing for the Interview

CONTACT YOUR REFERENCES!
And give them:

• Job Description
• Resume/Cover Letter
• Brag “sheet”
Preparing for the Interview

The all important question:

**WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?**

Know the dress code and bring it up 1-2 “notches”
Preparing for the Interview

Questions to ask prior to interview:

• Who is interviewing you?
• Where is the interview?
• How long should you expect to be there?
Types of Interviews ...

- Initial screening
- Telephone
- On-Site Interview-most common
  - 1:1 Interview
  - Group Interview: multiple interviewers
- On-Site Interview-less common
  - Group Interview: multiple interviewees
  - Presentation
  - Simulations/Role-playing
During the Interview:

The handshake:
• firm, but not crushing

Demeanor:
• friendly, smile, eye contact
• Enthusiastic/interested
During the Interview:

Expect:

- Nerves
- Surprise questions
During the Interview: Types of Questions

- Common Introductory
- Behavior-Based
- Situational
- Unexpected
- Negative

Questions to ask the employer
Common Introductory Questions

Open-ended at the beginning of an interview

- “Tell me a little about yourself”
- “What do you know about our org. / company?”
- “Why are you interested in this position?”
Behavior-Based Questions

Past actions predict future behavior

- “Tell me about a time you used your problem-solving skills.”
- “Give an example of when you experienced an unexpected problem.”
- “Tell me about a time that demonstrated your ability to work well on a team.”
- “Give an example of your leadership abilities.”
- “Describe a time you when you had to work with someone you didn’t like.”

Use **STAR** method, be specific and offer details
Situational Questions

Employer describes a hypothetical situation you may encounter

- “What would you do if the priorities on a project you were working on changed suddenly?”
- “You are leading a project, a team member isn’t contributing, how will you deal with this?”
- “You don't have the information you need to prioritize your projects. Your co-workers and supervisor are unavailable for you to ask for assistance. How do you handle the situation?”

- Relate your answer to a real situation
- Use best judgment if no experience with the situation
- It’s ok to ask for time to think
Unexpected Questions

Questions you didn’t anticipate being asked, which often surprise you:

• “What is the last book you’ve read and would you recommend it?”
• “What are your salary expectations and when can you start?”
• “If you could be a superhero, what would you want your superpowers to be?”
• “How would you describe your sense of humor?”
• “How do you spend your free time; what do you do for fun?”

____________________________________

• Pause – think – respond.
• Okay to ask for time to think.
• Okay to ask for clarification.
• Try your best, be yourself.
Negative Questions

Answer the question truthfully, but *emphasize something positive*:

- What you learned from the experience and/or
- How you would do it differently next time
- Leave them thinking about a strengths

- “What is a weakness that you would need to improve to become a really great [job title]?”
- “Tell me about a time you experienced an interpersonal difficulty and how you handled it.”
- “What didn’t you like about your last job/employer; your education at the UW?”
- “Tell me about a mistake you made in the past.”
- “When did you fail at something? Tell me about it.”

**Possible Approaches:**

- Talk about how you have addressed/overcome the weakness.
- Talk about behaviors that are negative in their extremes, but positive in moderation.
- Mention a weakness that is unrelated to the job/wouldn’t impact your success at the job.
- **End on a positive note!**
Illegal Questions

Questions that relate to: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, status as a veteran

• “How many children do you have?”
• “Are you single? divorced? married? widowed?”
• “What is your religious affiliation?”
• “You look awfully young – how old are you, anyway?”
• “Won’t your disability be a problem?”

Possible Approaches:
• Think of the underlying question the interviewer might have in mind and answer it.
• Ask how the question relates to the job.
Questions to Ask (and not Ask) the Employer

Ask specific questions about the job
Ask questions showing you researched the organization and are curious about learning more

• “What are the biggest challenges for this job/company in the next six months?”
• “What results do you expect to get from the person in this position?”
• “I saw where you are initiating service in Asia. Might this position contribute to that effort?”
• “What do you like about working here?”
• “What are the next steps in the job application/hiring process?”

Questions NOT to ask during the interview:
• Don’t ask about salary, raises, benefits, flex-time, leave/vacation accrual.
• Questions that reveal you haven’t done any company research prior to interview.
• Questions whose responses are easily found on the organization’s web site.
After the Interview: Reflect

• How did it go?
• What were the most difficult questions you were asked?
  – write them down, think about underlying question and how you might respond differently
• What did you do well and what could you have done differently?
• Assess whether this position is a good fit for you or not
• What might you do the same/differently in future interviews?
After the Interview — Follow-up

• Send a thank you note that day
  – Email or paper O.K.
  – Be specific in your thanks

• If they don’t contact you, call or email a week after you expected to hear from the employer
After the Interview: Possibilities

• You are invited to more interviews!
• You receive an email or call with an offer!
• You never hear back from the employer
• You learn that you *did not* get the position
What if You Don’t Get the Job?

• Review your approach (You know your resume worked; any quirks in the interview?...)
• Contact hiring manager and ask for feedback
• Be positive, professional and appreciative—keep the door open for the future
Utilize Interviewing Resources

• Mock Interview program

• “Interview Survival Kit”
  – (Career Center or Amazon.com)

• Employer Conversations/Panels on campus

• Career Guide (careers.uw.edu/Career-Guide)

• Various websites (Ex: glassdoor.com)

• Google/Bing (Ex: Company + Interview)
Final Tips

- Be your best self
- Speak clearly
- Stay positive
- Communicate your value
- Demonstrate interest and enthusiasm
- Treat everyone well, especially the receptionist
- Follow-up

QUESTIONS?
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Thank You!

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