

# Interviewing for a Non-Academic Job

If an employer invites you to interview with the company, he or she already thinks you are qualified to do the job. The purpose of the interview is for the employer to see if you and the company fit.

## SCHEDULING AN INTERVIEW

In most cases you will go through at least two rounds of interviewing. The first is a preliminary interview often done over the phone or on campus and the second is a company visit where you will meet people in the company.

When you are called to schedule an interview you should have some choice in time. It is okay to have a preference date, but be careful to be available on some of the time slots. Be sure to ask for a job description if you do not already have one. In addition, make sure you will receive a schedule of the interview day and the people who will be interviewing you. Your travel expenses may be paid for, depending upon the company. Make sure you keep your travel receipts.

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are several different types of interviews. Depending upon the field and company, they will usually follow one model or a combination.

### Traditional Interview

The interviewer generally asks open ended questions from your resume. The interview may be one-on-one or in a group.

### Case Interview

This typically is done in the consulting field. The interviewer(s) will give you a "case" and ask you to problem-solve on the spot. Keep in mind they are not looking for the right answer, but the method in which you go about solving the problem.

### Behavioral Interview

This is based on looking at the top people in the company and their skill or competencies, then asking questions to see if candidates have similar skills. In order to prepare for a behavioral interview, research the field. What skills are needed? Have examples from your own experience. In thinking about skill examples, use this model.

The three steps in example-based interviewing: POS.

Problem: What was the problem?

Outcome: How did it turn out?

Skills: What skills did you use in solving this problem?

## RESEARCH

Research the Organization

(Know what they do and know who their competitors are.)

Contact the company and ask for their literature.

Check their website.

Know who is going to interview and what they do.

Talk with alumni who work in the organization.

Research the Field

Read related industry articles so you have a sense of the industry as a whole.

Career Services subscribes to many industry journals available.

Know About the Position

Ask for a position description.

Get a sense of the salary range.

Self-Assessment

Know yourself and be able to talk about yourself.

Spend time thinking and writing out your strength/weaknesses/skills (with concrete examples), why you want the job with that specific organization, and what you might have for career goals.

## PRESENTATION

Each industry is different on the standard interview attire. If you are unsure of the style, dress conservatively. It is important to look professional. This does not mean it has to be the most expensive outfit. Remember, the interviewer wants to remember you not what you wore.

In addition to what you are wearing, it is important to give an overall good impression. Plan on getting to the interview 10 minutes early. Be pleasant to everyone you meet! Make sure you bring extra copies of your resume/cv and copies of references in a thin portfolio.

When meeting your interviewer(s) make good eye contact, have a strong handshake and smile. Be prepared for some small chitchat. Throughout your interview be aware of your body language: make good eye contact, sit straight and don't have distracting hand movements.

## THE INTERVIEW

The interviewer wants to know four things.

What does the candidate want?

The interviewer wants to know what you are interested in doing and if the company has those opportunities. Or he/she might want to know what part of the organization you would like to work. "I am willing to do anything" is not a good answer. It either sounds desperate or displays a lack of thought on your part. Instead you might have a list of things in priority you would be interested in relevant to the company.

Example: A PhD in Chemistry might be interested in working in areas as exploratory research aligned specifically with your training.

This requires research on the company to know the opportunities and areas. Note: Employers put a lot of time into hiring, so they want someone who will accept the job.

Can the person do the job?

The interviewer wants to know that you know how to apply your education in real world situations. For those in science/engineering, the interviewer tries to gather information on your technical expertise and capabilities in the interview. You will want to have examples of your technical performance. Some companies will test you by giving you a technical question or writing test.

How to talk about your research

Why: What were the goals of the research?

How: How did you approach the problem? What tools did you use and why?

Results? This is the bottom line. Be specific and brief.

Communicating your research in this way lets the interviewer know you understand what you have done and can effectively describe your research.

If you are interviewing for an industry job in research and development, know what the company is currently doing. Think about how they could be doing it differently. Have ideas on what you would like to start doing for research and tie it into how that would fit with what the company is doing.

Will the person do the job?

Ninety percent of the candidates could do the job, but an employer is looking for someone to excel on the job. The interviewer is looking for leadership and performance in the past to see how you might perform in the future. Think about and have examples from your experience that illustrate leadership and performance.

Will the person be compatible with the existing team?

In today's workplace, it is important that people work well together. The interviewer might be thinking, "Could I last 3 hours on a plane with this person?" Have examples of good team and people skills. In addition, you should demonstrate good interpersonal skills. Listen to the interviewer. Be enthusiastic about the position and show some curiosity. Have questions for the interviewer.

## FOLLOW-UP

At the end of the interview, it is okay to ask about the next step in the process. In addition, be sure to send a sincere typed thank-you letter. This is the last chance to market yourself and show that you have social skills.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

General

Tell me about yourself?

Why do you want to work for us?

Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

If you could meet any historical figure who would it be and why?

How would your classmates/co-workers describe you?

Tell me about an accomplishment you are proud of.

What don't you like about graduate school? What would you change?

In what kind of environment are you most comfortable?

How do you work under pressure?

Do you have a geographical preference?

Are you willing to relocate?

Behavioral

Tell me about a time you did not succeed and how you handled it.

Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet.

If you were on a team and one member was not doing their part, what would you do?

Tell me about a time you had to make a decision with not a lot of information.

Tell me about a risk you have taken.

Case

If you wanted to start a successful business in Hanover, what would it be and why?

How many phone booths are in New York City?

If a pharmaceutical company asked you if a new product would be successful, how would you go about deciding what to recommend?

Questions for the Interviewer

What do you like/dislike about working for XXX Organization?

How will I be evaluated?

What is your/your leaders' supervisory style?

How do you motivate your staff?