Effective Interviewing Strategies

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Purpose of Interview

✓ Professional in your field
  ✓ Market your skills/strengths for position to employer
    ✓ Opportunity to prove why you are the best candidate for the job
  ✓ Determine if employer is the best fit for you
    ✓ Opportunity to ask in depth questions
      ✓ Job
      ✓ Organization
      ✓ Work Environment

✓ Employer
  ✓ Determine if you are the best match for the job and organization
Types of Interviews

- **Traditional**
  - Employer is seeking factual information
    - Trusts your answers are honest
    - May do most of the talking during meeting
  - **Examples of Questions:**
    - Tell me about yourself.
    - Why did you choose your major?
    - What do you consider to be your strengths?
    - Can you describe a weakness?
    - Why are you interested in the position?
    - What motivates you most in a job?
    - Why do you want to work here?
Types of Interviews

Preparing for Traditional Questions

- Listen to what employer is asking you
- Give examples of past performance

Question: What are your strengths and weaknesses?

HINT: Just give employer only one weakness and try to turn it into a strength.

Answer: Some of my strengths are that I am client focused, take initiative, and work well on a team. Let me give you an example. I look for ways to make clients feel more comfortable and assist my co-workers out whenever possible. There was a discussion in the department about how helpful it would be to have an in-service training on alcohol abuse. After getting the go ahead from my supervisor, I took the initiative and developed and presented a successful training workshop to 15 of my colleagues on this topic. Also, in my most recent clinical experience, my direct supervisor included in her evaluation that she received several positive comments from clients about my interpersonal skills, making them feel more comfortable.

Regarding a weakness, sometimes I have a tendency to be too emotionally involved in the problems of my clients, but I am working on being as objective as possible when finding solutions to issues that they are experiencing.
Types of Interviews

- Behavioral
  - Discuss specific, concrete examples of your past experience
  - Employer predicts future performance at their organization from your past examples

- Examples of Questions:
  • Can you give me an example of how you are child or client focused?
  • Describe a problem that arose during your direct experience in the field and how you resolved it.
  • Can you tell me how you have handled multiple priorities with deadlines related to one of your direct experiences?
  • Describe a conflict or difference of opinion you had with a supervisor or colleague and how you handled the situation.
Types of Interviews

– Preparing for Behavioral Questions
  • Answer questions using “STAR”
    • S = Situation
    • T = Task
    • A = Action you took
    • R = Result of your Action

❖ Situational
  ❖ Closely related to the Behavioral Interview
  ❖ Example - Social Work: You are working in an outpatient mental health facility. How would you handle the following as a professional in your field?
    – What would be your approach to clients in this setting?
    – One of your colleagues is not pulling their weight on the team which causes more work for you. How would you resolve the problem?
    – Give me an example of how you would discuss and educate family members about a patient’s mental illness.
Types of Interviews

- Telephone
  - Purpose
    - Initial screening of candidates
    - Cost effective for employer
      - Also used for long-distance interviews

- Preparing for a Phone Interview
  - Always prepare as you would for face to face interview
    - Employer will use similar criteria in their decision making process as they would a regular interview
  - Ask about the time, length, who will conduct the interview (how many + titles)
Types of Interviews

- Preparing for a Phone Interview
  - Make sure that there are no distractions
  - Have materials ready and organized on a desk or table before employer calls
    - Resume
    - Company information - Research
    - Position description – highlight skills that employer is looking for
      - Connect your skills to job description
    - Prepare questions
  - Maintain positive tone and be articulate
- Resources:
  - http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/phoneinterview.html
Types of Interviews

- **Informational**
  - Networking
    - Contact employee of organization you want to work for
      - Possible Wheelock alumni/ae
      - Referral through network of friends, family, social, or professional group
    - Ask for information which may lead to a job
      - Never directly ask for a job
    - Possible topics of discussion
      - How individual enjoys their work
      - What are the challenges and benefits
      - How individual got started at the organization
Types of Interviews

Informational

- Additional topics of discussion
  - What the working environment is like
    - Client/Child focused
    - Team oriented
    - Average number of clients/children per day/week
    - Staff turnover rate
  - Any recommendations given your education, background, clinical experience

- Resources:
  - http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html
  - http://www2.jobtrak.com/help_manuals/jobmanual/inform.html
How to Prepare

- Conduct Employer Research
  - Review Organization’s Website
    - Request materials if online information is not available
      - Annual Report (if published)
      - Brochures
      - Pamphlets
  - Talk to friends, colleagues who have had experience at that organization (i.e.: practicum, internship, or volunteering)
    - Culture or Work Environment
      - Is it friendly?
      - Intense, demanding?
      - How client oriented?
      - Team oriented?
      - Flexible?
How to Prepare

- Investigate Key Elements
  - Mission
    - Organizations are proponents of their mission statements
    - Example - Education: “The mission of the Cambridge Public School, in partnership with family and community, is to prepare life-long learners for success in an ever-changing world by providing high quality, innovative opportunities in a safe and disciplined environment that fosters mutual respect and trust and where diversity is celebrated.”
  - Values – what an organization cares about, lives by
    - May be stated within Mission
  - History
    - How and when organization was created
    - Know recent developments – merged with another institution which would expand services?
  - Be able to discuss current trends in your field
Before the Interview

✓ Practice, practice, practice answering questions
  ✓ On your own OR with friends, colleagues
✓ Know all the details
  ✓ Exact location
    ✓ If unsure, visit before appointment
  ✓ Names and titles of interviewers
    ✓ One-on-one meetings with different individuals
    ✓ Panel(s) of individuals
  ✓ Length of interview
✓ Be able to state Key Facts about organization from Employer Research
  ✓ Example: Mission, Types of Services, etc.
✓ Be aware of current industry/field trends
Before the Interview

✓ Prepare questions relevant to Employer and the Job

✓ Examples:

✓ Can you discuss the formal supervision that an employee would receive in this position?
✓ Can you describe what a typical day might be like?
✓ How do you see this position fitting in with your overall departmental goals and objectives?
✓ Can you give me an example of the team oriented environment within this department?
✓ How would you describe the working environment within this department?
✓ What do you see are the most pressing challenges for this position and your organization?
Interview Day

- **Remember:** *First impressions are KEY to how an employer views you in terms of a good fit with their organization*
  - Use professional dress (suit, business shoes, female - conservative jewelry, very light makeup)
    - Carry a professional folder containing pad of paper and pockets
    - Write down your questions for employer prior to interview
    - Bring additional copies of current resume
    - Arrive at least 15 minutes early
    - Review resume and research
    - Relax – close your eyes, take some deep breaths
  
- **Greeting**
  - Shake hands firmly
  - Address interviewer as Ms. or Mr.
  - Look individual in the eye
  - Smile to show enthusiasm
Interview Day

- Listen attentively and answer questions thoroughly
  - Did I answer your question?
- Ask 3 – 5 relevant questions prepared in advance at end of interview
- Ask what are the next steps in hiring process if not mentioned
- Request business card from each interviewer
  - Contains exact title, address, and e-mail address
Interview DO’s

- Make sure you are *on time*
- Demonstrate *enthusiasm* through *tone of voice* and show interest in working for the organization
- Talk about former *employer* and/or *clinical experience* in a *positive way*
- Discuss *leadership* abilities and portray *confidence*
- Be aware of *non-verbal* communication:
  - *Body posture* – leaning in shows interest
  - *Eye contact* – maintain good contact but don’t stare
  - *Gestures* – control distracting behavior (pulling at hair, tapping feet, etc.)
- *Listen* carefully, stay focused, and answer questions
- Mention *key facts* about employer from *research* especially when opportunity arises
  - Example: What do you know about us?
- Connect your *skills* and *experience* to *job description*
Interview DON’Ts

- Do not use *inappropriate* dress
  - Example: casual style
- Do not arrive *late* for appointment
  - Emergency: contact and explain situation
- Do not leave *cell phone* on during interview
- *Never* discuss former employer, supervisor, or clinical experiences in a *negative way*
- Do not talk *too much*
  - Answer the question thoroughly but be focused
- Do not give *one or two word answers*
  - Be responsive and elaborate
- Let the employer broach the subject of salary first
  - Salary.com for salary range
After the Interview

- Review what went well and what you may have done differently
- Consider if employer and job are a good fit
- Write thank you notes to each interviewer within 24 hours
  - Include Name, exact Title, Address from business card
  - Use business letter format
    - E-mail
    - Letter
- Reaffirm your interest in employer and job
- Highlight how your skills, background, and experience match the position description
- Thank employer for their consideration

Resources:
- http://www.quintcareers.com/thank_you_letters.html
- http://www.quintcareers.com/sample_thank-you_letters.html
- http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/skills/letters/thanks/
Resources

Websites

- Behavioral Interviewing
  http://www.careertalk.com/behavioral-frame.html

- Careerbuilder: Scroll down to “Getting Hired”
  http://www.careerbuilder.com/JobSeeker/CareerBytes/

- Monstertrak:
  Job Search Tips          Additional Resources          Successful Interviewing
  http://www.monstertrak.monster.com/seekers

- Traditional Interviewing
  http://www.careertalk.com/ginterviews-frame.html

- True Careers
  http://www.truecareers.com/jobseeker/careerresources/default.shtml