

Interview Basics

Ryan Bixenmann, PhD

Director, PhD Career Services



PhD CAREER SERVICES
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Employer's perspective

1. Why are you here? - Goals
2. What can you do for us? - Skills
3. What kind of person are you? - Personality
4. What exactly distinguishes you from all of the other candidates for this job? - Strengths
5. Can we afford you?

- Bolles, R.N. 2014

Your perspective

1. What does this job involve?
2. What are the skills a top employee in this job would have to have?
3. Are these the kinds of people I would like to work with, or not?
4. Can I persuade them there is something unique about me that distinguishes me from all of the other candidates for this job?
5. Can I persuade them to hire me at the salary I need or want?

- Bolles, R.N. 2014

Before the interview

Planning/Preparation Checklist

- ☐ Gather information about the interview
- ☐ Research the employer
- ☐ Know your resume and your strengths
- ☐ Be able to describe how you fit their need
- ☐ Establish the talking points you want to convey - What do you want them to know about you?
- ☐ Anticipate/prepare for common questions
- ☐ Practice your responses
- ☐ Prepare questions to ask the interviewer

Do Your Research

Follow up with the point person

- When, where, how?
- Who will be interviewing me?
- What will the format be?
- Can you share interview questions ahead of time?
- Do I need to prepare a presentation, or other material?

Do Your Research

Be prepared for the question:

“So, tell me what you know about our company.”

Research the company/institution and the interviewers

- Read the job description thoroughly
- Network with people you know at the company
- Review the company website, especially their mission
- The news

Think of a job you are interested in
You will use this job for exercises during this workshop

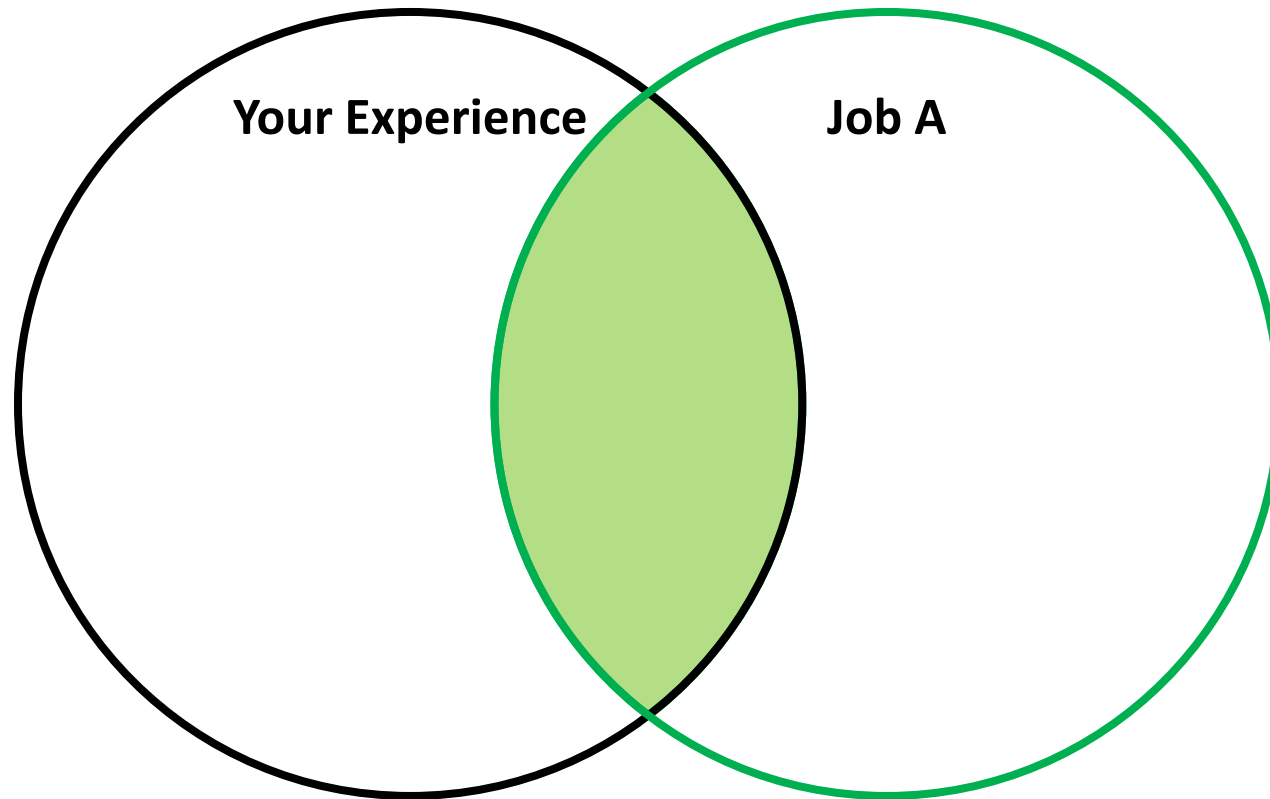
Establish your goals and talking points

What do you want them to know about you?

Establish your talking points

Be able to tell them why you are interested in their organization and how you would be able to fit based on your qualifications and your personality.

Establish your goals and talking points



Prepare (and rehearse) answers to commonly asked questions

Anticipate/prepare for common questions

- About you
- About their company/job
- About your resume

Plan each response to be between 20 seconds and 2 minutes

Encourage a discussion: Aim for 50% talking and 50% listening

Types of questions

About you

- Tell me about yourself
- Why are you interested in job X with our company?
- Items on your resume

Behavioral and/or Situational

- Tell me about a time when...

Strengths

- What are your greatest strengths?
- Why should we hire you?

Negative

- What is your weakness?

<http://careernetwork.msu.edu/jobs-internships/interviewing/interview-questions.html>

Assume every interview will start with “Tell me about yourself”

~~“What would you like to know?” WRONG ANSWER~~

~~A chronology of your diplomas and theses topics WRONG ANSWER~~

Prepare a 60-90 second introduction/marketing message about yourself

Focus on what you want them to know

A version of your elevator pitch

Tell me about yourself (60-90 seconds)

- Talk about your current position/student status, research, interests
- Briefly describe relevant experience
 - Pick 1-2 experiences that are particularly significant/relate to position
- Touch on something you've accomplished or excel at that directly relates to the position
- Mention why you are interested in and/or a good fit for the position

Take a minute to write a response to “Tell me about yourself”
Find a partner and practice

The Strengths Question

The strengths question can come in many forms

- What are your greatest strengths?
- Why should we hire you?
- What sets you apart from other candidates?
- What skills/experience can you bring to this position/internship?

Before the interview, make a list of your skills/experiences

- Top 2-3 strengths that are most relevant to position you are applying for (e.g., the area of overlap)
 - Technical skills and experiences
 - Transferrable skills
 - Natural Strength

Use specific examples!

Find a partner and tell them, out loud, your 2-3 strengths

Behavioral Questions

Tell me about a time when...

They can relate to anything: Leadership, problem solving, teamwork, integrity, accomplishments, overcoming challenges, dealing with conflict, managing people, etc.

Use examples from your life as evidence for how you handle those situations

Use the STAR method to convey that example

S.T.A.R METHOD

The S.T.A.R. Method is a technique for answering questions that helps you structure your answers in a way that gives the interviewer all the relevant information about a specific qualification for a job.

Situation- Tell the interviewer about a specific challenge or situation. Give your audience context and enough detail to understand the story.

Task- What were you trying to achieve? What was the assignment? Tell the interviewer what you were trying to get accomplished in this situation

Action- What did you do? If there was a problem or challenge, how did you handle it? Tell your interviewer what you did and why.

Results- What was the outcome of this situation? Did you meet your objective? Don't forget to tell your interviewer what you learned from this experience, and how have you applied that knowledge since.

Also known as the PARK method: <http://careernetwork.msu.edu/jobs-internships/interviewing/PARK%20Method.html>

S.T.A.R METHOD

Practice! Write down a response to the question below and share with a partner.

Tell me about a time when you had
multiple projects with overlapping deadlines.
How did you manage your time
to ensure all the work got done?

Responding to Negative questions

Pick one out ahead of time and practice the response

Be sincere, don't use a cliché like, "my weakness is working too hard"

Briefly describe the weakness, don't linger

At the end, describe how you have grown from, learned from, or addressed that weakness

- Show how you've taken steps to overcome a challenge

During the interview

START STRONG!



First Impressions

The Harvard Study of Communications said that it only takes **seven seconds** for you to make a first impression on another human being

AND

It takes meeting that same person **seven more times to change** that first impression that you made on them.



Making a Good First Impression

Be Nice to Everyone

Body Language/Posture

- Friendly eye Contact
- Smile
- Enthusiasm

Dressed appropriately

Firm handshake

Nonverbal

Sit up straight, place hands on the table

Make eye contact with the interviewer(s)

Take your time to respond

Breathe!

Business Casual vs. Professional

Have an interview or professional event coming up? Learn how to decode dress code.



Tips for Success in Any Business Situation



- 1 When in doubt, dress conservatively.
- 2 A suit (suit & tie for males) will suffice in most situations
- 3 Make sure your outfit is wrinkle-free.
- 4 Stick with solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics or simple patterns.
- 5 Accessories should be kept simple: basic pumps, modest jewelry, light make-up & light perfume.
- 6 Wear a belt and a watch.
- 7 Be sure your hair is neatly trimmed or groomed. Avoid the "messy" look.
- 8 Shirts with lettering or graphics should not be worn.
- 9 Check your outfit for missing buttons, lint, or a crooked tie.
- 10 A skirt should be no shorter than the tips of your middle fingers (or just above the knee for good measure).

Handshake tips

Firm but not too strong

2-3 pumps (3-4 seconds)

Shake from the elbow, up and down

Make eye contact

Talk while shaking

One hand is enough

General advice

The interview starts the minute you walk through their door and continues until you are accepted or rejected for the position.

- You are 'on' at all times. Be conscious of your behavior to everyone you meet at all times.

Know where you are headed (15 minutes early is in time) – where is the building, where is parking, etc.

Eliminate distractions

- Cell phones –turn off; vibrate
- No gum, mints, water bottles (unless they offer)

Relax

- Listen carefully. If the question is unclear, ask politely for clarification
- If needed, pause before answering to consider your response
- Display your intellectual and emotional process abilities, not just the right answer

Always think about selling your skills

Ask yourself: Why should they select me?

If you can't convince yourself that they should select you, you'll never convince the employer

Look for opportunities to talk about your strengths

Give specific examples of your skills and experience

Prepare Questions to ask the Interviewer

Specifics about the position (if not addressed during the interview)

What do you expect the person you hire to accomplish in the first 3-, 6-, 12- months?

What is the history/evolution of this position?

What are key characteristics you want this person to have?

What are the core values of the organization?

What do you like best about working here?

What does a typical day look like?

I read on your website that you do X. Is this an area of growth for your organization?

Are there opportunities for continued education and professional development?

And many more about the position and the role.

Closing the interview

Firm handshake

Friendly eye contact

Gratitude for interview

Restate honest interest in position (if present)

Friendly and positive

After the Interview

Send thank you letters to all interviewers

WITHIN 24 HOURS!

<http://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/thank-you-letters/index.html>

Interview don'ts

Arrive late or appear rushed or disorganized

Seem over-eager and desperate

Apologize for your background or experience

Criticize your past employers or co-workers in any way

Ask questions that you know the answers to

Oversell your qualities

Ask about salary and job benefits before you have a solid job offer

Elaborate on unnecessary details to fill an awkward silence

Practice

Out loud

In front of a mirror

Practice interviewing with classmate

InterviewStream and mock interviews

- <http://careernetwork.msu.edu/jobs-internships/interviewing/practicing-interview-skills.html>

Questions?

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