Lost in Translation: What Employers Are *Really* Asking and How to Give Them What They’re Looking For

http://studentaffairs.case.edu/careers/
• Purpose of the interview

• How to prepare and what to expect

• Interview framework

• After the interview

• Practice and feedback!
Purpose of the interview: 
*Interviewer’s perspective*

**Is the candidate qualified?**
- Does he/she show the basic competencies required?
- What are his/her strengths?
- Am I satisfied that his/her weaknesses are not a concern?

**Is there a fit between the candidate and the job/company/institution?**
- Does he/she have the right personality for our culture?
- Are his/her personal goals and interests aligned with the company/university’s?
- Do I feel a rapport with this person?

**What is unique about this candidate compared with other candidates I could hire?**
- How would I describe him/her to my colleagues?
- What are the risks? Potential benefits?
Interview Preparation: 
*Do your homework*

- Know the company and industry
- Know the interviewer(s)
- Understand the job and competencies required
- Recognize your competencies / position yourself
  - Interviewers vary in quality and preparation
  - It is your responsibility to make sure the interviewer understands what you bring to the table
- Have questions ready
- Practice! Practice! Practice!
Interview Preparation: 
*Do your homework*

You should know about:

- **The company**
  - Lines of business
  - Performance
  - Culture
  - Customers
  - Recent news

- **The industry**
  - Competition
  - Trends

- **The interviewer**
  - Background
  - Perspectives
  - Hint: Google your interviewer(s)
## Interview Preparation:
### Where to find this information

- Company website
- Annual report
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Professional Associations
- Internet search
- Alumni
- Current and former employees
- LinkedIn

### Websites to try:
- hoovers.com (through KSL)
- Vault Career Insider (access through MyCareer on the Career Center website)
- Ferguson’s (access similarly to Vault)
Interview Preparation: Know the job

You should know about:

The Position
- Competencies required
- Responsibilities
- Activities
- Your role; expected contribution

Career Path
- Developmental path
- Professional development opportunities
Interviews: What to expect

General questions
• Learning more about you, past experiences, skill set, what value you bring to the organization

Technical questions
• Gathering very specific information about your experience gained through research, internships, or co-op

Behavioral questions
• Past performance in particular skill areas predicts future behavior
Behavior Based Interviewing: 
*Interview framework*

To be successful using a behavior-based approach, you must analyze your experiences and know how to relate them to the current position the company / institution seeks to fill.

Use the STAR technique to help you structure your responses. STAR stands for:

**Situation**

**Task**

**Action**

**Result**
Behavior Based Interviewing

- Pull examples from coursework, work experience, research experience, campus involvement, volunteer work, etc.

- Your emphasis will not be on the experience itself but on the skill(s)/competencies/qualities developed as a result of having had the experience.

- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable). Focus on lessons learned, personal growth, and maturity.

- Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.

- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed account of one event.
Position Yourself: *Know your competencies*

**What skills do you enjoy using?**
- Skills = specific ability (SAS expert)
- Both hard and soft (teamwork, organization, written and/or verbal communication)

**What knowledge do you possess?**
- Knowledge = expertise developed (statistical analysis)

**What qualities or traits do you display?**
- Traits = personal style (dedicated, hardworking, curious, creative)
Interview Framework:
*Practice examples*

Competencies ➔ Activities ➔ Results

**EXAMPLE**
Analytical skills ➔ Conduct financial analysis to find undervalued companies in the stock market ➔ Successful stock picks / improved portfolio returns

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Traits
Examples of accomplishments

- Demonstrated leadership
- Took initiative to solve a problem; recognized an opportunity
- Prepared an original report
- Designed a new system, product, process
- Implemented a management decision or administrative procedure
- Identified a need for a plan, program, product or service

Your examples will highlight why or how you accomplished.
Give me an example of a time that you led a team to implement a change.

**Situation**

*I am the scholarship committee chair for my sorority and I was looking at different ideas to enhance scholarship for our members (State why you were doing this)*

**Task**

*The committee decided to come up with a plan to increase the chapter GPA.*

**Action**

*I led several committee meetings where we drafted our ideas and developed a plan. I presented the plan to all 50 members and received buy-in from the sorority members. (Share the specifics of the plan and why you chose what you did. Talk a bit about your how you led the group and what actions you took that got the buy-in you sought.)*

**Result**

*The plan was implemented and average membership GPA was increased from a 3.2 to a 3.4 after one semester. Camaraderie also increased as one of the plan components was the use of study groups.*
The dreaded question…

So, tell me about yourself.

• Prepare a 60-90 second commercial
• Overview of relevant professional background (education, major, degree, previous work experience)
• Skills or experiences you have had (work experience, leadership, etc.)
• What you are looking to do next
• Google: HBS elevator pitch builder: http://www.alumni.hbs.edu/careers/pitch/
• Ask yourself – what is relevant to my audience?
Example

My name is ______ and I am a student in the MEM program at Case Western Reserve University. I received my undergraduate degree in BME from ______. I have been doing research with the Cleveland Clinic for the past year on ________. I have also had some design experience with the Cerebral Palsy Foundation where I was part of an interdisciplinary team that created a wheelchair prototype with music and vibration incorporated. I am interested in using my engineering research and design experience, as well as my leadership and interpersonal communication skills in to explore opportunities at medical device companies, which led me to apply for _____ with ________.
Questions to always be ready for

• Tell me about yourself.

• Why are you interested in this position / industry?

• Why are you interested in this company?

• Why should we hire you?
At the end of the interview

• Ask questions of the interviewer
  • Questions should reflect your interest in and research of the organization and/or position
• Reiterate your interest in the job opportunity
• Ask about the next steps/timeframe for a decision
• Get follow-up information
• Write a thank you letter/email within 1 business day at the latest
Nonverbal communication

- Solid eye contact, but don’t stare
- Smile
- Shake hands firmly – everyone practice
- Walk into the office confidently
- Sit on the edge of the chair
- Hands free (or low motion)
Interview self-evaluation

Ask yourself these questions:

• What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
• Did I present my qualifications well?
• Did I overlook any which could be pertinent to this job?
• Did I learn all I needed to know about the job? Did I forget or hesitate to ask about factors that are important to me?
• Did I talk too much? Did I do enough talking?
• Was I too tense? Aggressive? Assertive enough?

How can I improve my next interview?
What to bring to the interview

- Resume / CV
- Notepad and Pen
- Portfolio
- Reference List
- Questions for the interviewer based on research of the company

A note about attire …
People who do well in interviews are …

• Passionate and articulate
• Poised and professional
• Conscious of their non-verbal messages
• Clear about their competencies and how they can benefit a potential employer in this position
• Able to ask thoughtful questions
• Able to show that they’ve done their homework
• Genuine and sincere
Schedule a mock interview

- Call 368-4446 to schedule a one hour appointment for a video-recorded Mock Interview
- Submit your resume in advance
- Bring a flash drive if you want to keep your video
- Career Fairs are in October and February
Mini-mock interviews

Form groups of 3
- Interviewer
- Interviewee
- Observer

Sample questions
- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this industry / position / organization?
- Tell me about a time when you demonstrated leadership skills.
- Tell me about the best team you’ve been a part of and a significant accomplishment of the team.
- Tell me about a new opportunity you realized or problem you solved.
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a project that failed.