**Different Types of Interviews**

Build your professional network

**What is the Purpose?**
To gather a list of contacts who will help you with your career or job search. To go “out of your way” to regularly and deliberately add to that list. To screen jobs before you take them, careers before you transition to them, locations before you move there. To find answers to very specific questions you have about your job search.

**Behavioral Interviews**
“Tell me about a team experience in which one member did not meet expectations.” This question demonstrates the type of question common in behavioral interviews. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to evaluate past behavior, this form of questioning allows the recruiter to assess your abilities based on what you have already done.

**Typical Behavioral Interview Questions**
- Tell me about an obstacle you have overcome.
- Tell me about the most unethical situation you’ve observed or experienced.
- Tell me about your last experience with success.
- Tell me about a goal you have met.
- Tell me about a time you criticized the work of another.
- Tell me about a time you motivated a dysfunctional team to excel.
- Tell me about the biggest risk you have taken.

**S.T.A.R. Response Style for Behavioral Questions**
In responding to behavioral questions, it is best to provide a specific example to support your response. Frame the response using an example from your resume including academic projects, classes, work experiences, and out-of-class activities.

Be very specific as you cover the four necessary steps (Situation, Task, Action & Result) for optimum success:
- **Situation**: Give an example of a situation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.
- **Task**: Describe the task(s) required in the situation.
- **Action**: Talk about the various actions you initiated or completed.
- **Result**: Provide the results directly connected to your actions.

To maximize this method, you should add what you learned from the situation that you will bring to your job as an intern, co-op or professional entry-level employee.

The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information, and works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job. Because the behaviors a candidate has demonstrated in previous similar positions are likely to be repeated, you will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviors. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency. If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous, related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position.
Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.

Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.

Be sure each story has a beginning, middle, and an end. Be ready to describe the situation, your action, and the outcome or result.

Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you. If the result itself was not favorable, talk about what you learned or would do differently next time.

Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story.

Case Interviews

“Simply put, a case interview is the analysis of a business plan or situation. Unlike most other interview questions, it is an interactive process. Your interviewer will present you with a business problem and ask you for your opinion. Your job is to ask the interviewer logical questions that will permit you to make a detailed recommendation. The majority of case interviewers don’t have a specific right answer that you, the candidate, are expected to give. What the interviewer is looking for is a thought process that is both analytical and creative (what consultants love to call “out-of-the-box” thinking). Specific knowledge of the industry covered by the case question is a bonus but not necessary. An understanding of the business models and processes as well as global business experience is helpful for success.”

Question categories can be identified as:

- **Market-sizing questions** focus on determining the market size for a particular service or product.
- **Business operations questions** refer to running a business and getting a product out the door. The focus may include purchasing and transporting raw materials, manufacturing processes, scheduling of staff and facilities, product distribution … the day-to-day running of the business.
- **Business strategy questions** deal more with the future direction of a firm. Good strategy questions may have a market-sizing piece, a logic puzzle, multiple operations issues, and a dose of creativity and action. These types of questions tend to be quite complex.
- **Résumé case questions** come directly from the candidate’s résumé. One example may be, “I see that you play rugby. Describe all the different positions on a rugby team, and the play strategy for each.”

Brainteaser Interviews

Part of the philosophy behind “brainteaser” interviews is that “IQ is all that matters.” Bill Gates’ hiring philosophy is based on the fact that a smart person can be trained to do anything. Intelligence is valued over skills or experience. Therefore, logic puzzles, riddles, hypothetical questions and trick questions have become commonplace in computer industry and the fast-paced consulting business interviews.

Questions may include:

- How many times a day do a clock’s hands overlap?
- Why are soda cans tapered at the top and bottom?
- If you could remove any of the fifty U.S. states, which would it be?
- Why do mirrors reverse right and left instead of up and down?

“It’s all about thinking outside the box—just make certain you know what kind of box.”

Other recruiters will ask unique brainteaser questions during a “typical” interview. It is important to stay focused and be adept at answering all types of questions. Keep your poise and sense of humor … and think carefully about the question. Recruiters are often evaluating your skills, creativity, and ability to think on your feet.

---

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews are often used as a screening device prior to extending face-to-face interviews. You will be evaluated to determine the benefit of inviting you for an on-site visit. Because of the obvious focus on communication skills, the phone interview can be intimidating. In addition, students often make the mistake of not preparing as thoroughly for this type of interview as they would for a campus interview.

Using the telephone for social and informal purposes is easy for most of us. However, using it for business purposes is quite another matter. During the job search, remember that a telephone interview (much like business email) must be strictly professional. You must adopt a manner in using the phone that conveys your seriousness of purpose, ability to concisely communicate your strengths, and desire to work for the employer.

The clear advantages of the telephone interview are that you are in a comfortable, familiar place and that you can have all your papers at your fingertips.

The disadvantages are also quite obvious. Your voice is the sole means of communication. You cannot obviously use eye contact, facial expressions, body language, or other visual means of communication to express your interest in the job opportunity. Nor can you respond to the recruiter’s nonverbal cues or attempt to interpret his/her interest. You are selling yourself using only words and the tone of your voice. Some general advice follows:

• Prepare as if this were a face-to-face interview. Know your résumé inside and out. Be able to provide specific examples to support your strengths, interests, and abilities. Show enthusiasm. Ask questions.
• Write down the names of the recruiters. Refer to them as Mr. or Ms., unless otherwise indicated. Take quick notes during the interview. At the close of the interview, thank the interviewer using his or her name.
• Speak slowly. Articulate clearly. Choose words carefully. Your diction, voice level, intonation and choice of words are your main forms of communicating.
• Enunciate. Don’t chew gum or smoke. Don’t use a speakerphone. Keep the mouthpiece close to your mouth.
• Smile. Believe it or not, smiling while you talk helps! You will sound more interested and friendly. A smile over the phone can be recognized.
• Allow for silences or pauses. If you need more time to consider a question, simply ask for it, since silences are more pronounced on the phone.
• Listen. With no other communication clues except a voice, it is critical for you to focus and listen carefully. Ask for clarification if you don’t understand a question.
• Dress nicely. It will help you maintain a serious, professional manner.
• Don’t interrupt, although some “over-talk” is bound to happen on the phone. Confirm that what you said has been “heard.”

In addition, always have materials ready for interviews:

• Résumé, references page, transcripts. Other portfolio items, such as list of publications, presentations, patents, as well as sample projects and papers.

Follow-up the Interview

The interview is not the end of the job search process; follow-up is required.

It is important not only to reflect on your interview performance, but also to continue a dialogue with the recruiter. What does this mean? It means that it is in your best interest to follow-up the interview with a thank you email or letter and maintain a regular follow-up schedule. Employers are interested in hiring people who are interested in the position! Indicate your interest by continuing to communicate with the recruiter until a decision has been made. Use discretion regarding frequency—do not become a “pest.”

Within one to two days, send an email message thanking the recruiter for the interview, clarifying topics discussed in the interview, and re-emphasizing interest in the employer’s opportunity. A well-written, well-timed thank you message will not “get” you a job, but it can “tip the scales” if all other factors are equal.

By sending a thank you message, you will:
1) show common courtesy and appreciation
2) stand out from the crowd
3) reiterate interest in the opportunity
4) make points you forgot during the interview
5) demonstrate your writing skills.

Regularly contact the recruiter after the thank you letter; do so approximately every 2 weeks until a decision is made. Offer to provide other materials, such as transcripts or samples of your work.

Develop a spreadsheet with employer names, recruiter contacts, interview dates, and follow-up dates. Since you are actively searching, a spreadsheet will help you track the interactions with many, many, many employers and recruiters.