

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Every employer has a preferred style of obtaining the information they need for their hiring decision. These are some basic types of interview styles you may encounter. Some employers may choose to utilize a combination of different styles, but as long as you've prepared well for your interview, you'll be able to adapt to the situation they present. Remember, there is a strategy behind the interview! **The best way to prepare is through research! Always research the organization first. Next, you may choose to utilize Glassdoor.com, or any other review information you can locate. By doing so, you are well prepared and confident going into the interview.**

Structured Interview

A structured interview is typically formal and organized and may include several interviewers, commonly referred to as a panel interview. An interviewer who has a more structured style will usually begin with what is known as an "icebreaker" question. The icebreaker is used to relax you before the more serious questions are asked. A discussion about the weather might be used or perhaps a question about the traffic on your way to the office.

Next, the interviewer may talk for a few minutes about the company and the position. During this time, the interviewer may describe the day-to-day work responsibilities and the general company philosophy. He or she may then ask you a series of questions regarding your past educational, co-curricular, and work experiences.

Finally, the interviewer may ask if you have questions for him or her. **You should always have several questions prepared.** This type of interview is structured and formal.

Unstructured Interview

The unstructured interview is what the name implies. The only structure to the interview is the one that you provide. Basically, the interviewer is interested in hearing from you, so you may be asked a variety of different open ended questions.

You will find an unstructured interview to be more conversational and less formal in tone than a structured interview. You may be asked questions about your hobbies, what you do on the weekends, or other casual questions designed to put you at ease. Many students prefer this laid back style of interviewing, but you must be cautious. Sometimes employers intentionally adopt this casual demeanor so that you feel comfortable enough to let down your guard and potentially reveal something that you normally would not. If you find yourself in an unstructured interview, be friendly but maintain your professionalism. Remember that you are there to showcase your best assets and to convince the employer that you are the most qualified candidate for the job. Casual conversation is acceptable, and it can set a positive tone for the interview, but be sure to bring the conversation around to your skills and qualifications.

Behavioral Interview

Behavioral interviewing is a widely used method of job interviewing. This approach is based on the belief that past performance is the best predictor of future behavior. Therefore, behavioral interview questions are designed to probe your previous experiences in order to determine how you might behave in similar situations in the future. In this type of interview, you will not be asked hypothetical questions about how you would handle a situation if confronted with it in the future. Instead you will be asked how you did handle a specific situation when you encountered it in the past. Keep in mind that employers are not interested in what you

should have done, or what you will do next time...they want to know what you actually did. Behavioral interview questions generally start with any one of the following phrases:

Tell me about a time when you...

Describe a circumstance when you were faced with a problem related to...

Tell me how you approached a situation where...

Share with me an instance in which you demonstrated...

This type of question requires you to tell stories from your past. These stories will be evaluated for evidence of your intellectual competence, leadership, teamwork, personal skills, adjustment and flexibility, motivation, communication skills, administrative skills, and technical abilities.

To prepare for a behavioral interview, you must first identify the skills and strengths that the employer is seeking. Next, reflect on your past experiences (educational, employment, extra-curricular, personal) in order to identify situations in which you clearly demonstrated the identified skills. During the interview, you must be able to recount these circumstances articulately and in a manner which showcases your strengths. **A thorough answer should describe the Situation, the Tasks with which you were charged, the Action you took, and the Result of your action. We refer to this as the STAR Method of responding to behavioral interview questions. (See the attached Behavioral Interview sheet)**

Problem Solving or Case Interview

Employers utilize this style of questioning to test a candidate's analytical ability and communication skills. In a problem solving or case interview, you will be presented with a real or simulated problem to consider and solve. You are not necessarily expected to arrive at the "correct answer." What the interviewer is most concerned with is your thought process, so be sure to "think out loud" when responding to this type of question. An effective answer is one which demonstrates your ability to break a problem down into manageable pieces and to think clearly under pressure.

Stress Interview

This style is used primarily by interviewers who are hiring for positions where there is a high level of daily stress in the work environment (i.e., sales, stockbroker, etc.).

The same questions that are asked during a structured or unstructured interview may be asked for a stress interview. However, there may be a difference in the behavior or demeanor of the interviewer. The interviewer during a stress interview may appear distracted, contrary, or indifferent to you. The idea behind this type of interview is to assess your reaction to the pressure of indifference, rejection, and overall stress. To be successful in the stress interview, it is recommended that you focus on the question that is asked and not the manner in which it is asked.

Another hallmark of a stress interview is the "strange question." For instance, some interviewers like to ask questions such as, "How many ping pong balls can fit in a 757 jet?" To answer a question like this, break it down into smaller, more manageable components. Verbally convey your decision making process. The interviewer will be less focused on whether or not you came to the "right" answer and more focused on your ability to problem-solve and think logically.

Sometimes in a stress interview, the interviewer will put candidates in an uncomfortable situation. For instance, candidates may be given a test that takes two hours to complete, and are told to complete it in thirty minutes. Remember to stay calm throughout a stress interview, because that is what the employer is looking for – a candidate who has the ability to remain cool, calm and collected.

LEGAL VS. ILLEGAL AREAS OF INQUIRY

While some information can be elicited once you have been hired, government legislation exists which discourages employers from asking certain questions during the interview process. Technically, employers can ask any questions they want to, they just cannot use certain information in making hiring decisions. In order to avoid potential problems, employers typically avoid certain topics. Some of these discouraged areas of inquiry include:

Age

Race

Religion

National origin (an employer can, however, ask if you are legally able to work in the U.S.)

Sex and/or sexual orientation

Marital status

If you are asked one of these questions during an interview, very tactfully and professionally say that you are “confident that the area in question (e.g. sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, etc.) will not adversely affect my ability to do my job and fulfill my responsibilities.” You may also choose to ask the interviewer to explain how the question pertains to the job and your ability to fulfill the responsibilities. Most importantly, notify the the CSB Work Practice office (910-962-2466) immediately when you perceive that employer questions were not appropriate.