Self-Study Guide to
The Successful Interview: Preparation and Practice Make Perfect

Advance preparation is the key to interview success. Check out these important actions to take before the interview:

- Research the company (culture, structure, mission, vision, etc.);
- Learn different styles of interviewing;
- Practice your strong nonverbal behaviors (i.e., handshake, eye-contact, positive attitude, etc.);
- Review questions to answer and ask;
- Choose your professional attire; and
- Take advantage of mock interview opportunities.

Now you'll be ready to interview with confidence and calm.

PRE-READING

1. What are some ways you can research a company prior to your interview with them?
2. Explain this sentence: "The interview starts when you arrive."
3. What are some of the "don'ts" to keep an eye out for when you plan interview attire?
4. Why is it important to prepare questions to ask the employer during your Interview? What questions shouldn't you ask?
5. Why are employers turning to behavior-based questions to evaluate a potential candidate for a job?

POST-READING

Reflect

1. Write down three interview questions that would be a challenge for you to answer. Why would these be problematic?

Apply

2. To answer behavior-based questions effectively you need to do the following:
   1) Provide an overview of the situation;
   2) Describe the actions you took;
   3) Explain the results;
   4) It is also often appropriate to add what you learned from the experience.

   Activity

   Choose one of the behavior-based questions from the article (p. 50) you just read. Prepare a written answer to the question, including steps 1-4.

   Use these tips to build effective stories that answer a behavior-based question:

   a. Start your story at a specific moment in time: "I remember one afternoon when…" or "One day a customer came in and said..."
   b. Stories don't have to necessarily be work-based: classroom stories; playing sports, doing volunteer work, mastering new skills can also produce powerful stories.
   c. Stories ought to have a "feeling" component, as well as a recap of what occurred:
      - What were you feeling when it looked like you couldn't meet the deadline?
      - What was going through your mind when you heard that you had to miss your day off to fill in for another employee who was ill?
   d. Bring the story to its true conclusion: "What did you learn from this experience?" "Did you hear anything about this later on?"

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Extend and Build

3. "Tell me about yourself." is the "ice breaker," the first question you most likely will be asked in an interview. Preparing a message that defines you, sometimes called a "branding statement," is helpful, not only for the interview, but also for introductions at job fairs and for quick "elevator speeches." The branding statement is not your whole story. It is a brief message that communicates the essence of who you are in the workplace.

   To write your branding statement, break the concept into manageable pieces:

   a. Who you are…What you do…What you are known for…Whom you do it for. Put the pieces together and you'll have something like these examples:
      - I'm Dean's List biology major with minors in philosophy and English. I want to combine my science, research and writing background to write accessible articles for The Scientific American, Nature and other magazines in my field.
      - I am international relations major with a passion for travel to developing countries, especially Kenya. I have tutored international students in English, studies Swahili, and been active in the International Student Organization. I really enjoy my work as a spokesperson for my college's study abroad programs.
      - I am very fortunate to be the first person in my family to attend college. I balance my 20 hour a week work schedule with my majors in history and political science. I have learned to multitask, and manage my time so I can do well both on the job and in my classes where I maintain a 3.2 average in my majors.
      - I have always been fascinated by bridges of every type. My major in civil engineering and internship at Dudley & Morris have given me the opportunity to learn as much as possible about bridges from both a theoretical and practical point of view.

      Activity

      Write a draft of your branding statement.

Guide provided courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

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