JOB INTERVIEWS

How to Prepare
What to Expect
TODAY’S DISCUSSION

- Overview of the Selection Process
- Employers’ Interview Questions
  - Traditional, scenario-anecdotal & performance
- Applicants’ Interview Strategies
You can handle any interview if
• you understand the selection process &
• practice anticipated questions.
OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTION PROCESS
HIRING PROCESS ©2015

- Resumes "scored" by a computer
- Social media profiles are scrutinized
- Screening call (optional)

- First interview round by Skype
- Applicants compared
- On site interview(s)

- Background Check
- Criminal/financial
- Drug Test/References
- Offer
- May/may not negotiate
- Accept/reject
Types of Interview Settings

Face to Face
- Main Office
- Branch Office
- Hiring Division

Technology
- "Neutral" locations
  - Airport
  - Restaurant
  - Hotel Room
- Voice Only
- Voice & Video
- Web-Based Conferencing
WHO CONDUCTS THE INTERVIEW?

- Head of Company
- Search Committee
- HR person
- Direct Supervisor
- Future Colleagues
- Administrative Group

Sometimes a 3rd party Recruiter
POINTS TO PONDER

• Who benefits from the interview process?
• Who controls the interview process?
• Who influences the interview outcomes?
APPLICANT PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE JOB INTERVIEW

Were answers honest?
Do I like what I hear?
Is this a good fit?
Any “red flags?”
What else do I need to know?

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE JOB INTERVIEW

Remember: The interview is for YOU as much as it is for them!
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
3 Types of Interview Questions

- Traditional
- Scenario - Anecdotal
- Performance
3 Types of Interview Questions

Traditional

Scenario - Anecdotal

Performance
TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

- **Formal** face-to-face settings
  - Structured
  - Unstructured

- **Informal** face-to-face settings
  - Social mixers
  - Meals
  - Some type of event or outing

**Straightforward questions**
about your qualifications, experience and why you want to work for them.
EXAMPLES: TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

Why do you want to work here?

Have you done this type of work before?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

What are your goals?
3 Types of Interview Questions

- Traditional
- Scenario - Anecdotal
- Performance
SCENARIO-ANECDOTAL

**Situational**

“**How would you ...**”

- Looking for:
  - Organizational fit
  - Analytical ability

**Behavioral**

“**Tell about a time...**”

- Looking for:
  - Personality traits
  - Leadership
  - Problem solving

Q: Why are these type of questions popular with recruiters?

A: Past performance is a good indicator of future performance. From your answers, they infer how you might react in a similar situation.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Situational

• What would you do if we had to change your job duties due to the economy?

• If you received a consumer complaint, how would you handle it?

• What would you do if you saw a fellow employee stealing from us?

Behavioral

• Describe a time that you failed at something and what you did next.

• Explain your leadership approach to managing a team project.

• Tell us how you resolved a miscommunication with another person.
“Describe a time...
when you failed at something.”
Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes.

- John Dewey
Interview probe: “Describe a time when you failed at something.”

**Examples of what they hope to learn about you:**

- Are you able to admit to mistakes and failures?
- Do you take ownership for failures or blame others?
- Were you accountable? Did you report the problem?
- Did you analyze the situation and identify what went wrong?
- Were you able to correct the problem? What was the result?
- What did you learn that will enable you to avoid similar mistakes in the future?
Interview probe: “Describe a time when you failed at something.”

First, pause a moment to organize your thoughts. Then:

1. Briefly describe the situation or context. Frame the problem.
2. Explain your decision or your action (or failure to act.)
3. Precisely state the unintended or undesired outcome.
4. Explain your corrective action and the new result.
5. State what you learned & what you will do differently next time.

**Best Advice:** Practice your answer! You don’t need to memorize, but repeat it until you don’t stumble over your words. Being frank and sincere.
3 Types of Interview Questions

- Traditional
- Scenario - Anecdotal
- Performance
Performance-Based Interviews

- **Portfolio**
  - work samples

- **Audition**
  - Including presentations

- **Inbox activity**
  - demonstrate specific skill set

- **Case Study**
  - or analyze actual problem

- **Stress interview**

- **Group interview**
  - multiple applicants

Think: “Reality TV”
Employers May Use All 3 Strategies

- Traditional
- Scenario - Anecdotal
- Performance
Example of “typical” 1-2 day academic interview

Preliminary Screening Interview (traditional questions via phone or Skype)

*If you are invited on campus, you may expect:*

1. **Unstructured, informal conversation over meals**
   - usually search chair; search committee; future colleagues
   - rationale for completing an etiquette class!

2. **Traditional, formal panel** (entire search committee)
   - individuals prepare own questions or group prepares a set
   - traditional questions; situational questions

3. **Performance-based assessment** (research presentation & portfolio)

4. **Traditional 1-to-1 interviews** (department chair, college dean)

5. **Structured or unstructured panels** (students; support staff)
   - individuals prepare own questions or group prepares a set
   - traditional questions and scenario questions; casual conversation

6. **Debriefing 1-to-1 interview** (normally search committee chair)
WHAT DO THEY HOPE TO FIND?

**Traits & Abilities**
- Confidence
- Motivation
- Creativity
- Problem solver
- Set priorities
- Flexible

**Organizational Fit**
- Past performance = future performance
- Team member
- Communication style
- Budget minded
- Productive
- Loyal
APPLICANTS’ INTERVIEW STRATEGIES
Your 2 main goals for the interview process:

1. Convincing them that you are the best person for their open position.

Examples:
- Disciplinary knowledge/skills
- Professional demeanor
- Teamwork & leadership
- Communication skills
- Problem solving ability
- Time management
- Flexible nature
- Budget minded
- Good listener
- Passion for THIS job & company

2. Learning all that you can to be able to make an informed decision about an offer!

Examples:
- Clarifying the position description
- Task priorities for the first 6 months
- How job performance is assessed
- Name/title of future supervisor
- Names/titles of team members
- How the team works together
- How well THEY communicate
- Adequate space & equipment
- Operating budget (if applicable)
- Promotion & tenure process (if applicable)
3 STEP TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

1. **Review your application packet**
   - Be able to explain everything!
   - Take a hard copy – make notes on the margins

2. **Find out who will be interviewing you**
   - Use their site, LinkedIn & Google
   - Try to find profiles, CVs or pictures
   - Make notes on publications, papers, service activities and interests

3. **Research the company/department**
   - Mission statement & priorities (strategic plan)
   - Reputation, financial stability, leadership changes & culture
   - Use Google & LinkedIn for Mizzou alumni employers
Develop short (3-4 line) summaries on your background & research (sometimes called an “elevator speech” or “in-a-nutshell”)

Anticipate general questions

Identify specific questions they may ask

List talking points for behavioral questions

Decide - in advance – how to handle embarrassing or illegal questions
Find example questions & practice them

1. Enter these phrases into a search engine:
   • “[your discipline] interview questions”
   • “toughest or difficult interview questions”
   • “behavioral interview questions”
   • “S.T.A.R. interviewing technique”

2. Peruse public job/career sites for advice
   • Monster.com
   • Quintcareers.com
   • theLadders.com

3. Record yourself & critique & practice by way of mock interviews (at MU, go to the Career Center)
RELIEVING ANXIETY

- Preparedness builds confidence.
- Practice improves performance.
- Be rested. Stay hydrated.
- Arrive early – take a short walk
- Breathe

Remember: Interviewers are nervous too!
BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE INTERVIEW

• Shut off your phone.
• If they offer water, take it.
  • Your mouth may get dry.
• Ask permission to take notes – do it!
• Write down names and titles
  – use them!
SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

Listen carefully.

Make sure you understand the question

• “I am sorry, could you please repeat your question?”
• “Could you please explain that a bit more?”
• “I think you are asking… (paraphrase). Is that correct?”

WHEN YOU DON’T KNOW THE ANSWER

❖ Remain calm.
❖ Remain confident.

#1 Rule: Be honest

*“That’s an interesting question. I need to think about it more.”*
*“I have thought about that before, but have not arrived at a conclusion.”*
*“I do not have that specific experience, but something similar.”*
*“I’m sorry. I don’t know the answer.”*
Ask 2-3 questions related to the position.

- Could you please tell me a bit more about [this part] of the job description?
- What are the top 3 priorities for this position in the next 6 months?
- What are the expectations for scholarship and securing grants?

Show enthusiasm for the job through the end.

- Voice inflections and enthusiastic tone.
- Smile, eye contact, good posture, head nod as nonverbal gesture.
- Take notes of their key points & answers to your questions.

Say thank you.

(and follow up with a thank-you letter!)
JOB INTERVIEWS

How to Prepare
What to Expect

Thank you!

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Special thanks to Catherine Hsieh, PhD.