



Interviewing: An Introduction to the Art of It

Bonner Curriculum

Overview:

Applying for a job is a process that includes researching a prospective job, utilizing personal and professional networks, and marketing yourself through a resume. Hopefully, the climax of this process is an interview with a prospective employer who invites you in, in order to explore your qualifications. However, many people seem to be unprepared for this task, with less than ten percent of students taking advantage of interviewing guidance and coaching before starting to apply for jobs. This workshop is a brief introduction into the art of interviewing for beginning job seekers. It is not necessarily geared at the non-profit sector; its content may be more appropriate for job-seeking in general, including in the for-profit sector.

There is some good basic information in this session as well as ideas for planned session activities; you may want to consult with your campus's career services department and staff and involve them in offering an interviewing workshop.

Category:

Career and professional skills; communication

Level:

Middle to advanced

Recommended

Bonner Sequence: This training is recommended for Bonner students during the junior and senior year, as they turn attention toward job-seeking and other future activities. It supports a focus on preparing for career paths and exploring vocation.

expectation	explore	experience	example	expertise

VALUES: civic engagement, others as pertaining to career paths in the nonprofit sector

Type:

Structured activity suitable for workshop or regular meeting

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- To give participants an understanding of the types of interviews frequently used by prospective employers
- To provide practice in skills related to certain interview types
- To help participants identify both positive and negative behaviors within an interviewing situation

Materials:

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Copies of attached handouts, *The Ten Rules of Interviewing*

How to Prepare:

Read and become familiar with the trainer's guide. Make copies of the handout for participants. Be prepared to write the types of interviews on flipchart paper (you can do this before the workshop or even make handouts of the descriptions to handout). Prepare a handout with contact information of your campus's Career Services Office or other relevant resources.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This 1 to 1.5-hour outline has the following parts:

1) Introduction and Icebreaker	suggested time 10 minutes
2) What are Interviews?	suggested time 5 minutes
3) Types of Interviews	suggested time 25-30 minutes
4) Preparing for the Interview	suggested time 15-25 minutes
5) Conclusion	suggested time 5-10 minutes

Part 1) Introduction and Icebreaker

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Begin the workshop by introducing yourself. You may want to cover your position/role, and any relevant professional experience you have had within the nonprofit sector (or otherwise).

Continue by explaining that the workshop is a basic introduction to interviewing and that the group will cover what interviews are, the types of interviews, and finishing with a chance to role play, practicing interview skills. Point out that further information and services are available at your Career Services Office on campus, and distribute contact information.

Next, prepare for the icebreaker. Introduce the icebreaker called "I Don't Know." Divide the group into groups of three. Explain:

- Each person in the group will have 30 seconds to be in the "hot seat"

- *During that time the remaining two members of the group have the opportunity to alternately share statements/questions. Questioners should begin each statement with “I don’t know.....”*
- *For example, A says “I don’t know if you voted in the last election,” then B says “I Don’t know if you believe in horoscopes,” and so forth*
- *The questions can concern anything, such as food, colors, movies, politics, books, future plans, etc.*
- *During those 45 seconds the person in the hot seat simply listens and does not respond. Don’t worry, you will remember what they asked.*
- *Then, I’ll call time.*
- *After the 45 seconds, the member in the hot seat will have another 30 seconds to respond, touching on as many of the statements as possible. You won’t do them in order, but just as you remember.*

Continue the 45-second rotations until each member of the group has been in the hot seat.

Part 2) What are Interviews?

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Debrief the icebreaker by explaining that what each person in the group experienced in the hot seat was a brief interview. And though it was short and intensive, the exercise illustrated basic skills that they will need in an interview, including thinking quickly, performing in a tense situation, and responding as directly and clear as possible to questions.

Continue by explaining that:

- Interviews are either formal or informal meetings for the purpose of determining if an applicant is qualified for a particular position. Though considered the climax in the application process, one interview may be part of a series of interviews.
- Often in interviews, the most important aspect to embrace is attitude. Employers need to feel confident that you will be able to do your best for their organization. They want to know that you are dedicated, responsible, focused, and a good fit for their mission, organization, and team.
- Effective interviewing skills include not only having the appropriate attitude, but dressing appropriately (business attire), being polite, courteous, clear.

Part 3) Types of Interviews

Suggested time: 25 minutes

Now have each participant take out paper and pen (you may have to distribute these materials if some do not have them). Ask the group to reflect and write on 2-3 experiences where they were being interviewed for any reason. Ask them to consider the following questions:

1. What were you asked by the interviewers?
2. How did you feel during the interviews?
3. Did you have trouble answering the questions? Were you nervous? Scared?
4. How successful were the interviews?

5. In retrospection, what could you have done better in the interviews?

Allow 10 minutes for this session.

After the writing exercise, explain to the group they will return to their reflections and continue discussing the following listings of interview types (also presented on the attached handout).

Spend about 10 minutes in presenting and discussing:

Traditional Interviews

Traditional interviews are the most common form of interviews where interviews may ask basic questions like “Why do you want to work for us” or “What makes you qualified for this position.” It is time efficient and employers and relatively straightforward.

Telephone Interviews

In an effort to save on time and expenses, some employers will conduct screening interviews by phone. The purpose is to weed out any unqualified applicants based upon your resume. Success in this interview could lead to a face-to-face interview.

Panel Interviews

As a time-management method, some organizations will arrange panel interviews. You may be interviewing with as many as five or six employers at one time. This can be a very intimidating situation.

Group Projects

If an organization intends to hire a large training class, a group project may be a part of the interviewing process. The group project is used to see how potential employees would work together to solve a situation or problem. Managers or human resource personnel will be present to evaluate individual contributions to the group project.

Simulations

In an effort to determine how you would respond to typical job responsibilities, an employer may engage you in role play or other simulations. For example, if you were applying for a position in managing a local community GED programs, the interviewer may ask you to assume that she is a high school dropout and for you to convince her to work towards her GED. Other simulation projects may include reading through a scenario and responding, in writing, your course of action to the situation.

Pre-employment Testing

Some employers utilize personality tests and tests of knowledge as part of their interviewing process.

Lunch/Dinner Interviews

Your interview schedule may include a lunch or dinner meeting. Even though this may seem like a more relaxed and social time, it is still a situation where you are being evaluated.

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior. If you have experience with traditional interviews, you will find behavioral interviewing different in several ways:

Instead of asking how you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask how you did behave. The interviewer will ask you to provide details, and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about several events. The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important.

You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories. Most interviewers will be taking detailed notes throughout the interview.

After the discussion, spend the remaining 5 minutes asking individuals to return to their past interview descriptions. Ask for volunteers to explain how their past interview experiences correspond to one or more of the interview types you have presented. Also, use the following discussion points to facilitate dialogue:

- 1. How does the identified interview type match up with what you were asked by the interviewers?*
- 1. How does the identified interview type match up with how you felt during the interviews?*
- 2. How does the identified interview type match up with any trouble you had answering the questions? With your nervousness? Fear?*
- 3. In retrospection and knowing more about different interview types, what could you have done better in the interviews?*

Part 4) Preparing for the Interview

Suggested time: 15-25 minutes

Continue by discussing preparing for an interview by using the list that follows. Allot 5- 10 minutes for this part.

1. Know the exact place and time of the interview, the interviewer's full name, the correct pronunciation and his or her title.
2. Learn pertinent facts about the company such as annual sales revenue, principal lines of business and locations.
3. Find out why the hiring manager and/or client representative is interested in your qualifications.
4. Determine how the opportunity will impact your immediate and long-term career development.
5. An interview is a "two-way street." Know what questions to ask during the interview. Your questions allow the hiring manager to evaluate your professional and personal needs. Insightful questions help both of you determine if your relationship will be mutually rewarding. Lastly, the better you understand the opportunity, the more you will be able to communicate your interest in the position.

6. Put your best foot forward. Always wear proper attire and greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and an enthusiastic smile.

Close this section of the workshop by distributing *Ten Rules of Interviewing* and use it as a discussion tool. The handout text is in the guide and attached.

Ten Rules of Interviewing

1.Keep your answers brief and concise.

Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.

2.Include concrete, quantifiable data.

Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.

3.Repeat your key strengths three times.

It's essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company's or department's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths then they will be remembered and—if supported with quantifiable accomplishments—they will more likely be believed.

4.Prepare five or more success stories.

In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.

5.Put yourself on their team.

Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer's name and products or services. For example, "As a member of _____, I would carefully analyze the _____ and _____." Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.

6.Image is often as important as content.

What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65 percent of the conveyed message is nonverbal; gestures, physical appearance, and attire are highly influential during job interviews.

7.Ask questions.

The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer's questions, write out specific questions you want to ask. Then look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don't ask about benefits or salary.

The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

8.Maintain a conversational flow.

By consciously maintaining a conversational flow—a dialogue instead of a monologue—you will be perceived more positively. Use feedback questions at the end of your answers and use body language and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.

9.Research the company, product lines and competitors.

Research will provide information to help you decide whether you're interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.

10.Keep an interview journal.

As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief, concise thank you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

Source: Roseanne Lidle Bensley, Placement and Career Services, New Mexico State University.

Part 5) Conclusion

Suggested time: 5-10 minutes

Close the workshop by having each participant explain what they learned from the workshop. Be sure to distribute contact info for your campus's Career Services Office so students will be able to access their resources to continue practice in interviewing.

Common Types of Interviews

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theorize or generalize about several events. The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important.

You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories. Most interviewers will be taking detailed notes throughout the interview.

Ten Rules of Interviewing

Before stepping into an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. A job seeker going to a job interview without preparing is like an actor performing on opening night without rehearsing.

To help with the interview process, keep the following ten rules in mind:

1.Keep your answers brief and concise.

Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.

2.Include concrete, quantifiable data.

Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.

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