

LAURIER

Career Development Centre

INTERVIEW SUCCESS



LMA Employment Preparation Series
2010

Part I - Context

- Approach
- Preparation

Part II - Content

- Interview Types
- Questions and Answers

Part III - Follow-up

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS COMBINES:

PREPARATION

PLANNING

PROFESSIONALISM

**A great interview is
a mutually engaging conversation
leading to
a mutually beneficial outcome!**

PART I: CONTEXT

A successful job search begins with a clear understanding of:

- **Who you are...**
- **What you are looking for...**

This is also the foundation of a successful interview.

3 Key Areas of Research

1. Yourself
2. The career/job and industry
3. The specific employer

THE JOB INTERVIEW IS A MEETING

- **Purpose:** Determine if there is a suitable match between your needs and skills and the needs and opportunities of the employer

a.k.a The Right FIT



- Beyond **qualifications**, FIT refers to the **qualities** to be effective with the clients, team and culture of the organization

Tell me about yourself.

- **Begin** by selecting a relevant time period that enables you to highlight your background and qualifications
- **Focus** on professional not personal information
- **End** by explaining why you are interested in and suited to this specific opportunity (a.k.a. FIT)

Conduct a Qualifications Analysis

1. **Compile** a comprehensive list of your **Skills - Experiences - Qualifications**
2. **Create** role-relevant descriptions of how you use your qualifications
3. **Prepare** to discuss your qualifications focussing on Fit with the specific job/agency

This list should align to your Professional Brand

Tangible and Measurable

- Years of experience
- Education
- Certification/Training
- Knowledge of specific methodology or procedures
- Computer skills
- Language proficiency
- Ability to operate relevant equipment, tools, instruments
- Ability to comprehend and interpret records
- Current knowledge of relevant legislation

Intangible & Non-measurable

- Communication
- Observation/
Assessment
- Analytical/logical
- Leadership
- Decision making
- Tact/diplomacy
- Negotiation
- Consultation
- Adaptability
- Influence
- Optimism
- Intuitive innovation
- Problem solving
- Collaboration
- Coordination/planning
- Presentation

IDENTIFY YOUR **CORE COMPETENCIES**

A **core competency or required skill** may be the same for many roles but their **use, application** and **degree of value** are quite different.

e.g. A **marketing analyst** and a **social worker** both require “**assessment skills**”

For each required core competency (**what you bring**), identify the underlying sub skills (**how you will use it**)

UNDERSTAND HOW SKILLS WORK

Assessment

Information
Gathering

Research

Asking
Questions

Creating
Reports

Analyzing
Data

Part of developing your unique Professional Brand

Are you prepared to discuss in an interview –

The specific job?

- Identify, assess and understand what the job really involves

Your field?

- Research and review the field
- Requirements • Activities • Trends • Affiliations

Are you prepared to discuss in an interview the organization or agency's -

- Mandate/Philosophy/Goals?
- History/Current Status?
- Key Brands?
- Organizational structure?
- Competition?
- Current and future challenges?

- The Internet
 - **The Employers Website (Media Releases)**
 - **Blogs**
 - **Twitter**
 - **Linkedin (facebook)**
- The Public Library/ Chamber of Commerce
- Magazines/Newspapers
- Career Events
- Professional Associations
- Alumni and ASK Program (Offered by the Career Centre)
- Similar organizations (in other cities)
- Call the organization and request information

Informational Interviews
with professional contacts
continues to be a leading source for obtaining insights and referrals

CREATE AN INTERVIEW AGENDA

- Identify 5 key points you want to communicate to the employer during the interview
- These should include:
 - **Relevant skills and qualifications**
 - **Key experiences**
 - **Relevant achievements**
 - **Future aspirations (related)**
 - **Statement of Professional Brand/Reputation**

ASK YOURSELF:

How will I distinguish myself in a positive and memorable way from other candidates?

Interview professionalism includes:

- Confirmation contact
- Attire selection
- Pre-Arrival planning
- Interview-ready portfolio
- Arrival and business etiquette

Confirmation Contact

- Establish key contact name/number
- Re-confirm interview logistic:
 - E.g. Time, duration, location, parking
- Obtain names & titles of all interviewees
- Verify interview format(s)

Attire

- Know the standard for the organization
- Dress (appropriately) above the standard
- Look well rested, neatly groomed, energetic and confident
- Be a minimalist - Carry only one briefcase or portfolio

Pre-arrival planning

- Plan transportation and parking ahead of time (rehearse commute if possible!)
- Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the interview
- Minimize “day-of” distractions (i.e. ensure gas tank is full, pre-purchase bus tickets, have change for parking etc.)

PORTFOLIO

- Reference letters
- Performance evaluations
- Awards/Certificates
- Work Samples (e.g. outlines or programs or educational material developed or managed)
- Copy of job description
- Cover letter
- Up-to-date résumé
- Your interview agenda
- List of questions for the interviewer(s)
- Pad of paper
- Pen
- Contact card...

Networking Cards Ideal for exchange during:

- Informational Interviews
- Job Interviews
- Industry Events
- “Chance” Introductions

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Arrival

- Greet the receptionist and formally introduce yourself
- Remove outerwear immediately
- Do not eat or drink while waiting (except water)
- Do not speak on the phone while waiting

INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

- ⊙ Stand up and shake hands
- ⊙ Introduce yourself by your full name
- ⊙ Invite interviewee(s) to call you by your first name
- ⊙ Repeat full name of each interviewee back (do not use first names unless invited to)
- ⊙ Small talk while walking to interview venue (e.g. weather, roads)
- ⊙ Wait to be invited to sit down
- ⊙ Never attempt to look at what the interviewer is writing

Interview Types & Formats

Interview Questions & Responses

COMMON INTERVIEW TYPES

- Screening interviews
- Individual interviews
- Panel interviews
- Group interviews

- General Questions
- Behavioural-based Questions
- Competency-based Questions
- Presentations
- Case Interviews

Behavioural-based (a.k.a. Situational)

“Past experience predicts future performance.”

“Can you describe an instance when you had to juggle multiple brands at once? What challenges did this raise for you, and how did you handle them?”

Competency-based (a.k.a. Skill-based)

Can you appropriately identify and/or discuss the competencies (skills) required to be successful in the role

“Tell me how you would approach...”

“Describe the core skills required to...”

APPROACHING ANSWERS

- Draw upon your past experiences
- Be systematic, concise & analytical
- Connect your examples to the desired position
- If you are asked about negative situation or failures – focus on “learning's” and possible future approaches
- Consider the **STARR** response ...

THE STARR RESPONSE

S	Situation	Describe the setting/situation (briefly)
T	Task	Indicate what needed to be accomplished
A	Action	Detail the actions you took and the skills utilized
R	Relevance	Describe the job-relevance of the skills used
R	Result	Outline the outcomes & benefits

Focus on **Transferable Skills**:

- Begin with generic skill/competency/qualification
- Articulate the underlying sub-skills
- Describe how you have used or would use these skills on the job
- Share your past achievements related to the skill

“Tell me about your strengths...”

- Focus on 3-5 Core Competencies
- Prepare 2 STARR examples for each

“I have excellent presentation skills: specifically my ability to explain information clearly while ensuring the audience is engaged. For example,...”

“Tell me about your weaknesses...”

- Focus on 1-2 “solvable” challenges that place you in a job relevant position
- Include strategies you will use to address these challenges

e.g. Challenges you may face initially on the job e.g. new systems, locations, policies, focus area, resources etc.

“What would you do if ...”

- Think logically through your response
- Clearly articulate step-by-step your style
- Focus on your initiative, creativity and ability to respond
- Demonstrate how your strengths enable you to address the situation

e.g. If you were a marketer at this company, what new product would you recommend we introduce to the market and why?

In general, within North America, laws prohibit discrimination in employment based on:

- Disability
- Marital status
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religious affiliation
- National origin
- Ethnic background

There are expectations (e.g. government and international hiring) so research and understand the rules that may apply

OPTIONAL APPROACHES FOR HANDLING INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

- 1. Examine the question for intent** and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job.
- 2. Answer the question.** You may answer the question as asked, but you may reveal more information than you intended.
- 3. Refuse to answer the question:** A strategy is to ask the interviewer how the information he/she is seeking is relevant to the position.

ALWAYS BE TACTFUL:

Often inappropriate questions are not intended to be offensive as an inexperienced interviewer may have been unaware.

PROHIBITED QUESTIONS (SAMPLES)

- How many sick days did you have last year? Were you hospitalized?
- Are you planning on starting a family?
- What are the ages of your children?
- Where is your accent from?

PERMITTED QUESTIONS (SAMPLES)

- Can you perform the essential functions of the job? Can you demonstrate?
- Are you eligible to work in Canada?
- Can you start at 7:30 and work overtime if necessary?

Once an offer is extended, there may be the requirement for medical testing or other assessments

other assessments

What questions might you ask an interviewer?

- Prepare 5 - 8 questions which demonstrate your knowledge of the organization/ industry (gained through research)
- Ask about training/project opportunities, your role, your supervisor, team philosophy, primary initial duties, work environment, company direction
- Usually, you should not ask about salary and benefits

**Avoid superficial
questions**

**Be respectful of time
available**

ALWAYS prepare and deliver a strong closing statement.

- Thank the interviewer(s) and (re)state:
 - your interest
 - your key related strengths
 - your understanding of next steps
 - any key point that you may have overlooked (refer to your notes)

**A great opportunity to restate
your Professional Brand**

PART III: FOLLOW UP

Send within 24 hours to the key contact(s) from the interview committee a **thank you note** expressing

Appreciation for their -

Time

Interest

Insights

Emphasis on your -

Qualifications

Enthusiasm

Confidence

Include LINKS to relevant online profile and portfolio information.

FURTHER FOLLOW UP

- **If no contact** within 3-4 days or stated timeline – phone or email
 - Indicate that you are checking the status of the selection process
- **If you are unsuccessful**, obtain feedback and restate your interest in future roles

Keep the door open
for future
opportunities!

2 FINAL TIPS

- Throughout the process, view each interview as a **professional business meeting** to determine FIT.
- After each interview, make notes immediately— don't rely on your memory!
 - This may be important whether you -
 - land the job
 - land a follow-up interview
 - have future interviews

SUMMARY INTERVIEW NOTES INCLUDE:

- Contact information
- What are my strengths/weaknesses as a candidate?
- What do I need to do to get to the next step?
- How could I have bettered my chances?
- Follow up activity recommended

- **The Interview Guidebook**
- **Schedule of Events**
- **Personal Branding workshop**
- **Self-help** resources – Career Centre
- Call to book an **interview coaching** or **mock-interview** appointment (ext. 4495)

ANY QUESTIONS?

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**Thank You For Your Interest
and Good Luck**