Interview Preparation

Tips for Successful Interviewing

- Be intentional- use the resources below and CMC resources to think strategically about your prep
- Be yourself - you want to ensure that you fit with the opportunity just as much as the company does
- Plan ahead- start early with your interview prep, iron your suit, map-out directions – bring your A game
- Get plenty of sleep- be alert and rested, it shows
- Relax- you know yourself and your experiences better than anyone...you don’t want to sound scripted

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Top 5 Most Frequently Asked Questions:
Expect to see these questions in some form and take time to prepare for them. Think about (even write down) your answers and utilize the STAR model where applicable.

- **Tell me/us about yourself (in relation to this position).**
  *Hint: If this was the only question asked, would the interviewer leave with a good summary of you and your fit? Possible formula- Education+Experience+Passion+Why this position is the next step
- **What would a past supervisor say is one of your greatest strengths?**
  *Hint: Highlight your greatest strength (related to the position) and share an example of when you used it well.
- **Weakness/Challenge Area?**
  *Hint: This question is all about your self-awareness! Briefly mention a challenge area/weakness and then focus on how you are turning it around/how you have already begun to address this.
  *WARNING- do not select a weakness/challenge that is critical to the position.
- **Why THIS industry, company, position?**
  *Hint: Do your research- know specifics- and be genuine!
- **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?**
  *Hint: Focus on your goals and how they mirror the goals of the company.

Additional Commonly Asked Questions:

- How do you deal with conflict in a group situation?
- What do you like/dislike about working in a group?
- How do you deal with conflicting deadlines?
- Describe a time when you did not meet a deadline.
- Tell me/us about the skills you used to achieve something great at your past work.
- Describe a time when you advised/mentored someone.
- How do you take constructive feedback? Describe when you received constructive feedback.
- What is your leadership style? Give a specific example.
- How do you deal with stress? Between work, school and personal life.
- Tell me/us a time when you went above and beyond at work.
- Tell me/us about your preferred supervisor style.
- What questions do you have for me/us?
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STAR Method

A method of answering interview questions that provides context, highlights your skills, and quantifies your experiences to provide clear examples for the interviewer. This method allows you to answer all questions in an organized way with attention to detail and demonstrating your value.

S – Situation  (Describe the situation that you were in- using detail)

T – Task  (Outline what goal were you working toward/what role you played)

A – Action  (Describe what actions YOU took to address the situation)

R – Result  (Describe the outcome of your actions and quantify the results)

Example:

S – Situation

Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, The Daily News, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

T – Task

Develop a plan that would raise advertising revenue for the paper and increase advertisers from the year before.

A – Action

I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of The Daily News circulation with other ad media in the area. I also developed a targeted list of local businesses/organizations with a customer base matching our circulation and implemented four direct marketing campaigns.

R – Result

I signed contracts with 10 former and 7 new advertisers for daily ads and three for special supplements, increasing our new advertisers by 20 percent over the same period last year.
Interview Preparation

Know Your Stories ★

Employ a strategic approach to interviewing by developing 6-8 of your BEST stories in advance, highlighting times when you excelled/added value/demonstrated your strengths/utilized key skills/were recognized for your accomplishments. Think about your stories, say them out loud, write them down, and/or practice them with a career counselor. Use the STAR model to add results and quantify how you made a difference. And...be sure to find a balance between sounding/being scripted and “knowing your stuff”.

Then, when asked an interview question, you will already be equipped with articulate examples to share and can select from the variety of stories you have already spent time thinking about.

Framework for developing stories:

- When was a time that you felt most proud or received recognition for your work?
- What skills did you use? Were you challenged? Were there positive results? Who else was involved?
- Does this story exemplify a key skill/qualification that this position requires?
- Use the STAR model to articulate the experience and bring the story full-circle

Utilize Your Resources ★

The Job Description is one of the BEST indicators of what types of questions and/or question topics that you can expect. You have in your hands a “cheat-sheet” to what the company is looking for in an ideal candidate- use it! Highlight the key words, skills, and qualifications listed in the job description. Ask yourself, “Do my 6-8 best stories cover these?” If the answer is no, think of additional stories and experiences that provide examples of how you meet these qualifications and follow the framework above.

Check-out the Company Website for more clues! What is the company ALL ABOUT? Read their “About” section or look for their mission/vision/values as an organization? You will likely see questions surrounding their core values as they look for candidates that FIT their overall company culture and goals, not just the specific position. Be prepared to talk about your company FIT!

Your Questions for Them ★

This is your opportunity to interview them and get any questions that you have about the position and company answered. It is important that you prepare some questions for the interviewer ahead of time, in addition to questions that may come up as you go through the interview. Ask questions that you genuinely want to (and do not already) know the answer to. Be sure to do your research so that you do not ask questions that you could easily find the answer to. Focus your questions on the position, the company, the culture, and the industry.

Samples:

- What do you see ahead for your company in the next five years?
- What do you consider to be your company’s most important assets?
- What are the career paths in this department?
- In what way does the company engage in the community/service?
- From your experience, can you describe the company culture?
- What have been the department’s successes in the last couple of years?
- What does the performance review process look like/how will I be evaluated and how often?
- Is there anything else that I can expand upon to give you a better idea of my fit for this position?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
HELPFUL HINTS

When conducting research on companies, use multiple sources to gather information. Here are just a few resources to check out:

- **Organization/Company home pages** on the World Wide Web
- **Colorado State University Career Management Center Career Resource Library**
- **Online Social Networks** – LinkedIn
- **Yahoo! Finance and Online Search Engines**
- Check out **local and national news sources** for recent articles highlighting the company.

Many companies are using **phone interviews** as an initial screening method. Here are some additional considerations for phone interviewing:

**Before the interview**
- Have a space available that is private and where you will not be interrupted
- Gather materials: resumes, company research, questions to ask, note cards with key points
- Make sure you have a good phone connection- be careful if using your cell phone

**During the interview**
- Dress for success- resist the temptation to interview in your jeans and tee shirt
- Organize your materials to avoid shuffling through your documents
- Ask for and write down the name(s) of all individuals participating in the phone interview
- Take notes as you go along
- Remember that both you and the interviewer(s) lack the visual cues, body language, and non-verbal feedback so your words are very important
- Show enthusiasm and energy by the tone of your voice; smile when talking
- Resist being too casual in your language
- Some suggest that you stand as you may project better
- Consider how to handle the pauses or silence- theirs and yours
- Good closing summarizing your qualifications and reiterating interest in the position; thanking interviewer(s) for their time.

**Need additional interviewing resources?**
- **Visit** the Career Management Center Online Career Resource Library for a variety of resources on Interviewing

If you need additional assistance, Drop-in Counseling is available Monday through Thursday from 10am-3pm. Drop-In is a brief 10 to 15 minute consultation with a Career Services professional to discuss any career-related topic such as:

- **Resumes**
- **Networking**
- **Job Search**
- **Evaluating Job Offers**
- **Salary Statistics**
- **Interviewing and Much More...**
- **Cover Letters**
- **Negotiating Salaries**

**REMEMBER**
Following any interview, you should send a thank you note as a matter of courtesy. It is acceptable to email your thank you letter or send by US mail.

Preparing for interviews takes time and practice! It is not something you can start working on the night before your interview.