INTERVIEWING

NEELEY DEVELOPMENT SERIES—TOOLS FOR BUSINESS

PUTTING YOUR BEST SELF FORWARD

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Neeley
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Looking For More Than You Think

An interview is a formal dialogue used to evaluate the qualifications and skills of a potential candidate for placement into a position within an organization. Interviewers are trained to ask specific questions to identify the best candidate to perform the job as well as fit with the culture of the company. By knowing more specifically what an interviewer evaluates during an interview will help you better manage the interviewing process. Is it your smile, your resume, your clothes, or your experiences? The answer is all of it, plus much more.

A survey of 197 employer members by the National Association of Colleges and Employers asked employers to identify the key skills and attributes they would like to see in new hires. The table below reveals the results of this survey.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work in a team structure</td>
<td>4.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make decisions and solve problems</td>
<td>4.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan, organize, and prioritize work</td>
<td>4.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obtain and process information</td>
<td>4.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze quantitative data</td>
<td>4.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical knowledge related to job</td>
<td>4.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proficiency with software</td>
<td>3.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create and edit written reports</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell or influence others</td>
<td>3.54</td>
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Source: Job Outlook 2014, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Looking at this information, you may be tempted to start making general statements such as, “I am a team player with strong communication skills and am highly organized. I consider myself to be an analytical person and know how to obtain information to solve problems.”

This type of response is common for individuals with little interviewing experience. The problem is that while key words are embedded in the statement, there are no examples to validate the statement. An experienced interviewer will not be fooled by flashy words; it takes real experience to garner the confidence of an interviewer and make them see that you are the right person for the job. To be successful when interviewing, you must be able to talk about your experiences in a way that shows employers you possess the skills and attributes they are seeking.

This booklet will provide you the basic information you need to interview effectively. The best way to improve your interviewing skills is by having a mock interview. Take advantage of the resources you have available at Neeley and invest time in improving your interviewing skills. The payoff can be substantial.
The Screening Interview

The screening interview is used to reduce the candidate pool and identify candidates that best fit the requirements of the position. It is also used to get an initial sense of the candidate’s potential to fit in with the culture of the company. These types of interviews are usually brief and somewhat informal, but have a significant impact on candidates proceeding to the next round.

Screening interviews typically take place over the phone, but they may also take place in person, through a videoconference, or by having you answer a set of pre-defined questions on a website.

Tips to succeed

1) Maintain professionalism - Treat every interview as a formal interview. Do not let your guard down because the screening process seems more informal. Professionalism is essential in all stages of interviewing.

2) Know your résumé - Screeners want to cover your resume in detail. Make sure you know what you have on your resume so you can elaborate on your key experiences.

3) Know the position requirements - Use this interview as a way to show the screener that your experiences and accomplishments align with the position requirements.

How to Manage the Phone Screening Interview

A few challenges when interviewing by telephone, including conveying adequate interest, listening effectively, and dealing with external distractions to name a few.

1) Have information available - Have your résumé and the position description in a place you can readily see if needed. Also, you may choose to have notes from key experiences to elaborate on during the interview.

2) Choose a secure location - It is critical that you have a room that is free from noise and distractions. A closet is perfect – well, maybe not, but a room with no TV, radio, roommate or window is ideal, because this will minimize distractions. Work this out in advance so you are not scrambling for a location at the last minute. The Alcon Career Center has interview rooms available for students use. Stop by the office to reserve your time.

3) Landline - Yes, most wireless networks are reliable these days, however if you have the option available, a landline is best to minimize dropped calls or incoming texts that may beep while you are on your mobile device. If you do use your cell phone, be sure it is fully charged.

4) Handset or speaker? - You want the interviewer to hear you without any difficulty, so it is best to use the handset. A headset or ear piece is not out of the question, just make sure you test it out with someone beforehand to be certain you can hear adequately and that others can hear you clearly.

5) Sit or stand? - Everyone is different; some find it easier to stand during a phone interview because they have excess energy they can channel while walking around and gesturing while others are more comfortable sitting, because they find it easier to focus this way. If you like to sit, have a chair that you like to sit in during your interview. If you like to stand and move around, make sure the room you use has open space for you to do so.

6) Water, gum, smoking - Okay, no, and no. A glass of water is okay to have nearby, try to avoid a plastic bottle, because they can make noises when you squeeze them. Gum will too easily hinder your ability to speak clearly, because it gets in your tongue’s way. Smoking will impact your breathing pattern and hinder your voice.

7) Not ready when they call? - If an employer calls and wants to do a phone interview right then and it was unscheduled, it is okay for you to request a later time that day or the following day so you can adequately prepare.

8) Convey interest - It is important that you use your voice to indicate interest and excitement about the position. No need to be overly expressive, but avoid being monotone.
Interview Types

Case Interview

This type of job interview is used most frequently by strategy consulting firms that allows an applicant to demonstrate his/her ability to solve a given business problem. More companies are beginning to like the idea of case interviewing to better assess a candidate’s abilities to find solutions.

Your success in a case interview will not depend on identifying the “correct” answer, but rather on how clearly you define the problem, how logically you structure your analysis, and how well you communicate your thoughts to the interviewer while solving the problem.

There are many case question types. Some examples are:

1) A custom furniture company in Ohio has been steadily losing market share. Why?
2) A restaurant wants to bid for a spot in DFW airport and they have hired you to determine if that is a good strategy.
3) You are a Marketing Manager for Brand X, and there is a shortage of a key ingredient just before a major key selling season.

Do you:

a. Send only the amount of product which you can produce with the ingredients you have on hand - which will mean shipping customers less product that they had ordered during a time of year where they rely on your products to drive business

b. Substitute a different ingredient into the product, which from your understanding the consumer will not notice a difference, and complete all of the orders your customers have placed which will allow them to have a successful key season.

Stress Interview

The purpose of these interviews is to evaluate a candidate’s response to stressful situations. The best way to manage these types of interviews is to depersonalize the event. The interviewer is simply playing a role and your job is to do the best you can in managing the situations.

There can be multiple tactics to induce stress. Some of these include:

1) Having you do a presentation with little or no preparation.
2) Asking oddball questions such as, “Why are manholes round?”
3) Appearing disappointed with your response by sighing or making you repeat your answer several times.
4) Asking a direct question like, “How would you rate me as an interviewer?”
5) Having your résumé out in plain sight with red correction marks all over it.
Interview Types

Situational Interview

You may see questions like these in a screening or behavioral interview. Use your experiences as a guide when answering these questions. If you have no experience related to the situation, think through how you would handle the situation and clearly state your process to the interviewer.

Some situational questions may include:

1) What would you do if you got assigned to be the team leader of a project and one of the team members was upset they did not get assigned to be the team leader?
2) How would you handle an irate customer who was yelling at you and using profanity, because they were unhappy with the service they received?
3) If someone asked you for assistance with a matter that is outside the parameters of your job description, what would you do?

Behavioral Interview

This is the most common type of interview and focuses on a candidate’s experiences. The belief is that a candidate’s past experiences are a good indicator of future performance.

Behavioral-based questions are easy to identify, because they typically start with the phrase, “Tell me about a time when...” or “Describe a situation when....” When you hear this phrase, you know you are being asked a behaviorally based question.

There are two types of Behavioral Interviewing Questions - Positive Evidence and Contrary Evidence

Positive evidence questions look for a positive outcome, i.e., “Tell me about a time when you were successful in leading a team.” However, it may not be so obvious, it may simply be, “Tell me about a recent team experience.” If the question appears neutral, answer it with a positive example.

Contrary evidence questions seek out situations where a candidate may not have been successful, i.e., “Tell me about a time when you planned to reach a goal and were unsuccessful and how you managed that situation.” Interviewers ask these types of questions to get a more balanced view of a candidate’s experiences. No one is perfect and interviewers want to identify challenges to be sure you are not skewing your answers too positively.
Interview Types
There are two models you can use to answer these types of questions.

STAR works well with positive evidence questions

SHARE works well with contrary evidence questions.

The Behavioral Interview – Positive Evidence

EXAMPLE: “Tell me about a time when you had to adapt quickly to a new situation and what you did.”

**Situation:** Last semester I worked part-time at a marketing firm as an intern while taking 15 hours of classes. The current intern I was replacing was leaving in a week and was going to be my trainer to learn the job responsibilities.

**Task:** I had to learn the daily routine for this position, get to know the people I was working for along with becoming more familiar with the computer system in a very short time period.

**Action:** One of the first steps I took was getting to know other people. I used break times to introduce myself to co-workers and other staff so they knew who I was. I also made a point to find someone other than my trainer to have lunch with each day, because she would soon be leaving. I spent the first two days observing the daily routine and taking detailed notes while my trainer told me about various tasks and procedures. The next three days I took on responsibilities such as completing client profile forms, answering the phones and making minor updates on the company website. During this training period I asked a lot of questions so I felt prepared when I acquired the responsibilities myself.

**Result:** By the end of week, I was comfortable with handling the basic responsibilities of my position. I was a familiar face in the office people recognized and, as a result of my detailed notes, I created a transition and training plan that I stored on a network drive so I could use it to train the next intern.

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<th><strong>Positive Evidence Questions</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
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The Behavioral Interview – Contrary Evidence

**EXAMPLE:** “Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline.”

**Situation:** At my job this past summer, I was assigned a project to create a database to store client information. My boss wanted it done by the end of June so when they launched the new company website clients could complete information online.

**Hindrance:** One of the challenges during this project was my schedule. I was taking two summer classes and the homework load was more than I expected.

**Action:** I stayed late in the office when I could and I even worked on weekends to stay on top of the database project. The long hours were having a negative impact on my overall productivity.

**Result:** I missed the database project deadline by two days. This did not affect the launch of the website, the online client forms were just delayed in getting posted. I apologized to my boss and explained my scheduling difficulty. She indicated that if I had informed her sooner she would have assigned additional support to get the project done on time. She understood that school was the first priority, but she was disappointed I did not inform her earlier.

**Evaluate:** Looking back at this, I realized that I was afraid to say I was not going to meet the deadline. It was an experience that showed me that being realistic about my workload is critical and more importantly that keeping my boss informed is necessary and expected even if it is not positive news.

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<th><strong>Contrary Evidence Questions</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Evaluate</strong></td>
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The Face-to-Face Interview

1) **Do your homework** - Know the company and what they do, how many offices they have, whether they are global, what the recent news stories are, their growth rate, etc. Other homework includes having your examples ready. You should be keeping an activity log each semester, review it and identify examples you want to use during the interview.

2) **Arrive early** - Arrive at least 15 minutes before your scheduled interview. Take time to visit with the front desk if they seem open to talking. If not, read a professional magazine and sit patiently. DO NOT use your phone or sit and text while waiting. Leave all electronic devices in the car.

3) **Dress the part** - Be business formal unless you absolutely know the expectation is different. If you are not sure what business formal is, stop by the PDC or the Alcon Career Center.

4) **Unspoken Language** - It all starts with a good, solid handshake. After that, you have the usual items to consider - sit up straight, make consistent eye contact, speak clearly, use inflection and incorporate gestures that are comfortable for you. The best advice is simply to be yourself; they are interviewing you and want to get to know you. You may have some nervousness and that is okay, do your best to keep the nerves in check – no fidgeting or tapping pens or feet. Completing a mock interview at the PDC or Alcon Career Center is a good way to reduce nervousness.

5) **Thank You** - Send a handwritten thank you note to your interviewer(s) within 24 hours.

Questions to Consider Asking the Employer

Be selective and avoid asking questions you should already know through your research on the company website or through other literature. Never ask about salary and benefits during the interview, let the employer be the first to discuss those topics.

- What skills and attributes do successful employees at this company usually have?
- What do you like best about working here?
- What is your philosophy regarding on-the-job growth and development?
- What are your goals for the department?
- What is the main objective for the organization over the next year?
- How would you describe the culture of the company?
- How did this position come to be open?
- What type of work can I expect to be doing during my first year?
- What is the performance appraisal process like here?
A Random Sampling of Questions

- Tell me something interesting about yourself I can’t get from your resume.
- How would your peers describe you?
- Do you think your grades are a good indicator of your ability to succeed in business?
- What is one thing you do that tends to frustrate others?
- What do you know about our company and why do you want to work here?
- What other types of positions and companies are you considering right now?
- What style of management motivates you to perform at your best?
- Tell me about the tasks that you find most difficult or frustrating to do?
- How have previous jobs and experiences prepared you for greater responsibilities?
- What two accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Describe how you prioritize your work.
- What professional publications do you read to stay current in your field of study?
- What do you want to improve upon in the next six months and what steps have you taken so far to improve?
- Tell me about a time when you faced a problem you could not solve, what did you do?
- Describe a time when you were under extreme stress and how you coped.
- Give me an example of when you have been assertive even when it was uncomfortable to do so.
- In prior team projects, how have you managed difficult team members?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced failure and how you reacted to it.
- Give me an example of when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- Tell me about one of your best examples when you were able to exhibit your leadership capabilities within a group.
- Describe a situation where you had conflict with team members and how you went about solving the issue.
- Tell me about a time when you had to increase group morale.
- Describe a situation where you took initiative to change something when no one asked you to.
- Tell me about a situation where you had to achieve team/group consensus and how you did it.
- Why should we hire you?
- Is there anything else we should know that you did not have the chance to communicate during the interview?
True Tales of Interviewing Fails

• An interviewee arrived for his interview early and went to the bathroom first. Little did he know the interviewer was also in the bathroom. When the interviewee left, he did not wash his hands. Needless to say, it made the initial handshake quite awkward.

• An interviewee was driving to an interview and another vehicle cut him off. The interviewee became highly upset and gave the driver of the other vehicle an unwelcome gesture. Yes, when he arrived his interviewer was the person that cut him off. The interview ended as soon as the two met.

• While interviewing at a Big 4 accounting firm an interviewee’s phone alarm went off. The interviewee proceeded to silent the alarm and two minutes later, it went off again, at which point the interviewer suggested that he turn off the phone.

• When asked what he wanted to be doing in his next position, the job seeker said, "I'll tell you what I don't want to be doing - sitting in boring meetings, doing grunt work and having to be nice to people all day long."

• When asked to give a practical demonstration of his abilities during a job interview, this candidate got out a deck of cards and proceeded to perform a series of magic tricks.

• When asked what her weaknesses were, this candidate smiled and said, “My two cute Chihuahuas, I just can’t live without them!”

• When asked what he liked about his last job, this candidate replied saying, “Well, not my boss that’s for sure. I don’t know who she thought she was, but she was awful.”

Please record your internships and job offers so the Alcon Career Center can keep accurate records of your successes.

Also, use NRAP to record interview questions you have been asked by employers to give other students an idea of what to expect.

https://bba-neeley-tcu.12twenty.com/
The Dos and Don’ts

DO

Dress the part

Know exactly when and where your interview is

Arrive 10-15 minutes early

Treat others you encounter with kindness and respect. Their opinions may be solicited.

Offer a firm handshake, make eye contact, and display a friendly expression when meeting your interviewer

Address your interviewer by title (Mr., Ms., Dr.) and last name until invited to do differently

Be yourself, they want to get to know you

Be honest in your responses

Have meaningful questions to ask your interviewer

Use the STAR and SHARE models to provide complete answers while being concise with your wording

Sit upright and be engaging during the interview

Make sure to understand the next steps in the hiring process. Who will contact you, when, and how do you follow up

Ask for a business card

Provide a firm handshake with good eye contact after the interview

Make notes after the interview to remember key details about the position and company

Write a thank-you letter to each person who interviewed you within 24 hours

DON’T

Make negative comments about others- former bosses, professors or former employers

Embellish your responses

Pretend you and the interviewer are good friends, maintain a professional demeanor at all times

Ask about salary or benefits until the interviewer brings up the subject

Make excuses, be accountable when answering questions

Act desperate for the position - you may be, but do not appear that way

Be stumped by the obvious questions – “Tell me about yourself” “Where do you see yourself in five years?”

Be extreme with your posture. Do not sit rigid and never move yet do not flail your arms around aimlessly

Smell like smoke or have gum or mints in your mouth

Have any hand stamps

Showcase piercings or tattoos

Bring your cell phone or other electronic devices

Ask questions that show you did not do research. For example, do not ask, “What does your company do?”

Bring a friend, a pet (unless it is an assistance animal), a parent, a girlfriend or boyfriend. Really, it has happened – this is your interview and it is up to you to be prepared and do well
What to Wear

When your potential employer requests an interview, you should make sure to extend your professional image in your potentially new work environment. Make sure you are well dressed, you are prepared to answer questions about your resume, and your past work experience, and that you carry yourself well. You must also leave a lasting impression - a professional image that will follow you outside of the interview.

Men

- Wear a dark suit (navy or charcoal, but not black)
- Wear a conservative and simple tie in a color that complements your suit (blue or grey is best; stay away from a red tie)
- Wear a suit that is well-fitted and a pressed or ironed shirt (consider paying for dry cleaning)
- Match your socks with your suit
- Polish your shoes and look at your shoelaces—are they neat? No frayed ends, please
- Look at your nails—they should look well-maintained (no unsightly hangnails)
- Avoid wearing cologne (exception: definitely wear deodorant)

Women

- Wear a dark suit (black, navy, or charcoal)
- If the environment of the company is conservative, wear hosiery with your knee-length skirt suit
- Wear close-toed shoes with heels that are no higher than 3 inches
- Wear a modest shirt or blouse
- Manicure your nails (clear polish or buffed is fine)
- Wear five pieces of jewelry or fewer (earrings count as two pieces of jewelry); jewelry should not make noise as you move
- Avoid wearing perfume
- Hair and makeup should be conservative. If you are a hair twirler or hair flipper, consider an up-do, or pull your hair back from your face

The Most Common Interviewing Mishaps

1) Not investing the necessary effort
The amount of effort you put into preparing for your interview is a direct indication of how much you think you are worth. It takes time to prepare.

2) Forgetting memorable experiences
Keep an activity log to remember key projects and activities that highlight your abilities in different areas – teamwork, organizing, managing conflict, prioritizing, etc.

3) Dressing down
Yes, it matters that much. If you do not look professional, you’ve already lost.

4) Uh, um, you know, like
Vocal fillers make you appear immature, less prepared and more nervous, pause instead.

5) Using examples that do not answer the question
Listen to the question being asked and be sure to select an example that best answers that particular question.

6) Sharing too much information
You may have made some poor choices in life, but now is not the time to talk about the time you “borrowed” your friend’s car and ended up at the police station.

7) Appearing unexcited
Gestures and voice fluctuation can go a long way in communicating excitement.

8) Electronic devices
A ringing or vibrating cell phone will not help your chances of getting selected. Do not bring personal electronic devices in the interview.

9) Arriving late
Arrive 10-15 minutes early. This gives you an opportunity to get relaxed and gather your thoughts. While you are waiting, you are being observed, so read a professional magazine or sit patiently–remember no cell phone or other electronic devices.

10) Lacking confidence
You should be confident: you got the interview. Be sure to have a solid handshake, good posture and maintain consistent eye contact.
About the Neeley Professional Development Center

The Professional Development Center (PDC) works closely with students to create an awareness of personal communication preferences and how these preferences impact students’ personal goals. Additionally, the PDC offers individual and team coaching for interviews, presentations, case competitions, and team conflict management. It is part of Neeley Student Success Services, a collaborative partnership designed to integrate the core services of undergraduate student development. The key areas of this partnership include the Neeley Academic Advising Center, the Alcon Career Center, the Neeley Professional Development Center, and Neeley Premier Programs.

Director: Kelly T. O’Brien (k.t.obrien@tcu.edu)
Assistant Director: Emily Paine Smith (emily.p.smith@tcu.edu)
Administrative Assistant: Deidre Williams (d.williams@tcu.edu)

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- Productive Group Meetings

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