Job Interviews

Faculty of Information, U of T
Alex Howes, Careers Officer
iSkills - Career Development Series

Resume/Cover Letter/Portfolio
September 18, 4:15-5:45, room 417
September 22, 1-2:30, room 224/225

Know Your Personal Strengths & Skills
September 20, 4:15-5:45, room 417

Job Interviews
September 25, 4:30-6, room 224/225
September 27, 4:30-6, room 224/225

How to Network
September 26, 4:30-6, room 224/225
September 28, 4:15-5:45, room 224.225

Leveraging LinkedIn
September 29, 11-12, room 224/225
October 2, 4:30-5:30, room 224/225

Professional Communications
October 4, 12-1, room 116
October 5, 12-1, room 224/225

UXD Portfolio
October 4, 5:15-6:15, room 224/225
Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate knowledge about various types of job interviews
- Demonstrate best practices during job interviews with peers
- Identify and practice interview skills with peer within or beyond their concentration of study
What comes to mind?
What is the purpose of a job interview?

1. for employer to evaluate you
2. for you to evaluate the opportunity
We’ll talk about ...

- Types of interviews
- Preparation
- What employers really want to know
- 4 main types of interview questions
- How to answer questions
- Your questions for interviewers
- Telephone interview
- Perceptions and Decisions
- Dos & Don’ts
Types of Interviews

- Individual/panel interviews
- Group interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Skype/videoconference interviews
- Peer group interview
- Luncheon interview
- Case-study interviews
- Academic job interviews
How to Prepare
Preparation

How do you prepare for an interview?

- Research the job
- Research the organization
- Practice answering questions
  - Write answers, say out loud, practice with friends, Careers Officer
- Prepare your questions for interviewers
  - At least 4-5 questions
- Research salaries, industry trends, latest news
  - Decide on a salary range
More Preparation

- Know yourself
- Remember all your accomplishments
- Make a comprehensive list of examples
- Make a list of possible questions and your answers
Even More Preparation

- Prepare what you’ll be wearing
  - Better to overdress

- Prepare what to bring with you
  - Pen, paper, few copies of your resume

- Prepare Thank You email/card
  - You’ll need to send it the same day of the interview

- Plan your trip
  - Arrive early, approx. 10 minutes
Telephone Interview

- Ask with whom? How long? (30’-60’) When?
- They might sound indifferent, or go very quickly
- May have very specific questions regarding your resume
- Awkward pauses – they might be writing answers
- Ask questions if pause too long
- Prepare your questions
- Prepare: sit at a table, quiet room, have resume & docs around you, and don’t shuffle paper, type, drink, text ...
- Smile, be calm, listen carefully, thank the interviewer
What do employers want to know?

Employers want to know:

1. Can you do the job well?
2. Are you a good fit?
3. Do you really want the job?
1. Can you do the job?

- Your strengths, skills, experience
- To evaluate your competences
- To find the most qualified candidate
  - How do you compare to other candidates?
2. Do you fit?

- All companies have their own unique culture
  - All business vs. more laid back; have a good work-life balance vs. your life is your work
  - Do you understand the company and its purpose?
  - Do you have the right mind-set? (e.g. can-do attitude)

- Do you complement the company’s strengths?
3. Do you really want the job?

- Will you leave us in 6 months?
  - Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?
  - It separates the final candidates
Types of Interview Questions

- Knowledge, technical, job specific questions
  - What do you know about metadata?; Tell me about this experience

- Behavioral & situational questions
  - Tell me about a time when you had to ...
  - Imagine a customer asks you to ... how would you answer?

- Case questions
  - “How would you solve this problem? Walk us through your thought process”

- General, usual / unusual questions
  - What are your weaknesses?
Top 10 Standard Interview Questions

1. Why are you interested in this role and how does it fit into your career path?
2. Why are you a good fit for this position?
3. Tell us about a time when you overcame a challenge?
4. Tell us about an accomplishment that you are proud of?
5. Tell us about a time when you worked with a difficult team member – what strategies did you use to manage?
6. Tell us about a time when you were required to manage multiple project deadlines at once? How did you manage?
7. What would you do in the first 3 weeks of starting this role?
8. List five strengths. Pick one and provide an example of how you demonstrated that strength
9. List five weaknesses. Pick one and provide an example of how you overcame that weakness?
10. Do you have any questions for us?
Structure of Question

- **Background**
  
  University of Toronto Libraries has over 40 libraries across the institution in almost every faculty and department...

- **Question**
  
  ◦ As Library Liaison, how would you manage existing relationships and create new relationships with faculty members in the Faculty of Medicine?

- **Instructions**
  
  ◦ Be sure to describe steps you would take to maintain existing relationships and be mindful of varying department structures
List five strengths. Pick one and provide an example of how you demonstrated that strength

- You want to give a few real and relevant examples

- Consider:
  - Based on your research, what are the top 5 competencies needed for this job?
  - What are your best 3 examples/stories of your work, volunteer, school experience?
What are your weaknesses?

- Share a weakness that could also be perceived as a positive:
  - Being overly meticulous, neat, or organized
  - Impatience with people who miss deadlines, slackers
  - Being a workaholic, demanding

- You want to give a real weakness that you are already in the process of addressing
  - *I have always been nervous speaking in public. This year however, I volunteered for a project in which I had to present to senior management. The presentation went pretty well. Of course, I was extremely nervous, but I got through it. Now, I am less intimidated by those sorts of experiences.*
Behavioral Questions

- Situational and behavioral
- What do they really want to know?
- They start with:
  - Tell me about a time when you had to ...
  - Describe a situation when you had to think on your feet to get yourself out from a difficult situation
  - Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it
Time to Practice!
Top 10 Standard Interview Questions

1. Why are you interested in this role and how does it fit into your career path?
2. Tell us about a time when you overcame a challenge?
3. Tell us about an accomplishment that you are proud of?
4. Tell us about a time when you worked with a difficult team member – what strategies did you use to manage?
5. Tell us about a time when you were required to manage multiple project deadlines at once? How did you manage?
6. List five strengths. Pick one and provide an example of how you demonstrated that strength
7. List five weaknesses. Pick one and provide an example of how you overcame that weakness?
**STAR Technique**

- **S** = Situation
- **T** = Task
- **A** = Action
- **R** = Result
How would you react if a team member was not contributing towards a project?

Unfortunately, I have been in this situation before where one team member was not contributing, and it caused a detrimental effect on the whole team. I would handle this situation with honest communication at the very beginning. What I have found is that the more you ignore the problem, the worse it can get. Speaking with the team member in a non-confrontational way is the best approach. Often the reason for a team member not contributing is that they don’t understand the work or what is expected of them. By communicating with the individual, I am at least able to find out what the cause of the problem and then be able to work toward a solution.
"Tell me the story of your life and the decisions that you made along the way and why you made them and also tell me about some of the most difficult problems you worked on and how you solved them."

Elon Musk
Increasing a supermarket's profitability

- A supermarket chain has noticed a decline in its profitability. They have hired you to find out why this is and to recommend and implement a solution. You’ll need to work out why there is a decline in profitability – for example, is it specific sites or the entire chain’s performance that is suffering? Once you have identified the problems, work out a cost-effective solution that will allow the supermarket to address each in turn.
Case-Study Interviews

Tips from consulting orgs:

- Expect math: be prepared both to set up the analytics and do the math. We want to see your comfort with numbers.
- Apply a structured approach to the problem; focus on the most important issues
- Don’t panic if the answer is not apparent
- Do not feel pressured to provide an answer immediately - take your time, work through the issues, and organize your thoughts
- Be attentive to cues your interviewer may give. How will the new information change your analysis?
“Stress” Interview Questions

Simple trick questions to throw you off

- What’s your favorite fruit?
- What are 5 things you’re NOT?
- What do you know about consulting? You’re only 24.
Please describe a particular work project you have been involved with where you worked as part of a team.

Employer’s prompt

- What was your role? Was the team successful? How did you feel that you contributed to the success of the team?

What competencies is employer evaluating?

- Self-awareness (strengths and weaknesses), problem solving skills, leadership skills, creativity, recognition of others’ skills, cooperation
Your Questions
Your Questions

- What would you say are the top two personality traits someone needs to do this job well?
- What improvements or changes do you hope the new candidate will bring to this position?
- How would you describe a typical day in this position?
- What is one of the most difficult challenges facing your department?
- I know this company prides itself on X and Y, so what would you say is the most important aspect of your culture?
- How is my performance going to be measured?
Tips for Success

- Learn about the company: research, research, research!
- Know your resume really, really well
- Two way conversation – don’t talk too much
- Dress to impress, but be comfortable
- Keep positive body language
- Be confident; enthusiastic; smile; say ‘thank you’
- Be yourself

The best prepared person gets the job!
Final Tips

- Bring your portfolio or candidate package (resume, references)
- Follow up right away
- Remember: It’s just a conversation with your future colleagues
- Try to enjoy it!
Don’t forget to sign the attendance sheet!