

Interviewing: Anticipating Questions & Creating Answers



Interview Expectations

Top Personal Characteristics Employers Seek in Job Candidates (from National Association of Colleges and Employers "Job Outlook 2008" Survey):

Communication skills (verbal & written)
Strong work ethic
Initiative
Teamwork skills (work well with others)
Interpersonal skills (relate well to others)

Detail-oriented/organization skills
Computer/technical skills
Leadership abilities
Problem Solving/analytical skills
Flexibility/adaptability



What does the interviewer really want?

Can you do the job (abilities/skills)?
Will you do the job (motivation)?
Will you be a fast learner (aptitude)?
Are you "promotable" (leadership potential)?

Will you fit into the organization culture?
Will you work well with others?
Are you sincerely interested in the job?
Have you adequately prepared for entry into this field/industry?

Anticipating Types of Questions Asked

- About You
 - Probing the resume
 - Role play or scenario
 - Open ended ("tell me about yourself")
 - Behavioral/situational



- About Job/Organization/Industry
 - Understanding of the position
 - Knowledge of the industry/recent trends
 - Specific insights about the organization
 - Interest in the organization/job

Role playing/scenario questions:

How would you pitch a product/service to a client who knew nothing about our organization?
If a difficult customer walked in demanding a service that was unavailable, how would you respond?
If you strongly disagreed with a co-worker about a project you were working on, how would you handle the situation?

Informal (tell me about yourself) questions:

Describe your educational background
Focus your responses on the relationship between the job/organization and your skills/attributes
Include a skill, an example, and application
Ask yourself, "How will my response give this person greater insight into me as a potential employee?"

Behavioral interviewing questions:

Give me an example of a time when you:
Faced an ethical dilemma
Solved a difficult problem
Persuaded a group to do something they opposed
Overcame a difficult obstacle

Took a risk and failed
Demonstrated leadership skills
Served as a member of a team



Industry/organization specific questions:

Why have you chosen to pursue a position with our organization?
What do you read to stay current in this field?
What are some of the challenges currently faced by professionals in our field?
What characteristics do you think are important for this position?

Ways to Prepare and Practice for Interviews

- ✓ Sign up for taped mock interview with UCS counselor
- ✓ Attend UCS Interviewing Skills workshop
- ✓ Check out interviewing materials in UCS Career Resource Room
- ✓ Visit <http://careers.unc.edu/yourjobsearch/interviewing/index.html> for UCS online interviewing tips
- ✓ Discuss interviewing with UCS counselor
- ✓ Use UCS Interview Stream interview tool to practice and watch your answers online
- ✓ Participate in UCS Mock Interview Day with Recruiters
- ✓ Visualize the interview by formulating a successful interview agenda
 - Manage first impressions
 - Anticipate questions/convey relevant content
 - Ask informative questions
 - Close by asking for next interview or job offer
- ✓ Write out anticipated tough questions with answers
- ✓ Critique verbal answers & non-verbal behaviors with friend, in mirror, or record

Using the STAR Technique to Create "Plug and Play" Interview Content

Use the STAR technique to describe powerful, relevant, and detailed examples of your experiences:

Situation/Task

- What was the specific job or activity you were to accomplish or what problem were you solving?
- Who was involved?
- Where and when did this occur?

Action/activities

- What steps did you take to complete the job or solve the problem?
- How did you go about completing the steps?
- How did you involve or manage others during the process?
- Why did you take these particular steps?
- Did you consider alternatives and what were they?

Results/outcomes

- Did you accomplish the job the way it was originally defined?
- Was the result an improvement? An innovation or change?
- Did you improve or maintain good interpersonal relationships as a result of your actions?
- Did you create new relationships that might have future value?
- What were the benefits of your actions for the organization or for other individuals?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What core skills did you acquire?
- What did you learn about yourself? How did you grow from this experience?

Remember to weave the research you have done on job, organization and industry into your presentation to create more quality content and to give yourself credit for your investigative work!

Also remember that the questions you ask along with prefacing statements made before asking questions (i.e. rationale for why you are asking something) also are good interview content!

Examples can be drawn from:

- Paid/unpaid work
- Internships
- Entrepreneurial ventures



- Significant volunteer and extracurricular activities
- Honors you took an active (not passive) role in achieving
- Courses at UNC or study abroad

Focus on actions and results:

- use action verbs
- quantify or alternatively use qualitative outcomes
- exceed goals and standards
- emphasize promotions, awards, accomplishments
- state any bonuses or incentives received
- recall special projects completed
- remember extra responsibilities taken on
- conclude with problems solved/decisions made
- focus on creative/innovative behaviors
- mention cost/time savings or other efficiencies realized
- emphasize special skills acquired

Create a positive impression while delivering your answer:

- Accurately answer the question
- Project enthusiasm
- Display maturity and confidence
- Show emotional stability
- Convey intelligence

- Project language fluency
- Take initiative
- Show controlled energy
- Articulate clear career goals

After the Interview

1. Evaluate your performance and look for ways to improve by asking yourself:
 - Did you cover points you intended to cover?
 - What questions were particularly difficult to answer?
 - How did the recruiter's personality affect your performance and why?
 - Did you ask the recruiter high quality questions based on in-depth research?
2. Send thank you letter immediately (email is perfectly acceptable)
For more information and a sample letter go to http://careers.unc.edu/yourjobsearch/resumes_letters/thankletters.html
3. Follow up by phone or email when the recruiter does not respond by stated date

Remember to promptly send a typed thank you letter/email and keep in touch with the recruiter after your interview.