

CAREER CORNER

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So Many Types of Job Interviews Are You Ready for the Possibilities?

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What will your next job interview be like? Today, there are many interview formats you might encounter during your job search. The techniques employers use depend on what they are looking for and how they want to obtain information from you. Regardless of the interviewing method, you will want to perform your best and successfully sell your unique qualifications. To be well prepared and increase the chances of securing a job offer, it's important that you recognize the various styles of interviewing and understand their purposes.

What Are Some Typical Types of Interviews?

Traditional

The traditional interview is one of the most common; it is usually conducted in person in a one-on-one setting. Typically, the interviewer asks questions that assess your skills, qualifications, experience, and work ethic as they relate to the available position. You will be asked broad-based questions like "Why do you want to work for this organization? What are your short and long range goals and objectives? What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?" In short, employers want to know if you can effectively communicate your strengths, abilities, and goals, so they can see if you are a good match for the organization. In this style of interviewing, you should establish rapport with the interviewer, relay your compatibility to the position, and emphasize how your qualifications will benefit the organization.

Behavioral

This type of interview is increasingly popular; it is based on the premise that your past behavior is the best predictor of your future performance on the job. Behavioral

interview questions are more pointed and probing than those of a traditional interview. Instead of being asked what you would do in a given scenario, the behavioral interview focuses on what you have done in similar situations. In fact, you will be asked to identify situations from your past experiences that illustrate your skills and abilities. The employer wants to know how you handled specific issues; so, the interviewer may ask, "Can you tell me about a time you experienced a difficult situation with a coworker? How did you resolve it? How did your resolution affect the outcome?" These types of questions allow employers to base their hiring decisions on experiences from your own career and job-related behaviors.

To be adequately prepared for a behavioral interview, carefully review the job description to determine what skills and characteristics the employer is seeking. Identify your skills and characteristics related to the job objectives. Recount situations that reflect your previous positive actions and behaviors. Draw from a variety of experiences. Become familiar with some typical behavioral questions. Prepare and practice your responses prior to the interview. (See Related Resources.)

Telephone

Employers use telephone-screening interviews to ensure that candidates meet minimum requirements and to eliminate unqualified candidates. It's also used as a cost-saving measure to decrease the pool of candidates invited for in-person interviews, minimizing travel expenses. At this stage, be wary of discussing specific salary requirements. You don't want to over- or under-price your value to the employer. Also, be aware that interviewers are looking for inconsistencies in your employment history and may challenge your qualifications.

Phone interviews may be scheduled or occur unexpectedly, so be prepared. Keep your resume and note cards easily accessible. Try to use a landline instead of cell phone to avoid poor reception or a dropped call. Arrange for a quiet place to conduct the interview. Be mindful of your communication style. You are being judged both on what you say and on how you say it.

Before the close of a phone interview, ask about the next step in the process to attempt to secure an in-person interview.

Panel

In a panel interview, you will be met by several members of the organization. Some employers want prospective employees to see several managers or potential co-workers from selected departments. Typically each interviewer will ask you questions; don't let multiple interviewers daunt you.

It's good to ask for the interviewers' business cards, so you can be sure to address each individual by name when responding to questions. Focus on your audience;

give each participant equal and appropriate attention. When responding to one interviewer's question, be sure to maintain eye contact with all of them. Following the interview, it is recommended that you send thank you notes to each of the participants.

Case

The case interview uses a specialized format designed to evaluate the applicant's problem solving, analytical, and communication skills. This interview process is used primarily in business settings. In short, you are presented with an actual or simulated business problem facing a company and are asked to present a solution. Candidates are expected to ask questions of the interviewer as they process the problem at hand. Employers want to know that you can think on your feet, identify key issues, analyze information using logical reasoning, and ultimately reach a positive resolution. It is highly advisable to practice your approach for a case interview. There are specific resources and strategies that can help job seekers prepare for this type of interview including tips and sample cases. (See Related Resources.)

Lunch

A lunch interview allows the hiring manager to assess how you handle yourself in a social setting and evaluate your interpersonal skills. Additionally, the job you are applying for may require luncheon meetings with customers or constituents. Choose meal selections carefully. Avoid messy choices that you cannot eat gracefully. Pasta with sauce, barbecue wings, and whole lobsters are probably not the best choices. Follow the interviewer's lead in both food selection, etiquette, and discussion topics. Consider your manners; employers are also observing how you treat serving staff and other colleagues or guests.

Video

Employers are beginning to use Web-based video interviews. In addition to saving on transportation costs, this new technology reduces time spent on the interview process and allows employers to review and replay the candidate's interview when making a hiring decision.

Arrangements for this type of interview are either scheduled at a satellite office of the organization, provided at a company that offers video conferencing services, or via a Web cam supplied to the applicant's home address. In any case, you will be provided with directions regarding the use of the technology. If you are still unsure how to operate the equipment, you should request assistance prior to the interview.

When participating in this kind of interview in your home, make sure you select an appropriate setting. If you are nervous about being in front of a camera — practice. Use a Web cam or a video camera to set up a trial run. During the video interview, be aware that there is often a time delay, and a few seconds may elapse during communications. Listen carefully before you respond to make sure you have heard the entire question the interviewer is asking. Focus on the camera and the interviewer. Relax and smile. Although the event is being conducted remotely, you will want to portray that you are confident and comfortable.

Second

Generally, the goal of your first job interview is to be invited back for a second interview. You may be asked back for any of several reasons. The employer might have other key stakeholders you need to meet prior to being hired, wants to confirm your suitability for the job, or could be deciding between you and another candidate.

The second interview will probably be longer than the first. You may meet with other managers and staff with whom they anticipate you would work, and be given a tour of the facility. The emphasis of the second interview is not so much to re-sell your skills but rather to establish rapport and accentuate your interest in the position and mission of the organization. It's also a time for you to obtain a more in-depth view of the workplace culture and make sure that the job will be a good match for you.

If you had qualms about the job after the first interview, it may still be beneficial to return for the follow-up interview to solidify your decision one way or the other and gain some additional interviewing experience. A successful second interview may just be the pathway to your new position.

What's the Common Thread?

Although there are very different styles of job interviewing, there are still a few things they all have in common; each one requires prior research, preparation, and professionalism. As a serious job applicant, you need to have a working knowledge of the position and the organization. It is also just as important to have an in-depth understanding of your own values, abilities, interests, and skills. Every job interview requires the same basic etiquette — arrive on time, be positive, dress professionally, make eye contact, be yourself, and write thank-you notes to each person who interviews you.

Be Versatile!

Awareness of the various types of interviewing techniques and settings that employers use will give you the knowledge and confidence needed to address whatever questions are asked. If you want to set yourself apart from other job candidates, remember the basics and be prepared for any kind of interview format.

Related Resources

- **Sample Behavioral Interview Questions**
QuintCareers.com
http://www.quintcareers.com/sample_behavioral.html
- **Case Interview Resources for Job-Seekers/**
QuintCareers.com
http://www.quintcareers.com/case_interview_resources.html
- **Video Job Interview**
About.com
http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/video_interview.htm
- **Types of Job Interviews**
QuintCareers.com
http://www.quintcareers.com/job_interviews.html
- **Interviewing**
The Riley Guide
<http://www.rileyguide.com/interview.html>
- **The Quintessential Guide to Job Interview Preparation**
QuintCareers.com
http://www.quintcareers.com/Quintessential_Careers_Press/Job-Interview-Preparation/

The Internet resources listed above may change over time. Enrolled students and alumni can access the most current information, as well as many additional career-related links on the Excelsior College Web site. Go to www.excelsior.edu, then log in, and click on the Career Resources link on your MyEC page; for graduates, click on the Alumni Connection.

Questions or comments about this article?

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