THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

Individuals do not get hired simply because of their qualifications. Instead, they get hired because of things that someone can see and judge during the interview process.

As with the referral process, establishing rapport is almost as important as establishing fit. The decision makers choose to hire primarily based on their perception of chemistry and on a candidate’s ability to fit in with the organization.

Senior executives hire people they like, people who, in his or her subconscious, that executive feels are “just like me.” If they see themselves as “results oriented,” a “people person,” or a “strong communicator,” a candidate should pick up these elements of their personality and inject them into the conversation. An example might be, “I recognize and appreciate the value you place on communications: I strongly embrace that approach.”

When the interviewer hears that message, it reinforces their self-image and provides an increased comfort level with the candidate. Remember, people hire people that they like.

Be aware of the things that leave others cold in the interview process.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

Plan

Make sure you arrive approximately 15 minutes early for the interview.

You may find the organization has publications describing its own products or services that you can study while waiting for the interview.

Prepare

Preparation for the Job Interview is essential, just as it is for the Referral Meeting. Before you go to any interview, find as much current information about the organization as you can. This is an integral part of the research program you began while preparing for your market campaign. In addition to information from annual reports, trade journals, chamber of commerce publications, and newspapers, you can find that your contact network, the people you have seen on Referral Meetings, can be very helpful. Utilize your contact network as a continuing source of information!

As you study the information you receive, prepare intelligent questions you can ask in the Job Interview to show that you are interested in the organization and eager to learn more about the responsibilities of the position and the interviewer’s long-term goals and specific plans for reaching them.

It is unrealistic to expect an offer as a result of the first interview. The goal of the initial Job Interview is to get a second interview.

Rapport is established by “active listening.” By active listening, we mean responding with interest to what the interviewers are saying and asking appropriate questions.

When you give the interviewer information, make sure it is relevant to their problems or needs. Remember, you will never convince future employers of your potential value unless you are able to relate your abilities and experiences to their needs.
CONSIDER YOUR LIABILITIES

Liabilities are adverse factors that may or may not be apparent during the interview process. Some liabilities can be eliminated. Other liabilities can only be reduced. Still others will stand no matter what you do about them. How you address these liabilities now will influence how you are able to handle them in an interview situation later. Your advisor will discuss these liabilities with you, after you have helped to identify which liabilities may be present for you.

The next two pages are devoted to helping you and your advisor discover, address and overcome as many liabilities as possible.

You will be asked to make a checklist of potential liabilities from the lists on the next two pages. If you feel you have a liability not listed, make certain that you address it with your career advisor.
Potential Liabilities

- You are attempting to return to a previous occupation.
- Your career may have peaked.
- Your achievements may be difficult to measure or quantify.
- You have relatively few personal contacts.
- Your earnings are relatively low.
- You haven’t been frequently promoted.
- You may have poor references.
- You were terminated from a previous position or positions.
- You have no experience in large corporations.
- You need to maintain absolute confidentiality.
- You are attempting to switch from a military to a civilian career.
- You worked for a company that performed poorly.
- You may be too old.
- You haven’t shown much leadership.
- Some people may consider you too much of a specialist.
- You stayed too long with one company.
- You have made lateral job shifts.
- Positive results from your actions have not been realized.
- It is well known that a direct competitor is more successful in an area for which you have responsibility.
- You need more writing experience.
- Your experience is in an industry different from those you are targeting.
Potential Liabilities

- Your previous earnings were too high.
- You are an entrepreneur seeking a corporate position.
- You have poor titles that don’t reflect your responsibilities.
- You are an educator attempting to switch to the corporate sector.
- You were terminated by the person who got the promotion you wanted.
- You have a short work history with relatively few achievements.
- You don’t have enough line experience.
- Your education is unrelated to your goals or is insufficient.
- You need to change careers.
- Your academic record was mediocre.
- You are unemployed.
- You want to relocate.
- You want to switch from government/nonprofit to the private sector.
- You are too young and inexperienced.
- There are gaps in your work history.
- You have stayed too long in one job.
- You have no experience in small companies.
- Your present employer has a reputation for demanding little of people.
- You have a record of too many job changes.
- You had few activities in college.
- You have narrow experience.
- You were terminated from your recent position.
- You made obvious mistakes or were directly responsible for a failure.
- You switched to your present position a short time ago.
- Some people may consider you too much of a generalist.

Note: A liability, at least at the onset, is only a liability if you think it is and if the prospective employer sees it as a liability. If the employer thinks you have a liability and you do not think so, you have a difference of opinion. It is your job to convince the hiring authority that the liability does not exist or that it is not significant enough to impact their hiring decision.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

A common interview technique is the "behavioral interview." Many companies now use behavioral interviewing as their preferred way to select the best internal and external candidates. The behaviors you have used in the past are a key indicator of the behaviors you are likely to use in the future. You must be able to demonstrate—with recent and relevant examples—that you have performed similarly in the past with proven success. The interviewer will look for patterns of behavior to determine if you are a legitimate candidate for the job.

The manner in which a question is asked is what differentiates behavioral questions from traditional interview questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL QUESTION</th>
<th>BEHAVIORAL QUESTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“What would you do if you had to deal with an angry customer?”</td>
<td>“You say you have ‘great customer service skills.’ Can you give me an example of a time when you had to deal with an angry customer?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A traditional interview question gives you the chance to spin a fairy tale. You can use your imagination and tell a wonderful tale to answer this type of question.

It is quite different when the interviewer asks a behavioral question.

You now have the challenge of thinking about your past experiences and coming up with a specific example of a time when you dealt with an angry customer.
**THE ART OF INTERVIEWING**

**WHAT IS BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING?**

Behavioral interviewing is an interviewing technique employers use to determine whether a candidate is a good fit for the job. The technique involves questions that determine your behavior—in particular, your past behavior—as an indicator of your future success. In other words, the answers you give about your past experiences will be used to predict your future performance: If you did it before, you can do it again. This includes both positive and negative behavior.

In the 1970s, industrial psychologists developed a new way to predict accurately whether a person would be a success in a job. On the basis of the principle that future performance can be predicted by examining past behavior, candidates were asked questions that requested proof, often in the form of examples, that they had done what they claimed to be able to do.

Research performed over the last three decades indicates that when only traditional interview questions are asked during an interview, up to 75% of the people hired do not meet performance expectations after they start the job. According to an article titled “Improve at the Interview” in the February 3, 2003, issue of *Business Week*, companies that have adopted behavioral interviewing techniques claim to make better hiring decisions and to have as much as five times more success with retention and performance than they were getting when they used the traditional interviewing style.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

PREPARATION

Preparation will make a definite difference in your presentation for and confidence in an interview. One of the biggest mistakes job hunters make is not preparing well enough for a job interview. You must convey confidence about your skills and ability to do the job to let the interviewer know that you are the best person for the job.

The most successful interviews are ones that are conversational and involve an exchange between two professionals. For some people, this may entail a paradigm shift in the way they think about an interview.

Step 1: Stop thinking of the interview process as a hockey game and begin thinking of it as a two-way conversation between two professionals.

Step 2: Start thinking of the process as a business solution process in which the employer has a problem and you, the candidate, are the solution to that problem.

Plan / Prepare / Practice

Interviewing is a learned skill. As with any other skill or learned technique, the more you practice, the more you will improve.
Actual Interviews

You can use job interviews that are not of great importance as practice, if you have the opportunity, but this strategy can backfire if you discover that a job would be a better opportunity for your career than you originally thought. You may discover that when you are not concerned about whether or not you get the job, you may interview at your best because you don’t have anything to lose. Take that attitude into interviews for jobs that you really want and you will have greater success.

Feedback is important, but getting the interviewer to give you feedback after you have been turned down is not easy. Most interviewers are concerned about saying the wrong thing and ending up being subject to some kind of discrimination claim. Every once in a while someone will take the time to tell you where you could have been more effective and convincing. If you are fortunate enough to receive this type of feedback, keep an open mind and listen as objectively as possible. Learn from the experience.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

RULES OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

- Your examples must be specific.
- Your examples should be concise.
- Your examples should include action.
- Your examples must demonstrate your role.
- Your examples should be relevant to the questions asked.
- Your examples must have results.

The following questions are typical in any given interview. While it is unlikely that an interviewer would ask all of these questions of the same person, it is, however, likely that any job candidate will be asked a few of these questions in an interview process.

To craft your answers, think back to your earlier assignment of creating anecdotal stories from your past experiences. Using the Situation/Action-Behavior/Outcome model (SABO), create a chronology for each answer you develop.

This is very important because it gives you a chance to not so much memorize answers as remember the process by which answers are developed. By practicing this method repeatedly, you will become better at it over time. Since no one can predict what you will be asked, and it would be nearly impossible to memorize answers to the dozens of possible questions, the best method for developing improved interview skills is to have the formula for answers clearly embedded in your mind.

The next step is to discipline yourself to practice to hone the skills you have developed.

View it as an algebra problem. Most people struggled with algebra the first time they tackled a problem. Once they learned how to reason through the formula, algebra became easier. This approach becomes “verbal algebra” for interview skills. Many of the questions you will be asked can be answered with a SABO story.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

Employers usually interview candidates for a single position. Your answers will be the one thing that separates you from the others. The following questions are among the most commonly asked questions in interviews today.

Do not attempt to memorize your answers. You want to seem natural in your responses. Your interview is a relationship building opportunity. Present yourself as someone who is capable of performing extremely well in the position and as someone that fits into the organization. Avoid clichés like “I’m a people person” or “I have excellent written and oral communication skills.” Your response should always be specific and should present examples from your own experience that support your ability.

In a “screening interview,” some of the questions may be generic, because they are looking for someone to eliminate. Your goal is to make your answer memorable. Go through the practice interview questions. It is not necessary to answer every question.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

1. Enthusiasm for Business

Q: Why do you want to work in this industry?
A:

Q: Why would you be particularly good at this business?
A:

Q: How do you stay current?
A:

Q: Where do you want to be in five years?
A:

Q: Describe your ideal career.
A:

Q: If you had unlimited time and financial resources, how would you spend them?
A:
2. Motivation and Purpose

Q: Tell me something about yourself that I didn’t know from reading your resume.
A:

Q: Tell me what you know about this company.
A:

Q: Why do you want to work here?
A:

Q: What particular aspect of our company/business interests you the most?
A:

Q: Where do you think we’re the most vulnerable as a business?
A:

Q: What would you do differently if you ran the company?
A:

Q: What other firms are you interviewing with and for what other positions?
A:

Q: Do you believe you are over-qualified for this position?
A:

Q: Why are you ready to leave your current job?
A:
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

2. **Motivation and Purpose (continued)**

- **Q:** What do you want out of your next job?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** What’s your dream job?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** What motivates you to do this kind of work?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** What salary would you expect for this job?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** What new skills or ideas do you bring to the job that other candidates aren’t likely to offer?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** What interests you most about this job?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** What would you like to accomplish that you weren’t able to accomplish in your last position?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** We have a number of applicants interviewing for this position. Why should we take a closer look at you?
  - **A:**

- **Q:** Why should I hire you?
  - **A:**
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

3. SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Q: What are your key skills?
A:

Q: What sets you apart from the crowd?
A:

Q: What are your strengths?
A:

Q: How is your experience relevant to this job?
A:

Q: What skills do you think are most critical to this job?
A:

Q: What skills would you like to develop in this job?
A:

Q: How do you explain your job successes?
A:

Q: How good are your writing abilities?
A:
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

4. DILIGENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

Q: Give an example of how you saw a project through, despite obstacles.
A:

Q: Share an example of your determination.
A:

Q: Describe a time when you tackled a tough or unpopular assignment.
A:

Q: How many days were you absent from work last year? Why?
A:

Q: Tell me about a time you didn’t perform to your capabilities.
A:

Q: Employees tend to be either concept-oriented or task-oriented. How do you describe yourself?
A:

Q: What would your colleagues tell me about your attention to detail?
A:

Q: How do you manage stress in your daily work?
A:

Q: How do you regroup when things haven’t gone as planned?
A:
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

4. DILIGENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM (CONTINUED)

Q: Describe a professional skill you’ve developed in your most recent job?
A:

Q: Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer. How did you handle the situation?
A:

Q: Are there any issues from your personal life that might potentially have an impact on your professional career?
A:

Q: When have your skills in diplomacy been put to the test?
A:

Q: How do you manage your work week and create realistic deadlines?
A:

Q: Tell me about a time you had to extend a deadline.
A:

Q: What personal skill or work habit have you struggled to improve?
A:
5. **Creativity and Leadership**

*Q:* If you got on an elevator where everyone was facing the back wall, what would you do?

*A:*

*Q:* What’s the most creative or innovative project you’ve worked on?

*A:*

*Q:* Why do you think that some companies with good products fail?

*A:*

*Q:* Give me proof of your persuasiveness.

*A:*

*Q:* What would your last supervisor say about your initiative?

*A:*

*Q:* Describe an improvement you personally initiated.

*A:*

*Q:* Describe a time in your work experience when the existing process didn’t work, and what you did about it.

*A:*

*Q:* Describe a time when you had to alter your leadership style.

*A:*

*Q:* Tell me about a good process that you made even better.

*A:*
6. **COMPATIBILITY WITH THE JOB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>What were the most rewarding aspects of your most recent job?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>What are the limitations of your current or most recent job?</th>
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<td>A:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>What do you want to achieve in your next job?</th>
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<td>A:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>What aspects of this job do you feel most confident about?</th>
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<tr>
<td>A:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>What concerns you most about performing this job?</th>
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<tr>
<td>A:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>Would you be able to travel as necessary to perform the job?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q:</th>
<th>What’s your most productive or ideal work setting?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**THE ART OF INTERVIEWING**

7. **PERSONALITY AND CULTURAL COMPATIBILITY**

Q: What would your friends tell me about you?
A:

Q: Tell me about your relationship with your previous bosses.
A:

Q: Describe your working relationship with your colleagues.
A:

Q: Describe an environment that is ineffective for you.
A:

Q: What situations excite and motivate you?
A:

Q: How do you feel your most recent employer treats its employees?
A:

Q: Who did you choose as your references and why?
A:

Q: Tell me what you learned from a recent book.
A:

Q: Tell me about a work group you really enjoyed.
A:

Q: Describe a time when you had to assist a coworker.
A:

Q: Are you most productive working alone or in a group?
A:
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

8. MANAGEMENT STYLE AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Q: Tell me about an effective manager, supervisor, or other person in a leading role you’ve known.
A:

Q: Describe your personal management style.
A:

Q: What type of people do you work most effectively with?
A:

Q: What things impress you in colleagues?
A:

Q: How do you organize and plan for major projects?
A:

Q: Describe a time when you’ve worked under intense pressure.
A:

Q: Tell me about a time when you had to defend an idea to your boss.
A:

Q: What personal characteristics add to your effectiveness?
A:
9. **Problem Solving Ability**

**Q:** How have your technical skills been an asset?
**A:**

**Q:** Describe a situation in which you’ve applied technical skills to solve a problem.
**A:**

**Q:** Describe how you’ve used a problem-solving process.
**A:**

**Q:** How do you usually go about solving a problem?
**A:**

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your work?
**A:**

**Q:** What was your greatest problem in your last job?
**Q:** Tell me about a problem that you failed to anticipate.
**A:**

**Q:** Describe a time you found it necessary to make an unpopular decision.
**A:**

**Q:** Tell me about a time when there was no rule or precedent to help you attack a problem.
**A:**

**Q:** When do you have difficulty making choices?
**A:**
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

10. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

| Q: Tell me about a major accomplishment. |
| A: |

| Q: Talk about a contribution you’ve made to a team. |
| A: |

| Q: Talk about a special contribution you’ve made to an employer. |
| A: |

| Q: Give me an example of a time you delivered more than was expected. |
| A: |

| Q: If I hire you today, what would you accomplish first? |
| A: |

| Q: Tell me about a quantifiable outcome of one of your efforts. |
| A: |
11. Career Aspirations

Q: Where do you hope that your career will have progressed to in the next few years?
A:

Q: What are your long-term career plans?
A:

Q: Why is this job right for you at this time in your career?
A:

Q: What new challenges would you enjoy?
A:

Q: If you could start all over again, what direction would your career take?
A:

Q: What achievements have eluded you?
A:

Q: Compare this job to others you’re pursuing.
A:

Q: Have you progressed in your career as you expected?
A:

Q: Tell me about your salary expectations.
A:

Q: Have you ever taken a position that didn’t fit into your long-term plan?
A:
12. Personal Interests and Hobbies

Q: Outside of work, tell me about an activity you’ve remained interested in over several years.
A:

Q: What do you do in your spare time?
A:

Q: What outside activities complement your work interests?
A:

Q: How is your personality reflected in the kinds of activities you enjoy?
A:

Q: What do you do to relax?
A:

Q: Describe how a sport or hobby taught you a lesson in teamwork or discipline.
A:

Q: When you aren’t at work, do you prefer to stick to a schedule, or do you prefer to be spontaneous? Why?
A:
The Art of Interviewing

Stress Questions

One of the biggest fears that job candidates harbor about interviews is the unanticipated question for which they have no answer. To make matters worse, someone may ask a question knowing full well that you can’t possible answer it. These types of questions are known as stress questions and are designed for their shock effect. They want to judge how well you might react to pressure or tension on the job.

If you encounter a stress question, your best bet is to stay calm, diplomatic, and positive in your response. Don’t get defensive or allow your confidence to be shaken, and try to answer the question to the best of your ability. If you simply can’t answer the question, think about it for a few seconds. Then, with a confident smile and without apology, simply say, “I can’t answer that question.”

These are some of the most challenging questions you’ll ever face in an interview.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

STRESS QUESTIONS

Q: What would you do if I told you that I thought you were giving a very poor interview today?
A:

Q: Tell me about your most difficult work or personal experience.
A:

Q: If this were your first annual review with our company, what would I be telling you right now?
A:

Q: Describe a time when you failed to resolve a conflict.
A:

Q: What aspects of your work are most often criticized?
A:

Q: Tell me about the last time you put your foot in your mouth?
A:

Q: Tell me about two or three aspects of your last job you’d never want to repeat.
A:

Q: Tell me about a situation that frustrated you at work.
A:

Q: Tell me about a time when your employer wasn't happy with your job performance.
A:

Q: Have you ever been passed up for a promotion that you felt you deserved?
A:
Stress Questions (continued)

Q: Have you ever been fired?
A:

Q: Why have you changed jobs so frequently?
A:

Q: Tell me about a problem you’ve had getting along with a work associate.
A:

Q: Tell me about your least favorite manager?
A:

Q: Who is the toughest boss you’ve ever had and why?
A:

Q: Have you ever had to work with a manager who was unfair to you or who was just plain hard to get along with?
A:

Q: What is your current salary?
A:

Q: Would you be willing to relocate to another city?
A:

Q: How do you feel when things go wrong with a project? How do you handle it?
A:

Q: Prove to me that your interest is sincere.
A:

Q: Tell me about yourself.
A:

Q: What is your biggest weakness?
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The fact is that few questions are actually illegal. It is, however, illegal to make a hiring decision based on certain criteria. Therefore, few employers will ever tread into the areas that are mentioned in this section.

Illegal interview questions probe into your private life or personal background. Federal law forbids employers from discriminating against any person on the basis of sex, age, race, national origin, or religion. For instance, an interviewer may not ask you about your age or your date of birth. However, she or he may ask if you’re over eighteen years of age.

Some employers, however, may lack the sophistication of understanding the delicate nature of the conversations they have with potential candidates. They may unintentionally broche a subject that would otherwise be considered taboo. In any case, do not show alarm if any of the following questions or subjects are brought up in an interview session.

If you’re asked such a question during a job interview, keep in mind that many employers simply don’t know what’s legal or illegal. One approach is to try to determine the reasons behind the question and then proceed.
THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: *What religion do you practice?*

A: I make it a point not to mix personal beliefs with my work, if that’s what you mean. I assure you that I value my career too much for that.

Q: *How old are you?*

A: I’m too young to retire, but I’m old enough to know better than to answer a question like that.

Q: *Are you married?*

A: Yes, I am. But I keep my family life separate from my work life so that I can put all my effort into my job. I’m flexible when it comes to travel and late hours, as my references can confirm.

Q: *Do you have children?*

A: Yes, I do. But I keep my family life separate from my work life so that I can put all my effort into my job. I’m flexible when it comes to travel and late hours, as my references can confirm.

Q: *Do you plan to have children?*

A: I can’t answer that right now. But if I ever do decide to have children, I wouldn’t let it distract from my work. Becoming a parent is important, but my career is certainly very important to me too. I plan to put all of my efforts into this job and this company.