INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

The Career Management Center provides several opportunities to develop your interview skills. Interviewing workshops are offered throughout each semester and students may also schedule mock interviews. The best way to improve your interview skills is to practice: the more you interview; the more confident you will be.

Employers utilize several settings and types of interviews to evaluate applicants. You will likely experience phone, in-person, panel, dining, and web conferencing situations throughout the interview process. Most hiring managers have the philosophy to hire for attitude and to train for skill; therefore, self-confidence, genuine interest, and motivation are key traits employers look for in candidates.

To help you get started, review our guide for navigating the interview process.

Before the Interview

- Research the employer. Review the employer website to discover the mission and core values. Review the LinkedIn profiles of the hiring manager(s) and individuals within your area. Consider how you “fit” into the company culture and determine how your values and skills are aligned. Vault also provide insider information on how organizations function. We also recommend that you read the news daily and are cognizant of industry happenings.
- Invest in a professional suit. Standard black and navy are considered the most professional. Wear the suit and shoes prior to the interview to break them in and help you feel more comfortable. Limit your use of perfumes and wear minimal jewelry.
- Prepare several questions to ask the employer based on your research. Your questions should help you learn more about the organization’s goals, expectations, and current/future projects. Review Bureau of Labor Statistics, College Measures Economics Success Metrics, Vault, Glassdoor, Payscale, and/or Salary.com for industry and region-specific salary information.

During the Interview

- Arrive 15 minutes early and turn off cell phone.
- During the greeting process, smile and provide a strong handshake. Maintain eye contact and posture throughout the interview.
- Remember the interviewer is considering three areas: strengths, motivation, and fit.
- Provide detailed examples of your experiences. Utilize the PARL method for structuring your storytelling technique. Describe the problem, your action(s), the results, and what you learned from the experience. Emphasize your strengths, goals, and motivation.
- Ask questions to demonstrate interest and to learn more about the organization. Your questions should help you determine if you would like the organization, responsibilities, structure, climate, and culture. Remember to ask for the next steps in the interview process so you are aware of when they will contact you again.
- Ask for business cards for follow-up correspondence.
After the interview

- Maintain a journal and reflect on the experience. Consider areas you performed well and where you could improve. It is very likely you may be asked similar interview questions in the future.
- Email a thank you note within 24 hours of your interview. Recent studies demonstrate that over 80% of applicants send thank you notes after each interview round. Affirm your interest in the position and reference the topics discussed in the email. Let the interviewer know when you will contact them again to check on the status of your interview.

Common Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why should I hire you?
- What do you know about our company/organization?
- Why did you select UT Dallas and your major?
- Discuss your favorite class.
- Discuss your most challenging course.
- What are your career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What motivates you to succeed?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- If you were to hire someone for this opportunity, what qualities would you look for?
- Describe your ideal work/office environment.
- What do you look for in a supervisor?
- Do you value money or experience?
- On a scale of 1-10, how proficient are you with MS Office products?
- Do you have plans to continue your education or attend graduate school?
- How do you know that our organization is the right place for you?
- Are you open to travel and/or relocation?
- What are your minimum salary expectations for this position?

PHONE AND/OR WEB CONFERENCE INTERVIEW

Employers often utilize phone screens to determine if the applicant meets the minimum requirements and is genuinely interested in the opportunity. Phone interviews are a cost effective way to meet several candidates in a short period of time. The majority of phone interviews are 15-45 minutes in length and include approximately 10-15 questions. We recommend preparing for the phone interview just as you would the in-person interview. Research the employer, review your application and the position description, and prepare 2-3 questions to ask the employer. Be sure to email a thank you note after every interview. The following strategies will help you have a more confident approach during the phone and/or web conference interview.
Phone Interview Strategies

- Schedule the interview for a quiet time and eliminate any background noise
- Utilize a landline when possible to avoid cell phone connection issues and dropped calls
- Review the position description and employer website for clues about the potential questions
- Prepare a 30-second summary of your resume and experiences (elevator speech)
- Dress professionally to help you avoid being too casual in your approach
- The power and tone of your voice are essential. Therefore, stand up while speaking and smile when discussing your accomplishments
- Demonstrate effective communication skills. Avoid fillers and awkward pauses; ask the employer to repeat or to rephrase challenging questions to allow additional time
- Be concise with your responses; provide specific examples of your skills and experiences

Web Conference Interview Strategies

- Most common platforms utilized are Skype and GoToMeeting
- Expect a panel of interviewers with your image being broadcasted on a projector-sized screen
- Avoid wireless connection if possible and test the quality of your webcam prior to the interview
- Utilize a clean, neutral space to eliminate distracting objects located on the wall or behind you
- No pets in the room because they can become a distraction
- Dress professionally and provide detailed, specific examples of your experiences and skills
- Look into the camera to simulate eye contact with the interviewer(s). Avoid tendency to focus on the computer screen. You may or may not be able to see every interviewer in the room
- Utilize a clean, neutral space to eliminate distracting objects located on the wall or behind you
- Prepare several questions to ask the interviewer(s) based on your research

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

The behavioral interview is the most common type of interview. Regardless of your industry of interest, you will likely encounter behavioral interview questions. Behavioral interviews are also known as situational interviews. The questions require a candidate to provide a specific, detailed example of a past experience and demonstrate how he/she handled the situation. From the employer perspective, past behavior indicates future behavior. The majority of behavioral interview questions are directly related to the position’s core responsibilities; therefore, review the job or internship description for clues about the types of questions that may be asked.

PARL Method

The PARL Method will help you articulate compelling stories. Utilize the following framework to ensure you are providing detailed and relevant information.
Problem: discuss the problem or situation you encountered
Action: describe the action you took to address the problem or situation
Result: review the results of your action
Learn: discuss what you learned from the experience; consider would you do anything differently

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- Describe a time you encountered a difficult individual.
- When were you required to complete a task and you lacked all the necessary information?
- Tell me about a time in which you failed.
- When have you felt the most successful?
- Describe a situation when you were the group leader/project manager, and your ideas were different from the group majority.
- Provide an example when you had to make a quick decision.
- Describe a time you mediated a conflict among members of your team.
- Tell me about a time you effectively delegated tasks within a project.

CASE STUDY INTERVIEW

A case study is most common with business and consulting firms. The employer presents a problem or situation and expects the candidate to thoroughly analyze the situation and provide a recommendation for improvement before a panel of interviewers. It is very likely that the case study will resemble a situation that the employer has previously encountered; therefore, we recommend reviewing the employer website for sample case studies and strategies for responding. Effective communication and analytical skills are being assessed during the case study.

The Career Management Center provides access to Vault, which feature consulting firm profiles and guides and resources for learning more about case study strategies and sample questions. The Vault Guide provides information on the top US consulting firms and a new feature added in 2013 also ranks the top firms in Asia and Europe. Rankings are also available based on diversity, prestige, discipline/area, and best to work for.

Employer Resources for Case Interview Preparation

Accenture: http://goo.gl/4mTh5o
Bain and Co: https://goo.gl/1J8U5q
BCG: http://goo.gl/fAe57K
Capital One: https://goo.gl/pZEw1S
Deloitte: http://goo.gl/aMjvFG
McKinsey: http://goo.gl/KDYYeu
Oliver Wyman: http://goo.gl/W6Hlhf
Case Interview Skills
- Effective communication
- Analytical thinking and problem solving
- Resourcefulness and initiative
- Confidence and cultural fit
- Self-leadership (how you react in pressure cooker situations)

Case Interview Process
- Listen carefully to the question and take notes (there are often clues embedded in the question to help you get started). Understand what is being asked of you
- Determine the audience for your recommendations
- Develop your initial approach; ask questions and summarize information to ensure you stay on track; watch for nonverbal clues from the employer
- The employer will sometimes provide additional information to lead to an alternative approach. At this time, consider alternative solutions for second approach
- Summarize your response and provide your recommendations

Case Interview Strategies
- Repeat question to recruiter to ensure you have the information needed for a strong start
- Think about your approach; take notes to organize your ideas
- If asked to whiteboard your presentation, ensure that it is easy to read and follow
- Be confident and demonstrate effective communication and analytical skills
- Eliminate fillers (uhm, you know, etc)
- Maintain a dialogue with the interviewer(s) and talk through your analysis
- Double-check your calculations and use manageable numbers to ensure accuracy
- Be receptive to employer feedback
- Keep your composure and demonstrate confidence
- Always provide your recommendations at the end; remember the client has paid for your recommendations and can choose to implement or to reject them

Sample Case Interview Questions
- Determine the number of baseballs utilized during a Major League Baseball season.
- How much would you charge to wash all the windows in downtown Dallas?
- You have eight balls, one of which is heavier than the others. All the balls appear identical. You have a balance-type scale, and you can perform trials on the balls. What is the minimum number of trials required to determine which is the heaviest ball?
- Design an emergency evacuation plan for New York City.
LUNCH INTERVIEW

Lunch interviews offer unique engagements outside of the office and should not be mistaken for informal events. The same level of preparation applies as in all other forms of interviewing. Recruiters and interviewers request lunch interviews to get to know candidates better, see how they multi-task during interviews and determine basic social skills.

Lunch Interview Strategies

- Approach the lunch interview with the same level of professionalism as in formal interviews.
- Base your ordering decision according to what your interviewer orders. Do not order the most expensive meal, nor is it appropriate to order beer, wine or other alcoholic beverages.
- Be decisive with your order, as this is something to which the interviewer will pay close attention.
- Food choice is important—do not order messy, smelly or high-maintenance dishes that will distract you from your interview.
- Remember your manners and brush up on table etiquette—do not talk with your mouth full, eat with your mouth open, or rest your elbows on the table. When finished with your meal, be sure to place your fork and knife together in the four o’clock position of your plate and fold your napkin next to your plate.
- Be courteous and friendly with the restaurant staff, even if they mess up your order. Your interviewer is also paying attention to how you interact with others.
- Thank your interviewer for their time and the meal.