



# ACE THE

# INTERVIEW



**UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC  
CAREER RESOURCE CENTER**

**“WHERE PREPARATION MEETS OPPORTUNITY”**

# **Top 2 Reasons Why Candidates Do Not Advance to the Next Round of Interviews...**

## **#1:**

They did not thoroughly research the company, organization, or graduate school

## **#2:**

They could not use examples to articulate their experiences

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# PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

## 1. Learn as much about the organization or graduate school as possible through pre-interview research.

### Job or Internship:

- Review the organization's website and profile in Tiger Jobs, ask others what they know about the organization, read industry magazines, journals, or websites, and perform a "Google" search to see what recent press releases or articles are available about the organization or the industry. Websites like glassdoor.com also has helpful information and sample interview questions.

### Graduate School:

- Review the school's website paying particular attention to the department that interests you. Find out the focus of faculty research and use <http://scholar.google.com/> to become familiar with published work by their faculty in that area. Ask faculty in your field what they know about the school or program.

## 2. After your research you should be able to answer:

### Company/Organization:

- What products and services do they offer?
- Who are their clients or customers?
- What is the organization's mission statement or core values?
- Who are their competitors?
- What is their reputation in the community
- Why do you want to work for them?

### Graduate School:

- What are the main areas of study or research?
- Who are the department faculty and what are they studying?
- Are there are any opportunities for research, graduate assistantships, or internships?
- How are the classes structured and what is their teaching philosophy?
- What are the admissions requirements and how do you match up?
- What is the reputation of the school and the program?
- Where do their alumni land after graduation?
- Why would you like to attend that particular school?

## 3. Know what you will be doing or learning.

### Job or Internship:

- Carefully read the job description and make sure you understand the responsibilities, skills, and qualifications the employer is seeking.
- Consider the job from the hiring manager's perspective and ask yourself what type of person would you hire?
- Prepare questions directed toward the employer that demonstrate your interest in the job and the company.

### Graduate School:

- Become familiar with the specifics that you will be studying and be prepared to discuss your interests in the program.
- Develop questions for faculty and students that show you have an interest in their work.

**4. Know what you bring to the table and identify examples that demonstrate why you are a good fit for the position or the school. (Examples can be taken from employment, class projects, leadership roles, campus involvement, or community service).**

- ☑ Review your resume and prepare accomplishment stories that highlight your contributions and talents.
- ☑ Determine your strengths and qualifications that relate to the position and identify examples of your experiences that support them.
- ☑ Identify problems you have solved and the methods used to solve them.

**5. Practice**

- ☑ Review typical and behavioral interview questions and develop responses to those questions that are supported by examples.
- ☑ Practice answering questions with a friend, Career Counselor, or in the mirror to enhance your articulation skills and increase your confidence.

**6. Familiarize yourself with the details of the interview day**

- ☑ How long is the interview? 30 minutes, 2 hours, the entire day? Is a meal involved?
- ☑ Is the interview with one person? Two people? A panel? Will you have more than one interview that day?
- ☑ What are the names of the people interviewing you? What role do they play in the organization? (Tip: Look them up on LinkedIn.com prior the interview)
- ☑ Confirm time, location, and directions to the interview site. If possible, visit the site ahead of time so that you don't have to worry about getting lost the day of the interview.
- ☑ Arrive 10 minutes early to the interview to demonstrate your professionalism and punctuality. Getting there too early can make the interviewers feel uncomfortable, so if you arrive more than 10 minutes early, it is best to wait outside until the interviewer is ready to receive you.



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## WHAT TO BRING

Remember to bring copies of your resume (one for each interviewer), a list of references, questions to ask during the interview, a calendar, a notepad and a pen with you to the interview. A leather portfolio to carry these items looks the most professional. You can also bring examples of your work if you have a neat and organized way to showcase them. Do not bring extra items such as backpacks or textbooks into the interview with you.

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## INTERVIEW ATTIRE

While acceptable professional attire may vary between industries and interviewers, you should always aim to “dress to impress”. In traditional industries (i.e. accounting, banking, law), it is best to choose more conservative dress. In some of the non-traditional or creative industries (i.e. art, music, high tech) there may be more latitude for you to express yourself through your wardrobe. When scheduling your interview, you can ask what type of dress they prefer you to wear. If unsure, it is best to lean toward the conservative side. Below are some examples of professional dress.

| <b>Women</b> |   |
|--------------|---|
| Suit:        | Navy, dark gray, or black two piece, long sleeve, professional skirted or pant suit. Length of skirt should be at knee or 1” below. |
| Blouse:      | White or pastel silk or polyester blended button-down, long sleeve shirt. Not sheer or low cut.                                     |
| Shoes/Hose:  | Well polished, closed toe, closed heel, dress shoe with 1 or 1.5 inch heel. Natural tone or sheer black hose.                       |
| Cosmetics:   | No perfume. Light application of makeup. Neatly groomed nails with clear or neutral color.  |
| Hair:        | Neatly groomed and professional. Put hair up if you tend to play with your hair when talking.                                       |
| Necklace:    | Modest (i.e. single strand pearls, small gold or silver pendant or chain).  |
| Earrings:    | Small and close to ear. Only 1 earring per ear. No other visible piercings.   |
| Handbag:     | Small conservative handbag or briefcase.  |
| <b>Men</b>   |   |
| Suit:        | Navy, dark gray, or black two piece traditional cut suit.   |
| Shirt:       | White or light blue cotton long sleeve shirt.   |
| Tie:         | Conservative, paisley, stripes, geometric patterns or solid color.  |
| Shoes:       | Black, well polished all leather lace shoes.  |
| Belt:        | Black leather.  |
| Socks:       | Black or navy blue.   |
| Cologne:     | No cologne or aftershave.   |
| Hair:        | Neatly groomed (professional cut).  |
| Jewelry:     | Analog watch and leather band. No earrings or visible piercing.   |
| Briefcase:   | Leather briefcase or portfolio.   |

## INTERVIEW SURVIVAL KIT

Besides your resume and portfolio, you may also want to consider bringing the items listed below. You can leave a lot of these items in your car:

- o Safety Pins
- o Extra pair of pantyhose
- o Breath Mints
- o Deodorant
- o Hairbrush or comb
- o Extra Pen
- o Stain Stick
- o Extra copies of your resume - kept separate in case something happens to them

## ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USING THE STAR METHOD

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Since interviewers often view past behavior as the best predictor of future behavior, candidates can give information about how they will perform in the future by supporting their statements with specific examples of their experiences. The STAR method (Situation or Task, Action, Result) is a way of structuring your answers so they are clear and concise and tell the interviewer everything they need to know. Think of a SPECIFIC example of when you demonstrated a behavior, and then discuss:

- S/T: The situation or task with which you were faced
- A: The actions you took regarding the situation/task
- R: The result of your actions

You can draw your material to answer behavioral questions from a number of different sources (i.e. academic projects, community service, leadership roles, extra-curricular activities, internships, full/part-time work etc.).

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### EXAMPLES:

**“Describe a conflict you had with a supervisor/co-worker/colleague and the process you used to resolve it.”**

**A Strong Answer from a Candidate:**

**Situation/Task** - “Last semester, I was working with a group on a project for a class. We needed to decide on a topic and determine the data that needed to be analyzed. A number of people in the group became argumentative and we could not come to a consensus as to what direction to take.”

**Actions**- “I decided to take the lead and suggested that we sit down and outline all of our options so we could determine exactly where we actually disagreed.”

**Results**- “Once we saw the points of contention, we were able to discuss the matter more productively and make a decision. In the end, we were able to work well together and we were able to pull off a great project. The professor said that it was one of the best organized that she had ever seen!”

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**“Describe a situation where you were able to achieve a particularly challenging goal.”**

**A Strong Answer from a Candidate:**

**Situation/Task** - “Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing their contracts.”

**Actions** - “I responded by designing a new promotional packet that compared the benefits of our newspaper’s circulation with other ad media in the area, so that advertisers could see the value in our ads.

**Results**- “As a result we signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20% (quantifying your results gives your answer substance) over the same period last year.”

## COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Interviewers often ask questions regarding your strengths, weaknesses, and interest in the position/program. They also tend to want to see examples of how you have demonstrated teamwork, leadership, initiative, time management, and communication skills. When answering a question, tailor your response so that it fits with the position/program. For example, if the job description states the organization is searching for candidates who can give presentations to clients, it might be a good idea to use an example of a presentation that you gave when answering a question about your communication skills. Below are some examples of interview questions that are commonly asked by employers and graduate school interviewers.

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- Tell me about yourself.
- Describe a situation in which you were successful.
- What is your most significant accomplishment?
- What is the most important recognition you have ever received?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career/field?
- Describe a conflict you had with a supervisor/co-worker/colleague and the process you used to resolve it.
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- If I were to ask your professor/colleague/friends to describe you, what would they say?
- How has your education prepared you for your career, this job, or graduate school?
- Tell me about specific classes you have taken to prepare you for this role.
- Why did you choose your major? At what point did you make this decision?
- Why did you select your college or university?
- Tell me about any specific skills you have developed or acquired.
- What skills do you think you need to add to your repertoire? How will you develop those skills?
- Why do you want to work in our industry/company/field?
- What do you know about our company/program?
- Why did you leave your last position/Why do you want to leave your current position?
- Describe your last position (likes/dislikes)
- What type of management style do you prefer to work under?
- How do you like to be managed?
- What is your ideal work environment?
- How would your last supervisor describe you?
- What three words would you use to describe yourself?



- Why should we hire you? Why should you be admitted into this program?
- What distinguishes you from others and makes you a strong candidate?
- What attracts you to this position/program?
- What attracts you to be a \_\_\_\_\_(job title)?
- What in your mind makes a successful\_\_\_\_\_ (job title)? What have you done to achieve these results in your past experience?
- What is your vision of success?
- Why are you qualified for this position/program?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What does it mean to you to be a professional?
- What are your long term goals?
- How do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What motivates you to achieve goals?
- How do you interact with people that are older/younger than you?
- Describe a major failure that you experienced and what you learned from it.
- What question did you expect us to ask that we didn't?
- What are your salary expectations?
- After learning about our organization/program, what made you take the next step and apply?
- Who has the greatest influence on you and why?
- Who do you admire?
- Name 3 of your core values.
- How do you define values? What are the 3 values that drive most of your decisions?
- Describe the necessary qualities of a good leader. Why are these qualities important?
- What ideas do you have to improve our organization/department/services/products?
- Specifically, what attracts you to this industry as a career?
- What interests you most about this position/program?
- In what way are you a good fit for this position/program,?
- Give me an example of a mentor you've had. Tell me about that relationship.
- What are you known for? What is one of your chief gifts/talents that you have consistently called upon?
- What work or school projects have you found particularly satisfying?
- You received a C- minus in Physics. Why?
- You received a low score on your GRE/MCAT/PCAT/GMAT, etc. Why?
- What other graduate schools/jobs are you considering?

## **DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?**

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Interviewers usually conclude the interview by asking candidates if they have any questions. Answering “no” will cause the interviewer to think that you are uninterested and not serious about the position/program.

Also, an interview is not just for the interviewer. Asking thoughtful questions about the company, program, or the position will give you information to use when deciding if the opportunity is a good fit for you. It is also your chance to find out if the interviewer has any concerns about you, so you can address them before the interviewer makes a final decision.

Below are some suggested questions to ask. Do not ask about salary, benefits, or vacation during the interview. You will want to prepare 5-10 questions ahead of time so that you do not ask questions that have already been addressed during the rest of the interview. Write your questions down and bring them with you to the interview, so you don't forget them.

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### **SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW**

#### **Job/Internship:**

- Six months from now, how would you know you hired the right person for this job?
- How would you describe your management/supervisory style? (provided future supervisor is involved in the interview)
- What are the opportunities for growth?
- How is an employee evaluated in this position?
- What does a typical work day/week look like for this position?
- How would you describe the culture of your company/department?
- What are the most positive aspects of this position?
- What do you think is the biggest challenge of this position?
- Why is this position open?
- What are your goals for this department?
- Do you have any questions or concerns regarding my fit for this position?
- Why did you take your position with this company?
- What will be the next step in the hiring process?

#### **Graduate School:**

- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most students do after graduation?
- Do most students publish an article or present a paper before graduation?
- What do you think makes a candidate successful in this program?
- Do most students live near campus? What is it like to live in this area as a graduate student (ask to other students)?
- When (and how) do you choose your advisor?
- Who selects the dissertation committee?
- In your opinion, what are the strengths of this program?
- What are some of the challenges this program faces?

## BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

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“Behavioral interviewing” emphasizes past performance and behaviors. The theory behind “behavioral interviewing” is that past behavior is an indicator of future behavior. For example, if you can give the interviewer an example of how you solved a conflict, the interviewer can reasonably assume that you can solve future conflicts.

During a “behavioral interview”, typically the interviewer identifies desired skills and behaviors that are necessary to be successful in the job or graduate program and creates open-ended questions and statements to elicit detailed responses. As a candidate, you should be prepared to answer the questions and statements thoroughly. Make sure you can give detailed examples using the STAR method (Situational or Task, Action, Result).

Below are some examples of Behavioral Interview questions that may be used to determine different competencies.

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**DIVERSITY:** Creates an environment of understanding, acceptance, and inclusion.

- Tell me how you have helped promote diversity?
- Tell me about a time when you worked in a diverse environment?
- Tell me about a time when you noticed someone was not respecting diversity. How did you respond?
- What is your definition of diversity?

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:** Exhibits understanding of natural sources of conflict and acts to prevent or soften them.

- Describe a time when it was difficult for you to work with a classmate, co-worker, boss, or professor. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- What do you do when you know you are right and your professor or boss disagrees with you? Give an example of this.
- Describe a situation where you were able to soften a conflict with another individual.
- Tell me about a time where conflict in the workplace got in the way of you being able to do your work.
- Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your professor's or supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?

**ABILITY TO LEARN:** Assimilating and applying new job-related information promptly.

- What tricks or techniques have you learned to make school or a job easier, or to make yourself more effective? How did you learn that?
- Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.
- Tell me about a time when you struggled to learn something new.

**TEAMWORK:** Works effectively with others to accomplish common goals and to identify and resolve problems.

- What do you think are the best and worst parts of working in a team environment?
- What obstacles have you encountered while working on a team, and how did you overcome them?
- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Tell me about a confrontation you have dealt with in a team environment. How did you handle it?
- Tell me of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his/her share of the work. What did you do?
- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.
- Give me an example of an experience where you had to communicate with a team. What did you do? What was challenging?
- Tell me about a time when communication within your work group broke down and what you did to resolve the problem.
- Give me an example of where you kept others informed.
- What have you done in the past to build a strong and productive team that worked well together?
- Tell me about a time when you contributed toward an environment that had a strong sense of teamwork?
- Describe a time when you helped a team member when it wasn't convenient for you to do so.
- Describe an ineffective teamwork situation in which you were involved.
- Describe a team you were on where communication was strong. What made it strong? How did you achieve and maintain that level of communication?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to work with another person even when that individual may not have liked you.
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone that wasn't collaborative.
- Describe a time when you had to modify your approach in order to work with another person.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to demonstrate respect with someone you thought was disrespectful.
- Describe a situation where you had to include someone on a project that you felt could have been easily be accomplished on your own.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Works self-sufficiently and exhibits a willingness to take a stand when needed.

- Describe a time when you were able to accomplish something on your own even when it might have been more comfortable working with others.
- Tell me about a time when being independent in your thinking or the way you work caused a problem.
- Describe a time where you held a different viewpoint than others and stood your ground defending that point of view.

**INITIATIVE:** Self-manages responsibilities rather than passively accepting duties. Takes action to achieve goals beyond what is required.

- Describe a slow time at your work and what you did to fill the down time.
- Describe a situation where you achieved more than what was required.
- What projects have you started on your own?
- Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.
- What ways have you found to make school or a job easier or more rewarding?
- Describe a time when you performed a task outside of your perceived responsibility. What was the task? What was the outcome?

**INNOVATION/CREATIVITY:** Explores and embraces opportunities for doing things in new ways. Improves processes, initiates, and/or supports improvements in work processes to increase efficiency.

- Give me an example of an opportunity you had to create to accomplish something new or in a new way.
- Tell me about a time when you suggested a better way to do a task, make work easier, or save money.
- Describe a time where you used your creativity. Why was it creative or innovative? How was your creativity beneficial to your department/school/others?
- What is the most creative thing you did in your last job, group project, or school assignment? How did this creativity effect the situation?

**INFLUENCING/NEGOTIATIONS:** Motivates others to buy into ideas and engages others in looking at a situation in a new way. Finds common ground to accommodate the needs and wants of different stakeholders.

- Who was the toughest group that you needed to get cooperation from?
- Tell me about a time where you had to get others to accept your idea.
- Tell me about a particularly tough negotiation that you successfully managed.

**ANALYSIS:** Relating and comparing data from different sources.

- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?
- We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.
- Describe a situation in which you had to collect information by asking many questions of several people.
- Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
- Describe a time when you were assigned a complex project. What steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?
- What was the most complex assignment you have had? What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you created order out of chaos?

**ADAPTABILITY:** Maintains effectiveness with varying environments, types of people, and responsibilities.

- Tell me about a time when you had to step out of your comfort zone. How did that make you feel?
- Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?
- Tell me about a time where you reacted quickly to changing conditions. Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to handle a difficult situation.
- Describe a time when you adjusted your behavior to meet the needs of different people or a situations.
- Tell me about at time where you worked effectively in an environment in which the parameters changed frequently.
- Tell me about a time where you took direction from multiple people. What worked? What didn't?
- How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular challenges?

**DEPENDABILITY:** Consistently demonstrates appropriate follow-through with commitments.

- Give me an example of when you earned the trust of others by being dependable.
- Tell me about a time when it was very difficult to follow through on a task or project.
- How do you feel about being held accountable?

**WORK STANDARDS:** Sets high standards of performance for self, subordinates, and the organization.

- Compare and contrast a time when you work was above the standard, with a time when your work was below the standard.
- Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?
- What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet these standards?
- Tell me about a time when you differed from a professor in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?
- Give me an example of when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Describe a project for which you were responsible that demonstrated your commitment to producing a high quality product or result.
- Give me an example where you achieved more than what was required.

**TIME MANAGEMENT:** Consistently adheres to deadlines and prioritizes time well.

- Give me an example of a time where you met a particularly tight deadline.
- Tell me about a time where you were unable to meet a deadline. What would you do differently next time?
- Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head". Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.
- Tell me about a time when you were faced with conflicting priorities. How did you determine the top priority?
- Describe a time in school when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
- Tell me about a time where you created order out of chaos?
- Give me an example of when your schedule was interrupted. What did you do?
- Have you ever been in a situation where the amount of work assigned to you exceeded the allotted time? How did you handle that?

**STRESS MANAGEMENT:** Recognizes stress triggers and works to mitigate them, maintains work/life balance, responds appropriately to stressors outside of one's control.

- As your manager, how would I know that you were under stress? What would be the signs?
- Tell me about a time in the past year when you felt you were under pressure.
- Tell me about a recent workflow or production problem, such as a co-worker calling in sick. How did you respond?

**LEADERSHIP:** Involves team members in solving problems and making decisions, inspires people to follow the lead, obtains input from others, facilitates change, and inspires confidence and optimism through a clear vision and by personal example.

- Tell me about a time you included others in the decision-making process even when it would have been easier not to.
- Tell me about a time when you made an unpopular decision that effected others.
- Tell me about a time when you had to lead others to implement a difficult change.
- Describe a situation where you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
- Give me an example of a time where you successfully guided another person's development.
- Give me an example of a time when you successfully managed a group.
- Through your own experience or through observing others, do you find it more appropriate to point out what is wrong so a task can be accomplished competently or to praise individuals and then point out what may need correction after the task is complete? Give an example.
- What strategies have you used to get the individuals of a group to work well together to achieve the same goal?
- Tell me about a time where you positively influenced a morale problem.
- Tell me about your most difficult leadership challenge.
- What do you like about leading?

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** Assesses the major elements of a specific situation from a number of viewpoints and considers an array of alternatives.

- Tell me about a time when you had a complex problem to solve. What options did you generate? How did you choose the best one?
- Tell me about a time when you took a unique approach to solving a problem.

**PLANNING AND ORGANIZING:** Establishes a course of action for yourself (and/or others) to accomplish specific goals while appropriately allocating resources.

- Give me an example of a time when the details of a task or project were particularly important. How did you ensure accuracy on a consistent basis?
- Tell me about a time when you had to organize a large project or event? What steps did you take to ensure the project was completed on time and met standards?



**STRATEGIC THINKING/GOALS:** Works on initiatives that impact and improves the organization, department, or group. Anticipates changes that may impact the organization, department, or group.

- Give me some examples that demonstrate your ability to see the big picture and foresee the impact of potential changes on your department/school.
- Give me an example of a time when you suggested a better way to do a task to make work easier or save money.
- Tell me about how you helped a school group or work group accomplish its goals.
- While working on a group project, individual assignment, or at your job, are you more detailed oriented or more conceptual in your thought process? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you effected change.

**DECISION MAKING/JUDGEMENT:** Follows a process for problem solving and uses consistent logic, rationality and objectivity.

- Tell me about a situation that you wished you had handled differently (i.e. did not receive your desired outcome). What was the situation? What would you change if faced with a similar situation?
- Give me an example of a difficult decision you have made and the outcome of your decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a decision quickly with limited information.
- Tell me about a time when you held off making a decision because you didn't have enough information.
- Describe a decision you made that did not turn out very well. What was the decision and its impact? What did you do once the result was noticed?
- Give me an example where using good judgment was key to accomplishing a task or completing a project.

**CONCEPTUAL ABILITY:** Works effectively with abstract conceptual matters, not just with concrete tangible data.

- Describe a problem you were solving, idea you were selling or project you were implementing where you had to work with a concept that was abstract rather than concrete and tangible.

**ASSERTIVENESS:** Takes a stand on issues without being excessively abrasive.

- When have you expressed an unpopular opinion at work? What was the result?
- Give me an example of a time when you took a forceful stand at work with finesse.
- Tell me about a time when you were assertive, but didn't get the reaction you hoped.

**COMMUNICATION/LISTENING:** Clearly expresses ideas either verbally or in writing (including grammar, organization, and structure). Actively listens to others' opinions and ideas; respects and seeks to understand differences in opinions.

- Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you. This might be a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.
- What has been your experience in giving presentations to small or large groups?
- What has been your most successful experience in speech making?
- Tell me about a time you used verbal communication skills to get a point across.
- Tell me about a time you used written communication skills to get a point across.
- Tell me about a time where you had to write a difficult message. What was the situation? What did you write? What was the result?
- Give me an example of a time when you actively listened in order to understand another person with whom you had a difference of opinion.
- When has not actively listening to what was said caused you some difficulty?

**CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION:** Makes efforts to listen to and understand the customer (both internal and external), anticipates customer needs and gives high priority to customer satisfaction.

- What ideas do you have for building a strong customer base?
- Tell me about the most difficult customer service experience that you have had to manage.
- Have you ever had to go the extra mile to satisfy a customer? What did you?
- You may have heard the phrase, "the customer is always right." Describe a time when you felt that the customer wasn't right.
- Tell me about a time when you did your best to resolve a customer's concern and the individual still was not satisfied. What did you do next?
- Tell me about a time when you provided quick and thorough service in response to someone's request.

**COMPLIANCE:** Honoring university or organizational policies and regulatory requirements.

- Give me an example of a policy that you ended up having to go around to get your work done.
- Tell me about a policy you conformed to even though you did not agree with it.
- Describe a situation where you held a confidence or maintained confidentiality of information.
- Tell me about a time when you had difficulty maintaining confidentiality?

**ETHICS AND INTEGRITY:** Follows through on commitments; incorporates honesty, respect and fairness of daily actions.

- Tell me about a time where you demonstrated integrity.
- Talk about a time when you did the right thing, even when it was going against the crowd.
- Tell me about a time when you had to bend or break a rule?
- Tell us about a time where you witnessed a friend or colleague doing something wrong. What did you do?

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:** Manages financial assets responsibly with a focus on cost effectiveness and productivity.

- What opportunities have you had to estimate and monitor expenditures?
- Give me an example of a budget you managed.
- Tell me about your financial management responsibilities and successes in this area?

**DEVELOPMENT:** Makes efforts to build challenges into current job responsibilities and apply new skills on the job, recognizes one's own strengths and areas for improvement.

- What did you do in your last job to improve your skills and performance?
- Give me an example of a new task or responsibility you took on and how you went about accomplishing it.
- Give me an example of steps you have taken to develop yourself over the last year.
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure. What was the impact, how did you react to it, and what did you learn from the experience?



## THANK YOU LETTERS

After any interview or networking meeting, it is recommended that you send a thank you letter that expresses your gratitude and interest. Sending this type of letter demonstrates your follow through and excitement while encouraging the interviewer to revisit your application. The letter should reference specific points of discussion from the interview and reiterate your strengths and qualifications. If there are any topics that you did not have time to discuss in the interview, or you did not feel like you explained adequately, you can use the thank you letter as an opportunity address those concerns. Since the letter exemplifies your professionalism, it may also encourage the interviewer to think about you for future opportunities.

The letter should be sent in within 24 hours of the meeting and can be handwritten, typed, or emailed. A hand written note catches attention, but if the interviewer is going to make a decision quickly, it might be best to send an email. No matter which method you choose, the letter should be thoughtful, professional, and individualized. If you met with more than one interviewer, you should write a separate letter for each one.

Dear Ms. Harris:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me this morning to discuss the Management Trainee position with Enterprise Rent-A-Car. After our conversation, I am truly excited to be considered for this opportunity.

I was particularly impressed when I heard the details of your organization's commitment to growing and developing their employees. While I have strong leadership skills from my campus involvement experience, I have a desire to learn more and grow as a professional. I believe that I would thrive in Enterprise's culture and will become an effective manager.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to speaking with you again.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Schultz

## **PHONE INTERVIEWING TIPS**



Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates and narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. They are also used to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

A phone conversation may be your initial contact with a prospective employer or graduate school. In order to make a positive impression, be prepared for a phone interview at a moment's notice. You never know when an interviewer or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk. If the time is not convenient, suggest some alternative times and make sure you keep your appointment. If possible, avoid using a cell or speaker phone so the connection is clear and talk directly into the mouth piece of the phone.

Always answer the telephone in a professional manner and coach your roommates, family, or friends on how to answer the phone and take messages if you are not available. Also, make sure you have a professional voicemail message that includes your first and last name (example: Hi, you have reached Julie Chan. I'm sorry I missed your call. Please leave me a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you).

## **BE PREPARED**

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview.

- Plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills. Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses, as well as a list of answers to typical interview questions.
- Keep your resume in clear view, on the top of your desk, or tape it to the wall near the phone, so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions. Anything on your resume is fair game so make sure you are familiar with the details.
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking. Also, have your calendar available so you are prepared to schedule additional interviews.
- Research the company or graduate school and prepare questions for the interviewer.
- Study the job description or program to identify the experiences and knowledge you need to highlight during the interview.
- Clear the room and make sure you have a quiet non-distracting place to talk. Evict friends, family, roommates, and the pets from the room. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.

## **PRACTICE**

- Have a friend or family member conduct a mock interview and record it so you can see how you sound over the phone.
- Practice reducing your "ums", "uhs", "okays" and "likes" from your conversational speech.
- Rehearse answers to typical interview questions.

## **DURING THE PHONE INTERVIEW**

- Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink.
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Remember that the interviewer will not see your body language or facial expressions, so make sure you are using an energetic and confident voice tone to convey your enthusiasm for the position.
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.) Only use a first name if asked.
- Listen carefully to the questions and don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Give short and concise answers that use examples that demonstrate your qualifications for the position. Use the job or program description and your research to determine qualifications.

## **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- Take notes about what you were asked and how you answered. Use these notes to help you prepare for the 2nd interview.
- Remember to say "thank you." Follow with a thank you note which reiterates your interest.

**LIST THE REASONS YOU ARE QUALIFIED**

Match your skills and experience to the job/program for which you are applying. Based on your research, on the left side, make a list of the requirements. On the right, make a list of the qualities you possess that fit those requirements. Demonstrate your skills and experience on

| <b>Position/Program Requirements</b>                      | <b>My Skills and Experience</b>   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Example:</b><br/>Excellent Communication Skills</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years experience communicating with customers while working at Coldstone Creamery. Explained menu, provided customer service, resolved customer complaints, and informed supervisor of any issues.</li> <li>• Presented senior engineering project to American Society of Civil Engineers. Explained purpose of project to a group of 38 engineers.</li> </ul> |
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