

Interview Preparation Handbook

The staff of the Career Services Center is pleased that you are participating in the Mock Interview Program. The following information will help you maximize the benefits of this experience:

- The entire process will take between 45 minutes and 1 hour; be sure to schedule enough time.
- You will need to furnish a resume at the time you schedule the appointment.
- If there are areas of difficulty in your background or answers you would like to practice, please furnish this information before the interview. Otherwise, questions will be asked at the interviewer's discretion.
- We suggest that you dress as you would for an actual interview situation. The videotape provides an excellent opportunity to analyze your appearance.
- The videotape of your mock interview will be re-used for additional interviews. Inform the interviewer if you do not wish your mock interview to be videotaped.
- Although styles differ from one interviewer to another and your anxiety level may be lower than in an actual job interview, the Mock Interview Program can help you build confidence in preparing for on-campus or on-site interviewing. GOOD LUCK!

CHECKLIST:

- Have you registered for Senior and Alumni Services through the Career Services Center?
- Analyzed your workplace strengths and weaknesses?
- Become familiar with the career position for which you are applying?
- Possess proper attire for the interview?
- Thought out for yourself responses to commonly asked questions?
- Provided your coordinator with a current resume?
- Studied salary data for the positions for which you are applying?
- Formulated specific questions to ask during the interview?
- Made yourself familiar with the interview date, time, and the specific position you are interviewing for?

ESSENTIAL SKILLS & TRAITS EVALUATED IN THE INTERVIEW:

- ACCURACY - The information you provide should be truthful and without error.
- ALERTNESS - The ability to present yourself as bright, intelligent, and enthusiastic.
- COMMUNICATION - The ability to present thoughts clearly, openly, & understandably.
- COURTESY - The polite attention given to other people.
- CREATIVITY - Developing new ideas, finding better ways of doing things, being imaginative.
- DEPENDABILITY - The ability to do required jobs well with a minimum of supervision.
- DRIVE - The desire to attain goals, to achieve.
- INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS - The sensitivity and response to the attitudes, backgrounds, thoughts and feelings of others.
- KNOWLEDGE - The information concerning chosen field which an individual should know for satisfactory job performance.
- ORGANIZATION - The ability to systematically structure work tasks.
- MANAGEMENT - The ability to delegate tasks and supervise others.
- PERSONAL APPEARANCE - The neat, well-groomed, appropriately dressed image you present to others.
- PERSONALITY - An individual's behavior characteristics or personality suitable for the job.

- **PROBLEM SOLVING** The ability to describe a problem you have encountered, what action you took to resolve it, and the outcome.
- **STABILITY** The ability to withstand pressure and to remain calm in critical situations.

INTERVIEW KNOCKOUT FACTORS: Top Ten reasons candidates don't get past the crucial screening interview:

1. Lack of knowledge or skills necessary to do the job- not qualified.
2. Poor personal appearance (makes a poor first impression).
3. Not prepared for the interview- failure to conduct research on the company.
4. No confidence or poise (fails to look the interviewer in the eye, no enthusiasm).
5. Unable to express ideas clearly (gives vague, evasive or no answer to questions).
6. Only interest in job is the amount of money the position pays.
7. Poorly defined short (3-5 yrs) and/or long (5-10 yrs) term career goals.
8. Asks few/poor questions about the job.
9. Displays little or no real interest/enthusiasm in the company/field (job shopping).
10. Unhappy/ unpleasant personality (dislike former jobs, unhappy personal relationships, dissatisfaction with collegiate experience).

QUESTIONS RECRUITERS OFTEN ASK:

One of the main purposes of an interview is for the interviewer to find out about you, the prospective employee. The employer wants to know about you in order to make a hiring decision and you want that decision to be a favorable. The interviewer may not be looking for the "right answer" from you as much as they want to see how well you articulate answers to the questions put before you. A good interview can often be the determining factor in whether or not an individual is hired for a position. When it comes to the interview, nothing beats proper preparation! Take the time to review/formulate responses to this list of commonly asked questions during the screening/initial stage of the interview process.

Self-Awareness: Tell me a little about yourself (standard, ice-breaking statement/question). / Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing? / What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? weaknesses? / How would you describe yourself? / How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you? / What do you see yourself doing five years from now? ten years from now?

Collegiate Experience: Why did you select your college or university? / What led you to choose your field or major study? / Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement? / Describe your most rewarding college experience.

Work Expectations What two or three things are most important to you in your job? / What are the most important rewards you expect from your career? / What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort? / How do you determine or evaluate success? / How do you work under pressure?

Interview Preparedness: What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours? / In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company? / What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work? / What qualities should a successful manager possess? / Why should I hire you?

Hypothetical Situations: Tell me about a time when you worked on an assignment/project that was new to you. / Tell me about a time when you worked on a complex project. / Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult person. / Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a project that you had no interest in. / Tell me about a time when you were asked to provide feedback to a supervisor.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK THE EMPLOYER DURING THE INTERVIEW:

The interview process is an opportunity for you to find out more information about the organization. Always come prepared with questions to ask the interviewer- specific questions with relevance to the position applied for. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest and confirm your knowledge of the organization.

- Is there anything else I can tell you about my background?
 - Can you show me where this position fits in the organization?
 - What characteristics does a successful candidate bring to this position?
 - What characteristics must they develop to continue that success?
 - Can you tell me more about the company's training program?
 - Can you tell me the opportunities/prospects for advancement beyond this level?
 - What is the average time it takes to get to the _____ level in the career path?
 - Could you tell me what the largest issue facing this department is?
 - Largest issue facing the organization as a whole?
 - What changes do you see forthcoming for the company during the next three to five years?
 - Does the company have plans to grow in the next three to five years?
 - How much travel is normally expected from those in this position?
 - After the job is offered, additional questions to be answered...
 - I greatly appreciate your offer. How soon do you need a decision? May I let you know by ___?
 - Is a brochure on the company's benefits program available?
 - Clarification on details (where do I park? immediate supervisor? orientation period? etc.)
- IF you are turned down for a position...**
- Are there others in the organization/elsewhere who would be interested in my experience?
 - How could I improve myself for opportunities in this field?
 - I remain very interested in what your company is doing. Could you keep my resume on hand for consideration for future openings?
 - Always end interview situations on a positive note!
 - Be sure to send thank you/post interview letters to the interviewer(s), regardless of the outcome!

QUESTIONS/AREAS TO AVOID WHILE INTERVIEWING:

- Questions that are answered in the company's annual report or employment brochure.
- Salary or benefit information in the initial interview. The recruiter may bring the topic up, you should not initiate the topic.
- Questions of a personal nature that would put the interviewer on the defensive (educational background, marital status, past work experience, etc.)
- Questions that have already been answered during the interview. Do not repeat them unless you need clarification.

MOCK INTERVIEW RESOURCES:

Books (including)

- Resume Writing Guidebooks (Various)
- What Color is Your Parachute?
- Job Opportunities in Business, Health Care, Television...
- Mid Career Job Hunting
- Careering and Re-Careering

- Executive Job Search Strategies
- How to Build A Successful One-Person Business
- Surviving Unemployment
- The Best Companies for Minorities
- Jobsmarts for Twentysomethings

Video Tapes (including)

- You've Graduated...What Now?
- How to Get The Job You Want
- Networking Your Way to Success
- Telephone Interviewing
- The Employment Interview American Style
- Returning Home Thinking Success
- Negotiating Competitive Salaries and Benefits

Additional resources available in the CSU Career Services Library:

- CSU Annual Salary Survey
- National Salary Survey information
- Newspapers - *Crain's Cleveland Business*
- Periodicals - *Fortune, Hispanic Business*
- Career Conversations (for Networking)