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The purpose of this booklet is to provide job seekers with information for successfully handling the largest hurdle you face: the employment interview. By learning about all aspects of the interviewing process, you'll be in a better position to compete for, and obtain, employment related to your interests, skills, abilities, and values.

We assume that if you're reading this guide, you've completed the necessary pre-interview tasks: done some self-assessment, prepared a resume, and written cover letters. If you have not completed these tasks, stop by the Career Center and pick up our Career Guide on Resumes and Job Search Letters .

Interviewing: A Definition

An interview is an opportunity for an employer to gather information about you. During this initial meeting, the interviewer will assess your employment potential, so understanding the criteria employers consider when making hiring decisions can help you have a positive interview experience. The sixteen items below are the National Association of Colleges and Employers' list of traits employers frequently seek in job candidates.

- 1. Ability to Communicate.** Do you organize your thoughts and ideas effectively? Do you express them clearly when speaking or writing? Do you present your ideas to others persuasively?
- 2. Intelligence.** Do you have the ability to understand job assignments? To learn the details of an operation? To contribute original ideas?
- 3. Self-Confidence.** Do you demonstrate a sense of maturity that enables you to deal positively and effectively with a variety of situations and people?
- 4. Willingness to Accept Responsibility.** Do you recognize what needs to be done and are you willing to do it?
- 5. Initiative.** Do you have the ability to identify the purpose for work and to take action?
- 6. Leadership.** Can you guide and direct others to reach recognized goals and objectives?
- 7. Energy Level.** Do you demonstrate a forcefulness and capacity to make things move ahead? To maintain your work effort at an above-average rate?
- 8. Imagination.** Can you confront and deal with problems that may not have standard solutions?
- 9. Flexibility.** Are you capable of changing and being receptive to new situations and ideas?
- 10. Interpersonal Skills.** Can you bring out the best efforts of individuals so they become effective, enthusiastic members of a team?
- 11. Self-Knowledge.** Can you realistically assess your own capabilities? Can you see yourself as others see you, and clearly recognize your strengths and weaknesses?
- 12. Ability to Handle Conflict.** Can you successfully negotiate stressful situations or antagonistic relationships?
- 13. Competitiveness.** Do you have the capacity to compete with others and the willingness to have your performance measured in relation to others?
- 14. Goal Achievement.** Do you have the ability to identify and work toward specific goals? Do such goals challenge your abilities?
- 15. Vocational Skills.** Do you possess the combination of education and skills required for the position you're seeking?
- 16. Direction.** Have you defined your personal needs and values? Have you decided what type of position will satisfy your knowledge, skills, and goals?

Interview Settings and Methods

Interviews are typically either on campus (primarily for technical and business-related graduates) or off campus (for most humanities and social science graduates.) The on-campus interview is an expensive, time-consuming process for employers, one that they avoid when possible. However, because of the keen competition for highly qualified technical and business graduates, many recruiters elect to visit campuses to interview these candidates.

Students with non-technical majors will likely have a different experience. Employers rarely have to seek out qualified candidates from these fields; on the contrary, they're usually besieged with applications for open positions. For this reason, humanities and social science students must remain proactive throughout the job search process by initiating and maintaining contact with employers.

The three general methods for interviewing are as follows:

1. Face-to-face
2. Phone
3. Video

Face-to-face interviews are by far the most common and most preferred type, since they allow employers and candidates to freely communicate with each other.

Phone interviews are increasingly common since they're less expensive than face-to-face interviews. Employers often make screening decisions solely on the basis of phone interviews, so be prepared for this interview method as you would for a face-to-face interview. See Appendix A for more tips on phone interviews.

Video interviews can take place in two ways: a candidate can prepare a tape and then send it to employers, or a candidate and an interviewer can participate in a video conference or live feed. The first type of video has some disadvantages: they tend to be generic in nature, and therefore rarely address an employer's particular needs. They also compromise communication and discussion, which is an essential feature of in-person interviews. Video conferences or live feeds eliminate some of these difficulties, but they may be difficult to coordinate. For more information on video interviews, please contact the Career Center.

Interview Types

Although each company has its own way of interviewing, the following are the most common types of interviews. See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion of interview types.

Screening Interview. This is a quick process designed to review a large number of applicants; the interviews typically last no more than 30 minutes. Candidates who make it through a screening interview will probably be invited back for a more thorough interview.

Behavioral Interview (also known as Targeted Selection). This interviewing style is based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Interviewers ask candidates for examples and descriptions of previous experiences and encourage them to respond in a complete and thorough—but not too lengthy—manner. See Appendix C for more information.

Second Interview. If you get called for a second interview, the employer is seriously considering you. Typically, second interviews occur in a home office or plant location, and they can last from one hour to a full day or more. Be prepared to talk at length about your education, skills, career potential and achievements, and other topics that support your qualifications. You may speak to one individual, a series of interviewers, or a group.

Stress Interview. This type of interview determines your ability to handle stress. The objective is to create stressful situations through verbal abuse or innuendo, and to upset you in order to observe your behavior under stress. This type of interview is not common for entry-level positions, but if you should encounter this situation, all you can do is try to maintain your composure and sweat it out. Most candidates seriously question working for an employer that utilizes this interviewing tactic.

Regardless the form your interview takes, remember that interviewing is always a sales process—and you are the product. But also keep in mind that you are also the salesperson, so you must convince the interviewer that you are the ideal candidate for the position. Preparation is key for this sales process.

Preparing For The Interview

Self Awareness

Take some time to contemplate and determine which issues are crucial for you in a job. The following questions may assist you in recognizing what you do and don't know about your needs and expectations for your first professional position.

- How do your skills relate to the position you seek? Is there a match between what you have to offer and the employer's needs? Make sure you understand what the employer needs—otherwise, you'll have difficulty selling yourself successfully.
- How does this position relate to your long-term goals? Be sure to determine these goals first, then be prepared to articulate them lucidly to your employer. Employers are impressed by candidates who demonstrate a clear direction.
- What can you do for this organization? More specifically, what can you contribute to the organization's success? Create a mental list that details your attributes, both professional and personal, and be ready to communicate that information.
- What style of management do you prefer? Are you most comfortable within in a hierarchical management setting? Or does a decentralized management environment sound more appealing? Do you seek a situation where most of your tasks are

- monitored? Or do you prefer significant autonomy?
- What size organization do you want to work for? Are you interested in being a generalist within a small work setting, or would you rather work as a specialist within a larger work environment?
 - Where do you want to live and work? What area of the country, and what size and type of community do you want to live in?
 - Do you understand the organization's philosophies and values? How do they agree or conflict with your own values? Is this factor important to you?
 - Do you know how to intelligently answer the most frequently asked questions? For a list of those questions, see Appendix D.

Employer Research

One key to getting a job offer is matching an employer's needs to your abilities. The more you know about a potential employer's business, the more likely you are to make the link that will lead to an offer. You can best determine an employer's needs through research. A few sources for researching an employer are as follows:

Internet. This may be the best current source of information. Check the internet first to see if an employer has a website or any web presence.

General reading. Always read basic publications—newspapers, magazines, business weeklies—for possible leads.

Super directories. These publications give you the names and publishers of other directories, trade publications, associations, schools, and other reference materials you can use. For example, if you are trying to identify professional associations for accounting or newsletters related to health food, a Super Directory would be a good place to begin. A variety of these publications are available in the Career Center and the Christopher Center. For more information, please consult a Career Center staff member.

Directories and other business publications. Virtually every type of enterprise, from foundations to corporations to food cooperatives, has a directory listing with names and addresses of potential employers.

Trade Journals. Almost every profession has one or more trade journals or magazines published monthly or quarterly.

Government reports. Write to any branch of the government that might publish bulletins, reports, or listings in your job target area.

Third parties. One of the most productive sources of employer information is people you know—friends or relatives or others employed in a professional capacity who might have contacts or knowledge that might prove helpful to your job search. You don't have to know the contact individual; if you know his or her name, give it a try.

Associations and professional societies. Professional or trade associations related to your field can be an important source of leads for career information. See if the organization has a student chapter, or if students can attend meetings of local chapters. These associations often list job opportunities on their websites and in their publications.

Literature prepared by the employer. Annual reports, company brochures, newsletters, and magazines can provide a wealth of useful information. You can also find out how the employers chooses to represent themselves through their websites and print publications.

Organizing Information

Depending on how you prefer to take notes and organize information, get a notebook and dedicate it to your research, or create a spreadsheet to record all the information you gather. Then compile a list of the following information for each employer you're researching:

- Relative size of employer
- Potential growth for the industry
- Percentage of annual sales/service growth in the last five years
- Array of product line or services

- Potential new markets, products, or services
- Who the competition is
- Age of top management
- Organizational structure by product line or function

- Geographic location
- Number of and location of facilities
- Short-term profit picture, if applicable
- Structured or unstructured training

- Recent items in the news
- Structure of assets
- People you know in the firm
- Formal versus on-the-job training

- Typical career path in your field
- Location of home office
- Name of recruiter
- Salary range information on the position

It's not always possible to gather all of this information. However, by collecting as much data as you can, you'll increase your chances of creating a favorable impression.

Additional Thoughts on Employer Research

- Believe it or not, this research is a creative activity. Once you've gained research experience, you'll be able to acquire information from any number of apparently unlikely sources.
- All researchers have their own style. You may prefer to do most of the research online, and someone else may do most of the research by phone. The method isn't important; the results are what matter.
- Do employer research when you're alert, well-rested, and optimistic. Chances are you'll turn up better results and perceive possibilities that might escape you if you work when you're tired or distracted.
- Consider working in a team. Two or more people working together can accomplish a lot.

Once you've compiled lists, ideas, names, addresses, phone numbers, trade journals, etc.—sort them out, and enter them into your notebook or spreadsheet. Be sure to maintain your system diligently.

Practice Interviews

Practicing your interviewing skills before you begin searching for a job can be extremely beneficial. Consider taking part in the following activities:

Video interviews, which the Career Center offers each fall semester. A professional recruiter makes a video tape of your interview, then reviews the tape with you and provides feedback. This visual and oral review can be very useful in determining your strengths and weaknesses. Stop by the Career Center for further information.

Role playing interview practice; ask a friend to drill you on common questions.

If you suspect you might have a problem with your interviewing style, consult the Director of the Career Center. Perhaps through discussion, evaluation, and practice, you'll be able to diminish or eliminate your problem.

These practice exercises won't get you a job, but they'll undoubtedly enhance your interviewing abilities and improve your employment options.

Professional Attire

The clothing you wear to an interview can make an immediate impression, so always take extreme care to select your outfit and prepare it in advance. The best advice for interviewing attire is to dress professionally and conservatively. The Career Center library has numerous resources to assist you in selecting proper interview attire. For more information, consult Appendix F.

Body Language

Body language is a part of your physical presentation as a job candidate. The following are a few factors to keep in mind:

- Good eye contact goes a long way towards convincing an employer of your honesty, sincerity, interest, and self-confidence.
- Smile now and then during the interview; this will help both you and the interviewer relax.
- Sit straight and back in the chair and face the interviewer. Turning the chair to one side may seem evasive, or at the very least, indirect.
- Try to be aware of, or ask a friend to help you recognize, any annoying mannerisms. These mannerisms may seem trite to you, but they'll probably be magnified in an interview setting.
- Don't forget the importance of a firm, healthy handshake. It should indicate your willingness to begin the interview process in a friendly, professional way—not a display of your strength or anxiety. Smile and make eye contact when shaking hands, and grip firmly—but not too tightly.
- If you sense something about your physical presentation is causing you problems in interviews, consult a staff member at the Career Center.

Psychological Preparation

Mindset has a lot to do with interviewing success. So as you prepare for the interview, visualize yourself being successful.

Thoroughly understanding your skills, abilities, interests, and values will be very useful in an interview. The best way to demonstrate your assets to an employer is to appreciate them yourself, and to be prepared to articulate them. Share information about your strengths when appropriate.

Also prepare yourself to gracefully answer difficult questions about your weaknesses or liabilities. Even as you discuss a weakness, try not to assume a negative or defensive manner. Instead, acknowledge the negative and, as best you can, communicate how that factor will not be a liability in your performance.

Stop by the Career Center for specific advice or to view “How to Interview Like You Mean It,” a video about this crucial aspect of interviewing.

The Interview

The day has come, your preparation is complete, and it's time to put your skills to work. Regardless of the length of the interview, the format will likely be similar to the one below:

- Introductions and Settling In (*1-5 minutes*)
- Questioning the Interviewee (*10-25 minutes*)
- Information about the Employer (*5-15 minutes*)
- Questioning the Interviewer (*5-10 minutes*)
- Concluding Remarks (*1-5 minutes*)

Although this process does not begin until the interviewer has greeted you, remember that you're on display from the moment you walk in the door. Arrive 5 to 10 minutes before your designated interview time so you can appear calm and confident, rather than frenzied and incompetent. Being early also gives you a few minutes to breathe deeply and gather your thoughts in order to make your best impression.

Remember to make your presence known by introducing yourself to the receptionist and mentioning the time of your interview. Most likely the receptionist will offer you a seat and ask you to wait until the interviewer is ready for you. Now is your chance to relax and establish your concentration. If you find literature about the organization in the waiting room, pick it up and peruse it. Be on your best behavior, as employers often question receptionists about your demeanor while waiting.

As soon as the interviewer has appeared and said your name, the interview has begun.

Introductions and Settling In

Most often an interviewer will get things started with a handshake and by introducing him or herself, and then invite you to move into another room where the interview will take place. Be ready to respond with a firm handshake, and be sure to listen carefully for the correct pronunciation of the interviewer's name. You may wish to repeat the name, saying something like, "I'm pleased to meet you . . ." to make sure you've got the pronunciation down.

The rest of this phase of the interview consists mostly of small talk and efforts to make both parties comfortable. Even while you're walking to the interview room, the interviewer will probably engage you in conversation about the weather, sports, your trip, or some light, non-controversial topic. Once you've reached the interview room, make yourself comfortable (within reason, of course) in the designated seat, and organize your belongings.

At this point, the interviewer may continue the ice-breaking conversation for a few minutes just to put you at ease. This is a common time for an interviewer to pick up on hobbies and leisure activities you may have listed on your resume. Regardless of the

interviewer's style, be sure to follow his or her lead during this part of the interview. The interviewer will determine when it's time to get down to business.

While the content of this part of the interview may seem trivial, initial impressions are absolutely essential. Most interviewers will form an impression of the candidate, good or bad, within the first two minutes of the interview. Then the candidate spends the rest of the interview either proving or disproving the original judgment. Since disproving an initial impression is always an uphill battle, try to be at your absolute best during the first stage of the interview—and avoid having to expend so much energy climbing out of a hole. Don't make the mistake, however, of letting down your energy and enthusiasm for the remainder of the interview.

Another important task begins in this stage of the interview. Not only will the interviewer be sizing you up, you should also begin sizing up the interviewer. While you might assume that the interviewer knows what he or she is doing, realistically, this isn't always the case. All too often, interviewers simply have gathered inadequate information to make a positive employment decision. If you suspect this early in the interview, you may need to take more initiative than usual. Be subtle, but aware of opportunities to share information you think is relevant to the position and that might help you gain employment.

Questioning the Interviewee

This is the longest stage of most interviews, and it represents your opportunity to shine by accurately demonstrating your skills, abilities, attributes, accomplishments, and areas of expertise when answering the interviewer's questions. Remember that not only what you say, but also how you say it, reveals many aspects of your personality to employers. Being prepared reflects at least one valuable characteristic all employers appreciate.

Even though predicting exactly what an interviewer will ask is impossible, some questions are predictable. (See Appendixes D and E for a the most common types of questions). Preparing and practicing answers to each of these questions is a very useful process.

When contemplating your answers to the interviewer's questions, remember that the interviewer's goal is to determine whether you're the best candidate for the position. As a prepared interviewee, you will have already anticipated difficult questions and how to respond to them. Difficult questions typically fall into two categories: those that reveal your weaknesses or liabilities, and those that are discriminatory in nature. Learn how to turn your potential liabilities into assets or at least into neutral, innocuous points. The following ideas may help get you started.

Liabilities vs. Assets

Low GPA

Liability: lazy; not very smart; not serious

Asset: focus on upward trend over time; substantial involvement in extracurricular activities; part- or full-time employment; improvement in grades once you established a direction

Major

Liability: unrelated; too broad or too narrow

Asset: focus on skills that do relate to the position; decision to seek employment in this field; college education as a base of knowledge; educational field complementary to work

Unfamiliar college

Liability: poor education; no prestige

Asset: focus on advantages of student-teacher ratio; renown of particular departments or professors; greater opportunities for involvement and levels of responsibilities

No related experience

Liability: no evidence of professional ability

Asset: focus on transferable skills; levels of responsibility held; ability to follow instructions and learn quickly

Fired

Liability: incompetent; can't get along; troublemaker

Asset: focus on early problem identification; self-analysis and preferred type of employer

Job hopping

Liability: immature; can't settle down

Asset: focus on diverse experience; ability to be flexible and adjust to a variety of environments; chance to experience different styles and philosophies of management

These are just a few examples of how sensitive subjects can become either liabilities or assets. Take time to identify your potential liabilities, and seek out the assets they may represent. Visit the Career Center for further assistance in handling this potentially difficult matter during interviews.

Discriminatory Questions

Dealing with the discriminatory questions is a more delicate matter. First, realize that no question is necessarily illegal in and of itself. The same question may be discrimina-

tory in one context and completely appropriate in another. Second, understand that while most large employers who do business with the government are aware of and follow Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations, many smaller employers may not be well-versed in these regulations. You may encounter employers who ask you inappropriate questions out of ignorance and with no malice intended. Carefully choose how you respond to such questions. A few alternatives and their potential consequences are listed below:

Alternative 1: Answer the question directly.

Consequence: You may get the job and find yourself working for an employer with questionable ethical standards.

Alternative 2: Answer the question, and inquire about the question's relevance to the position.

Consequence: This at least lets the interviewer know that you're aware of the discriminatory nature of the question, yet doesn't point fingers.

Alternative 3: Try to read between the lines for the interviewer's concern and address the issue rather than the question.

Consequence: This gives the interviewer the information needed and redirects the focus from the discriminatory issue.

Alternative 4: Inform the interviewer that the question is illegal in regard to this situation and refuse to answer.

Consequence: Your interview may come to an abrupt end, you probably won't get the job, and you may miss an opportunity for a terrific experience just because of the irresponsibility of one employee.

Clearly, Alternatives 2 and 3 are the most inclusive: the employer receives the requested information, and you don't compromise or lose your chance at the job. Alternatives 1 and 4, however, may also be appropriate given the right conditions. Use your best judgment at the time, but be prepared for the consequences. Oftentimes, the wording of a question can make it lawful or unlawful in a given situation. Typical discriminatory questions involve age, race, ethnic background, citizenship, religion, sexual orientation, arrest record, financial status, marital status, and childcare arrangements.

Finally, the following are general tips for good interviewing techniques:

- Be natural. Don't try to be someone you're not.
- Concentrate on emphasizing your strong points. Never apologize for weaknesses.
- Use your sense of humor appropriately. You're neither a comedian nor in a life-or-death situation.

- Describe your abilities and experiences accurately, and use figures and examples when possible. Don't exaggerate.
- Be concise and direct. Leave out unnecessary details.
- Think before you speak. Take a few seconds to consider your response, then answer promptly and fully.
- Pay attention. Allow the interviewer to finish before you begin, and ask for clarification if needed.
- Be positive. Frame all comments in a positive light.
- Turn a liability into an asset. Never offer negative information.
- Be discrete and courteous. Never speak poorly of a previous employer.

Information about the Employer

This stage of the interview allows you to utilize your best listening skills. The interviewer will probably do most of the talking, providing information such as employer history, philosophy, future goals, as well as further information specifically related to the position at hand.

By no means is this a time to sit back and zone out. Pay attention to what the interviewer is saying. Listen not only with your ears but also with your whole face. Appropriately interject comments and simple questions that you might have based on the research you did in advance. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer that might not have come up earlier in the interview. Show the interviewer the extent of your knowledge, but don't be obnoxious. In addition, listen carefully for information you might want to clarify in the next section of the interview. These items should be of a more complex nature—the sort not satisfied by a single word or phrase.

During a short interview, note-taking is generally not acceptable. Immediately following the interview, however, spend five minutes or so reviewing the interview and summarizing pertinent information on paper. Taking notes is acceptable for interviews lasting an hour or longer.

Questioning the Interviewer

Now it's your turn! The interviewer usually begins this stage of the interview by asking if you have any questions. During your research and preparation, you should have formulated at least two or three questions regarding the company or industry. Of course, you may have already learned the answers to these questions during the course of the interview. In that case, move on to other questions, including those you formulated during the last part of the interview.

Planned questions have to be somewhat generic, since they need to apply to most situations. A few possibilities include the following:

- Describe the organizational structure of your company.
- How are evaluations accomplished and what impact do they have on promotions?

- How does the organization encourage and support professional growth and development?
- What are potential lateral movements from this position?

For a more comprehensive listing of potential questions to ask the interview, see Appendix E. Make sure that whatever questions you use, you understand what you're asking. If an interviewer doesn't understand your question, be prepared to rephrase it.

Questions regarding salary, benefits, and vacation are not appropriate in the initial interview; these subjects are best left to the second or more in-depth interviews. Be certain, therefore, that all of your questions—whether planned or spontaneous—are appropriate.

Concluding Remarks

At this point, the interview is nearly over, and the interviewer will most likely attempt to accomplish some element of closure. For example, you may notice the interviewer making physical or verbal gestures that indicate the end of the interview. Bring questions promptly to a close and prepare to give your concluding remarks. An important note: Keeping track of time yourself and structuring your answers accordingly is always a good idea; interviewers are always on a tight schedule and appreciate a timely interview.

This final stage of the interview requires three tasks. First, express your thanks and appreciation for the interviewer's time and consideration. Second, if you are sincerely interested in the position, indicate your interest to the interviewer. Third, ask what you can expect next and a time frame for communication. Remember, first and last impressions are the most memorable. If you've started out well and maintained a good rapport with the interviewer, don't damage that relationship with a negative or weak ending. Now is not the time to lose confidence and enthusiasm. Prepare, practice, and make a strong, positive exit.

Interview Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical part of the interviewing process. Most employers have their own in-house candidate evaluation form; criteria on the forms are usually similar to the following list.

- Appearance
- Communication Skills
- Job Interests / Career Goals
- Technical Competence (coursework, work experience)
- Initiative
- Maturity
- Potential for Success
- Overall Rating

Your performance in the above areas will determine whether you will have an opportunity to progress further with a particular employer.

Interview Follow-Up

Many job seekers think their career fate is completely in the hands of the employer once the job interview is finished. On the contrary: you have an ongoing role in the hiring process.

Within a few hours of your interview, write a summary of the interview experience for your future reference. Include the following items:

Employer name, address, phone number, interview date

Name of interviewer(s)

Position title and description

Name of supervisor of position (if known)

Additional information

Your assessment of your interview performance

Areas for improvement

What impressed the interviewer

When you can expect to hear from the employer

Your plan of action for the next interview.

Record Keeping

When you're interviewing with a number of employers, keeping information organized can be a real challenge. Consider using a dedicated spiral notebook, or create your own spreadsheet. Be sure to keep copies of all correspondence, and use this information to follow up with additional information you may have promised to send. Also use this information to remind you of relevant information before you follow up on the position.

If you have waited the designated period of time plus a week or so and heard nothing from the employer, call or write to inquire about the status of your application. When inquiring, mention the history of your application, explain why you need clarification, and express your appreciation for the employer's cooperation. You may need to call more than once, and as long as you're being polite and asking appropriate questions, that should be no problem.

Thank You Letters

Another important task is sending a "Thank You for the Interview" letter within 24 to 48 hours of the interview. For an example, see the Career Center's Career Guide to Resumes and Job Search Letters. Basically the content is as follows:

First Paragraph: Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to interview for the position. Be sure to state the job for which you interviewed, the date and the location of the interview.

Second Paragraph: Reaffirm your interest in the employer and the position, and try to mention something specific that you found particularly interesting or appealing. State your willingness to provide additional information.

Third Paragraph: Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration.

Writing a thank you letter is extremely important. Many candidates don't bother to extend this courtesy, but those who do usually get noticed.

Sending a thank you letter typed on standard letter-size bond paper is appropriate, as is a neatly-written note on plain stationery.

After sending your thank you letter, you still have one more thing to do. If you didn't learn when to expect a hiring decision, call a week or two after the interview and ask for the date. When you call, be very polite and straightforward. You might ask, "Is there any other information you need?" or "Is there anything else I should know at this stage of the decision-making process?" Also, "Can you suggest a time when it would be appropriate for me to check on my status?"

The Second Interview¹

Introduction

The second interview—also known as a company visit, a plant trip, a site visit, or an office visit—is generally a full day of interviewing and related activities at the company site. After this interview, you may receive an offer.

The structure of second interviews can vary widely, and employers arrange them in a multitude of ways. The length of the trip, the number of people involved, the levels of people interviewed, types of tests conducted, and degree of formality can differ from one company to the next. This section of the guide focuses on information that is fairly common for most organizations.

The Purpose of the Second Interview

The second interview serves two primary purposes:

1. It allows the employer to get a more comprehensive assessment of you prior to making a job offer. At this point, the employer is confident that you have the necessary skills and abilities to do the job, so the second interview is really an opportunity to make certain that you're a good match. Employers also attempt to determine that you'll have a good chemistry with their clients.
2. It gives you an opportunity to see the organization and some of its employees first hand, and to make an informed decision if you receive a job offer. The second interview also gives you a chance to learn more about the position, its long-term career opportunities, the organization's employees, the organization itself, and the local community. The employer will usually be doing as much selling as evaluating, because this is the information you'll use when deciding whether to accept or decline a job offer. Just like the employer, you're trying to decide whether or not there's a good match.

Preparing for the Visit

Given the importance of the second interview, prepare very carefully for this interview and take it very seriously. Try to learn even more about the organization, and consider the following items:

- Notes you took after the initial interview
- The organization's annual report
- Additional information from the organization's website
- Promotional materials
- Publications containing information about the organization
- Conversations with current employees in the field you're considering
- Conversations with people who have had direct dealings with the organization, its employees, or its products or services

¹ much of the information in this section is drawn from Ralph Miranda and Dr. Robert Greenberg, *Guide to the Company Visit*, University of Tennessee - Knoxville.

Be prepared to present your knowledge about the organization, its products or services, and the career opportunity you're considering. The better prepared you are, the more likely the employer is to recognize the valuable qualities of enthusiasm, drive, maturity, and thoroughness.

Use all the information you've gathered to develop insightful questions that demonstrate your interest in the organization and the position. In order to prepare perceptive questions, investigate the following characteristics:

- The employer's field or business
- The employer's mission and long-term goals
- The employer's business philosophy and management style
- The community in which the employer is located

Be sure to ask these questions at appropriate times during the interview process. For example, you might ask recent hires about training, promotion, performance evaluation, and community life. More experienced employees might be a good source of information about corporate culture, long-term planning, and organizational history.

Good questions will cover a wide range of topics, including the following:

- Organizational goals and direction
- Career enhancement
- Market growth opportunities
- Competitive environment of the organization
- Research and development
- Evaluation procedure
- Career paths of recent hires
- Commitment to training
- Community lifestyle

Questions such as, "So what do you do?" or "What are the benefits?" are almost always awkward, and they tend to go over poorly with most employers. These questions demonstrate a lack of concern for the key factors employers are investigating during the interview. The first type of question asks for information you should have acquired through research, and the second questions reflects excessive concern for things you'll learn about at a more appropriate time.

Candidates frequently underestimate the value of personal preparation. While knowledge, good insightful questions, and a sharp acumen for the field will go a long way toward succeeding in the second interview, a lack of personal preparation can severely diminish the impression you make.

Good personal preparation includes the following:

- Leaving personal problems at home
- Wearing appropriate and professional attire (for the type of organization)
- Having a well-groomed appearance (hair, nails, accessories, etc.)

Be sure you don't put yourself at a disadvantage by packing carelessly, forgetting necessary grooming aids or products, leaving for the interview with pressures from school deadlines, etc. These items can all contribute to a poor second interview.

Arranging the Trip

A contact person for the organization will usually invite you for a second interview. This person will be your source of information about all aspects of the trip, as well as a resource for any questions you might have prior to the interview.

Most second interviews last one full day, so most likely you'll need to stay overnight in the city where the interview takes place. Depending on your personal preferences and the distance you have to travel, you may end up driving, flying, or traveling by train for the interview.

Some employers will handle all aspects of your travel, including flight arrangements, hotel reservations, and transportation from the airport to the site. Others will ask you to make the travel arrangements yourself, but will ask you to send information so they can pay in advance. Still others will ask for you to pay for arrangements, and then reimburse you at the interview.

Regardless of the details, be sure to call or send an email to the employer well in advance to confirm all reservations and travel plans. Always take whatever means necessary to prevent mix-ups or unnecessary confusion. Also be sure to ask for detailed directions to the site, and to confirm the dates, times, and location of the interview.

Arrival

If possible, plan to arrive the night before the second interview. If you're traveling by plane, try not to book the last flight of the day, and make arrangements for ground transportation—either hotel shuttle, cab, or rental car—in advance. Be sure you keep all receipts for later reimbursement.

When you check into the hotel, ask for any messages or information the employer may have left for you and verify any pre-payment arrangement.

Additional tips:

- Schedule a morning wake-up call with the front desk allowing plenty of time to get ready, and set an alarm clock as a backup.
- If the hotel room you're assigned is unsatisfactory—for example, if it's noisy—don't hesitate to ask for another room..

- If you're not a smoker, be sure to request a non-smoking room in advance.
- Review the bill when you check out to make sure you agree with all the charges.

The Evening Before

Many second interviews involve dinner the evening prior; you'll have an opportunity to relax and meet an employee (or employees) and gain an informal sense of the next day's schedule, the organization, the community, and any other relevant topics you might want to address.

Your dinner host might be a recent hire, your key contact at the organization, or possibly a Valpo alumnus. Most of these dinners are very relaxed and informal—although the degree of informality can vary. Be aware that your dinner host might be involved in the hiring process, so be very professional during the dinner—and remember that you're probably being evaluated.

A few items that are up for evaluation:

- Social etiquette
- Manner of speech and conversational skills
- Ability to be at ease in a business setting and make chitchat
- Maturity

Always dress appropriately for an interview dinner. Eat moderately, avoid drinking alcoholic beverages unless your host invites you to order one, ask thoughtful questions, and try to relax. These dinners are typically very social in nature, so you should try to make yourself at ease, while at the same time behaving professionally.

Interview Day

Start the day out right by being punctual. At this point in the interview process, no mistake is worse than tardiness—so make sure you take all necessary precautions to wake up on time. Ask the hotel desk for a wake-up call, and also set an alarm clock as an additional precaution.

Check out of your hotel when you leave for the interview, and take your luggage with you.

Most second interview days will be very busy. Schedules will vary, of course, but many organizations will put you through a mixture of one-on-one and group interviews. The latter allows the employer to evaluate you in a group of current employees, some of whom may be your peers or even part of your training group. Keep in mind that anyone you meet with during the day—even for a few minutes—is a potential evaluator. Stay on your toes at all times—be sharp, confident, and professional.

You'll probably tour the organization during the interview, which will give you a valuable opportunity to form your own opinions about the workplace and make a better in-

formed decision if you're offered a position. Remember that at this stage, the employer is very interested in you as a candidate—so it makes sense for them to show you all the good things about their organization, and to encourage you to learn as much as possible about the job, its location, its community, etc. If you're not from the area, this could be your best chance to decide if you're interested in relocating and if you're truly interested in the position.

Departure

Before the end of the interview, you'll have opportunities to ask any final questions and take care of reimbursements or other details. Take this time to ask about follow-up procedure and the time frame of the decision-making process, as well as whom you should contact. Most second interviews will conclude by late in the afternoon, allowing you time to return to the airport if you're traveling by plane.

Interview Insights

You'll find that most second interviews are long, rigorous days with multiple interviews. Under the pressure of these back-to-back sessions, it's easy for candidates to become very weary—and to become less than attentive to important details. For example, you might forget to ask about housing, entertainment, cost of living, and other personal concerns, but all these things will be very important if you decide to accept a position and relocate.

Expenses and Follow-up

Most organizations will arrange to pre-pay for your travel and lodging expenses, although others may ask you to pay for these costs and then be reimbursed during or following the interview. Having a major credit card can make these sorts of transactions much simpler, but if you don't have a credit card, and paying by cash isn't an option, be honest about your situation and discuss it openly with the employer.

Regardless of the arrangements, always keep receipts for all expenses and use good judgment when purchasing food, making phone calls, giving tips in restaurants, and other expenses the employer will cover. Most organizations will look unfavorably at very high meal expenses, so avoid pricey items like appetizers and alcohol. A good rule of thumb is to make your visit comfortable, but not extravagant.

After the Visit

Following the visit, be sure to send a personal note of thanks to all the people you met during the interview. While your note may not influence the likelihood of a job offer, it's a common courtesy and will certainly make a lasting impression if you end up working with the organization.

A letter of thanks to your main contact person is mandatory. This letter should reaffirm your interest in the position and highlight your qualifications one last time; it's also an opportunity for you to distinguish yourself from competitors and position yourself for

an offer. On the other hand, if you decide you're not interested in the position, write a courteous letter explaining why.

Most organizations will be in touch with candidates within two weeks, on average, of the actual visit with a job offer or a rejection. Other companies will offer jobs the day of the interview, and still others may take up to a month to respond. Given the variations, it makes sense for you to ask how long the hiring process should take when you have the chance. Then if the expected date passes, you should feel free to contact the employer and inquire about the status of your application.

A final note: Never be afraid to turn down a job offer if, after careful consideration, you determine it's not right for you. After all, long-term career satisfaction should be your ultimate goal.

Evaluating The Job Offer

Your preparation and planning have paid off! You've received at least one job offer and probably more. Now you're the one who has to make a decision. If you've followed the steps outlined in this booklet, you'll have the information you need to make an educated decision.

Evaluating a job offer requires assessing four areas:

- Employer
- Position
- Location
- Salary and Benefits

Of course, there is no such thing as an ideal job—but that doesn't mean you should accept a position that doesn't even come close to meeting your expectations. Start thinking about things you might be willing to compromise and things that are absolutely non-negotiable. Make use of the Career Center's many resources to help you work through this complicated process. For example, you may want to take an MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), which could help you clarify your preferences for supervision, work environment, etc.

Employer

You should have spent lots of time evaluating the employer long before you receive a job offer. After all, you can always decide that you don't want to work for a particular employer before you go through the rigors of the interview process. Investigate the following areas as you move through the recruiting process:

- Employer philosophy and management style
- Employer product or service
- Employer disposition and personality
- Employer reputation
- Supervisor and coworkers
- Clientele served

By the time you've completed the first and second interviews, you should have ample information about each of these areas.

Position

By this point, you should also be fairly clear about the role you'll play in the organization and the work you'll do. Other factors to consider include the following:

- Challenge of tasks
- Opportunity to use your skills, abilities, and expertise
- Level of responsibility

- Training program
- Advancement opportunities
- Working Conditions
- Location

Your job will likely require at least 40 hours a week of your time. Be honest with yourself about your feelings. Are you excited by the prospect of full-time work? Do you believe you'll be able to sustain your interest in the position over the long term?

Location

To some extent, you've probably already thought about where you'd like to live and work. To further evaluate location, investigate the following items:

- Buying power of salary offered
- Housing availability and costs
- Commuting distance, time, and methods
- Amount and frequency of expected travel
- Geographic preference
- Social and cultural opportunities
- Educational opportunities

If you've represented yourself as willing to travel and relocate, now is not the time to refuse to do so. If, on the other hand, you stated upfront that you have limits in certain areas and the employer has not respected your preferences, you might need to reconsider your willingness to accept a position.

Salary and Benefits

Although you may have discussed salary and benefits in general terms prior to the job offer, specifics usually come into play following the job offer. In fact, most job offers are framed in salary terms. Always be sure to consider benefits in conjunction with salary, since they will have a direct bearing on your out-of-pocket expenses. Regarding compensation packages, consider the following items:

- Realistic salary range for your profession
- Cost of living in the geographic location
- Length of training or probationary period (usually followed by an increase in salary)
- Additional out-of-pocket expenses required for the position
- Expected time commitment per week
- Opportunities for upward financial mobility
- Negotiable items

Benefits packages may include any combination of the following items:

- Group insurance: life, health, and disability
- Paid vacation and holiday; sick, personal, mental health, and parental leave
- Expense accounts, company car
- Stock options, profit sharing, bonus plans
- Professional development or continuing education funds
- Paid professional memberships and fees
- Relocation expenses, home buying or selling options
- Provisions or reimbursement for child care
- Discounts or other perks

Be sure to spend plenty of time assessing how you feel about each offer. Does it feel right or wrong? Good or bad? Positive, negative, or neutral? Be sure to consider your emotions in the decision-making process.

Regardless of what you decide, always convey your decision to the employer promptly. If you're trying to choose between two or more offers, and you need more time to make a decision, share your circumstances with the employer and request an extension. Be mindful of time limits, though, and try to ask for extensions only under dire circumstances. Career Center staff can help you navigate the intricacies of multiple job offers.

Solidifying The Job Offer

Now that you've reached your decision, it's time to agree on the terms of employment. Solidifying your job offer involves concluding any final negotiations; agreeing on arrangements for moving, preliminary preparations, and the start of work; and exchanging written statements concerning the proposed offer.

Negotiation

While evaluating the job offer, you may have identified areas that you'd like to negotiate. Before you discuss these areas with the employer, however, be sure you know your breaking point. If there are circumstances that would make you decline the job offer, be up front with them from the start, and communicate them effectively to the employer. Also, be prepared to make a decision very quickly, and don't expect the employer to give you more time to make up your mind. Additional time is a courtesy, not a requirement.

Many employers leave room for negotiation and won't be offended by your initiative, provided you can support your arguments with substantial points. Employers are always very clear, however, about where they must draw the line, and will not usually refrain from saying so. Negotiation at this point, therefore, should be short and direct.

Beginning Work

The next item on your agenda for solidifying the job offer is to confirm the specifics of where and when you are to begin work, and if necessary, arrangements for getting there. Be sure you have detailed directions to the location, instructions for parking, and which office you should report to upon arrival. Consider making a practice run a day or so before your start date. You'll have a better feel for the commute, including information about construction, detours, and rush hour traffic—of course, these things are more pertinent if you're in an urban setting. Take whatever steps are necessary to be on time for your first day of work.

Written Agreements

An essential part of this process for both employee and employer is a written statement that covers the major aspects of the employment agreement. The employer will usually send you a letter inviting you to join the organization and outlining the conditions of the agreement. Your job is to respond positively or negatively in writing, enumerating the understood terms. This step assures both parties that the terms of employment are clear. The information typically includes a starting salary, benefit package, position, and the date employment will begin.

If the employer does not indicate that you'll receive such a statement, don't hesitate to inquire about it by saying something like, "Should I expect a letter in the mail outlining our agreement?"

When you receive the letter, read it carefully to make sure that you understand the terms completely, and that you agree to them. Compose a letter of acceptance in which you restate, in some way, the terms of the employment agreement. Be sure to keep a copy of your letter for your files.

If the employer fails to send you anything in writing, consider sending an acceptance letter anyway. State your understanding of the employment agreement in straightforward terms and refer to the date of the conversation in which the employer offered, and you accepted, employment. Be sure to keep a copy of this letter for your files.

The Ethics Of Interviewing

All parties in the recruiting process—the Career Center, the Employer, and the Student—must behave responsibly and ethically. Bring any questions you might have about ethical breaches to the Director of the Career Center promptly for resolution.

The Career Center will provide the following assistance for student interviewees at no charge:

- Provide and monitor fair sign-up procedures.
- Follow nondiscriminatory guidelines supported by confidentiality of information covered by federal and state laws.
- Promote freedom of choice through discouraging influence by any other party.
- Represent students and the institution in an accurate and honest manner.
- Enforce the ethical expectations of the Employer and the Student.

The following guidelines should be expected of any employer or representative thereof:

- Provide qualified interviewers.
- Abide by and respect the recruiting procedures established by the Career Center.
- Refrain from asking illegal, discriminatory, or unrelated personal questions.
- Disseminate accurate and sufficient information pertinent to the position and employer.
- Honor all commitments made to the student within the timeframe discussed.
- Refrain from imposing financial hardships on the student during the recruiting process; issue prompt and equitable reimbursements.
- Provide written confirmation of offers.
- Allow the candidate freedom of choice based on relevant information without undue influence.
- Honor all extended offers.
- Honor accepted offers as a contractual agreement.
- Promote and encourage the ethical expectations of both the Career Center and the student.

The following ethical behavior is expected of all Valparaiso University students using the facilities of the Career Center.

- To abide by and respect the interviewing procedures outlined by the Career Center.
- To provide accurate and honest information about self; falsification of information will not be tolerated.
- To sufficiently prepare for interviewing including conducting research of the employing organization.
- To use the interviewing process only when sincerely interested in the available position and the employing organization.
- To maintain the interviewing schedule by arriving promptly at the appointed time.

- To provide sufficient advance notification of intent to cancel so that the interview can be offered to another student.
- To promptly acknowledge invitation for a second interview, whether accepted or rejected.
- To provide written notification of acceptance or rejection of all offers tendered within the timeframe designated and as soon as the decision is made.
- To notify the Career Center of all offers, acceptances, and rejections.
- To promote and encourage the ethical expectations of the employer, the Career Center, and other students.

Adherence to these expectations by all parties will result in an equitable and quality recruiting program for the benefit of everyone. For further clarification of ethical guidelines, contact the Director of the Career Center.

APPENDIX A

Winning Strategies for Telephone Interviews

Preparation

Keep the following materials by the phone:

1. An updated copy of your resume and a current academic catalog to refer to if necessary.
2. A folder with a copy of each cover letter you've sent, arranged alphabetically by company. Attach note cards with contact names for each employer you've sent resumes to or had prior contact with.
3. Your calendar, for setting up interviews.
4. Blank paper and a pen or pencil.

To ensure that you don't miss out on potential interview opportunities, make sure that you receive all phone messages and keep the following items in mind:

1. The outgoing message on your voicemail leaves a lasting impression and may determine whether you hear from an employer again, so keep it simple and professional.
2. Tell your roommates, friends, or parents—anyone who may be answering the phone—about calls you're expecting.
3. Keep handy message forms near the phone along with a pen or pencil to make sure that others can easily take messages and pass them along to you. Be sure to ask everyone to take down the following information: who called, the company name, the time of the call, the person's phone number(s), and the time you should call back.
4. Always leave a copy of your class schedule along with alternate phone numbers where you can be reached in case the employer needs to reach you right away.

Handling a Phone Interview Effectively

- Answer the phone politely and enthusiastically.
- Do not proceed with a call if there are too many distractions in the room. Explain that you're not able to speak freely at the moment, and ask if you can call back in a few minutes.
- Think before you speak. Answer directly but thoroughly. Don't forget to ask questions that are important to you.
- Before ending the call, be sure you understand what the next step will be and that you have the caller's correct name, title, and phone number. Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to pronounce and, if necessary, spell his or her name for you. Make notes about the pronunciation if you have difficulty pronouncing the name later.

Follow Up

- Record the date of the call and summarize your conversation for future reference.
- Send a brief thank you note by email or regular mail.

APPENDIX B

Types of Interview Questions

Opening Questions

These are questions such as, “Tell me about yourself.” For this type of question, pay attention to the interviewer to determine how formal or informal your answer should be. If you’re uncertain, ask for clarification. An interviewer wants, to a certain extent, to find out more about you as a person. This is an important part of evaluating how you’re going to fit into the culture of that specific organization.

Credential Questions

This category includes questions such as, “What was your GPA?” or “How long were you at your previous job?” or “How well did you do in your major classes?” In this case, the interviewer is trying to measure your background.

Experience Questions

These questions relate to your experience and allow an interviewer to subjectively evaluate your background. Expect questions such as, “Have you done this type of work before?” or “What did you learn in that class?” or “What were your responsibilities in your previous job?”

Opinion Questions

With this sort of question, the interviewer attempts to determine how you would react in certain situations. The interviewer could ask you anything from “What are your greatest weaknesses?” to “What would you do in this kind of situation?” or “What kind of supervisor do you like to work with?”

Company Research Questions

Did you prepare adequately for the interview? If not, look out! Interviewers will ask questions to find out if you did your homework. Expect questions the interviewer already has an answer for, to some extent, such as “Why do you want to work here?” or “What kind of salary do you expect?” or “What kind of contribution do you think you could make to our sales team?”

Dumb Questions

Depending on how non-traditional the employer is, or how important creativity and problem solving are to the position, you might find the employer asking you questions that seem completely bizarre. The real purpose of this type of question is to see if you can come up with original responses and move past all the pre-determined, “correct” answers. You could get asked anything from, “What kind of animal would you like to be?” to “How many jellybeans do you think could fit into my office?” to “Who has most influenced you in your life?”

APPENDIX B, cont'd

Behavioral Questions

Because behavior-based questions have high predictive validity, they're very common in most interviews. The interviewer will ask you things like: "When have you had to use quick thinking to solve a potentially serious problem?" or "What steps would you go through to perform this task?" or "When have you had to work in a team? What resulted from that teamwork?"

Personal Questions

Interviewers legitimately need to gather some personal information from you, so expect—and feel free to answer—questions such as, "Can you explain this gap in your work history?" or "When would you be available to begin working?" Keep in mind, however, that some personal questions are illegal to ask in an interview. Read the next section for more information on this topic.

Closing Questions

At this point, the interviewer will try to wrap things up. He or she may ask you for references or samples or your work. Also be prepared to ask some questions of your own. Be sure to take a business card from the interviewer, and make sure you know what happens next. If you have any questions, now is the time to ask.

Dealing With Illegal Questions

Lots of times interviewees are caught off guard by illegal questions. What's the best way to respond to this situation? First, remain calm, and realize that most interviewers ask illegal questions out of ignorance. Sometimes, an interviewer will innocently ask something like, "Marino. Is that a Mexican name?" In this case, the interviewer is probably trying to make small talk, but nonetheless has crossed a line.

Your next step: try to figure out the interviewer's motive. Is s/he innocently asking something inappropriate, or does the question have a malicious intent? If you decide the interviewer is simply ignorant, you can respond in a few ways: 1) answer the question briefly and move on to something else, 2) ignore the question and change the topic, 3) answer the question with regards to the position. If you're asked, "Do you have children? Are they in day care?" then you might respond, "My child-care provider is very reliable and I have alternate arrangements in case of an emergency. My children will not affect my work performance." If the interviewer asks, "Are you married?" you might respond, "Is that relevant to this position?"

If you feel very uncomfortable, it's appropriate to mention this to the interviewer, and ask that you move on to another topic. If the situation doesn't improve and the interviewer continues to ask inappropriate questions, you might want to consider how this attitude could potentially affect the environment of this workplace.

APPENDIX B, cont'd

How To Answer Questions

Be honest!

If an employer can tell you're being dishonest, or if the interviewer later determines through checking references, reviewing your transcripts, or looking over your work samples that you lied during your interview, you can forget about that job. If you have to lie to get this particular job, will you be able perform well if you get it?

Be positive.

If you have to answer a question negatively, try to find something positive to incorporate into your answer. Interviewers want to see how you react in this type of situation like this. For example, if an employer asks, "What is your greatest weakness?" you might answer, "Some people tell me I take too much responsibility on myself, but I think of it as getting things done right the first time."

Be thoughtful.

Think about the question carefully, and always make sure you understand what the interviewer is asking. Sometimes questions may be vague or even too specific. Sometimes you'll feel like the interviewer wants to know your life history, when really all s/he wants to know is information about your last job. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification if necessary.

Be direct.

Make eye contact and use good body language. Sit upright in the chair—don't slouch—and point your body towards the interviewer. Remember: this is a time for the interviewer to judge your interpersonal skills. If you can't look him or her in the eye, or if you slouch or mumble, you aren't going to make a good impression.

Be yourself.

Interviewers want to be able to determine whether you'll fit in with the organization. You should be trying to determine the same thing. If you don't fit in, would you really want the job anyway? The interviewer also wants to see how well you can think and formulate your own answers to questions, instead of just giving them pat answers to common questions.

APPENDIX C

Popular Behavior-based Interview Questions

Tell me about a time when you . . .

1. Worked effectively under pressure.
2. Handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.
3. Were creative in solving a problem.
4. Missed an obvious solution to a problem.
5. Were unable to complete a project on time.
6. Persuaded team members to do things your way.
7. Wrote a report that was well-received.
8. Anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
9. Had to make an important decision with limited facts.
10. Were forced to make an unpopular decision.
11. Had to adapt to a difficult situation.
12. Were tolerant of an opinion that was different from your own.
13. Were disappointed in your behavior.
14. Used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.
15. Had to deal with an irate customer.
16. Delegated a project effectively.
17. Surmounted a major obstacle.
18. Set your sights too high (or too low).
19. Prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
20. Got bogged down in the details of a project.
21. Lost (or won) an important contract.
22. Made a bad decision.
23. Had to fire a friend.
24. Hired (or fired) the wrong person.
25. Turned down a good job.

APPENDIX D

Questions Employers Frequently Ask

1. Tell me about yourself. What does your resume not tell me?
2. How well do your grades reflect your ability? Why?
3. What led you to determine your major (and minor)?
4. Which classes did you enjoy the most (the least)? Why?
5. Why did you choose Valparaiso University for your college education?
6. Tell me about your interests and activities. What skills have you learned from them?
7. What have you gained from any part-time jobs, summer employment, internships, or co-op experiences?
8. What do you do to relax? How do you spend your leisure time?
9. What are your best personal strengths (weaknesses)?
10. What are your plans for graduate school?
11. Why did you choose to interview with us?
12. What do you know about this organization?
13. For what position are you applying? Why?
14. What qualifications and experiences make you a good candidate for this position?
15. What do you hope to be doing in 5 years? In 10 years?
16. How would you describe your best motivators?
17. Describe your leadership experiences.
18. Describe your most satisfying (most disappointing) experience.
19. What are your geographical preferences? Why?
20. Are you willing to travel? How frequently?
21. Why did you leave your previous employer?
22. What are your salary expectations?
23. Why do you believe that you would be successful in . . . ?
24. Give me an example of . . .
25. Have I missed anything?

APPENDIX E

Questions for Job Candidates to Ask

General topics. What is the financial stability of your company? What future changes do you see for this company? What direction do you see your company going in the future? Who are your competitors? How successful have you been with marketing your company's products? What plans does the company have for becoming more competitive in this industry? What is the biggest negative about your company? What makes your company different from others?

Career motivation. Why did you decide to work for this company? How long have you been employed with this company? Why do you continue to work for this organization? What do you like most (or least) about your company? Would you want your son or daughter to work for this company too? What makes your association with this employer enjoyable? What are you really hiring me to accomplish? Graduating students really want to get past the recruiting jargon and learn what's truly expected of them. Why should I take this job? (Or, why should I work for this company?)

Anticipated job responsibilities. If I were hired by your organization for this position, what duties would I be performing? What will be expected of me in this position? How does my job fit with the mission of the organization, company performance, or profitability? How do you know when to hire additional staff? How much responsibility will I have? Why is this job important to you? What will I be contributing to the organization? What do you wish you knew about the company before you started? What would you change about the position, if you could?

Work environment. What is your corporate culture? How would top management describe the corporate culture, and how does this compare with things in the organization as they really are at the lower level? What were your personal experiences on this job? Will I be on a team, or in a group? How much freedom will I have to solve problems with my own methods? What help is available to me when my methods fail? Is this a new position? Why did the other person leave? What is your company really like?

Affirmative action / equal employment opportunities. What is the standard of living among minorities in your local community? What minority programs do you have?

Quality of work. What differentiates your company from your competition? Do you get repeat business from your customers? What are the ethical and environmental philosophies of your company? What has been the history of turnover among recent hires in the company? What is this company's philosophy towards its employees? What is the relationship of this organization to the local community?

Personality factors. What can I do with my education and training for your company? What values are sacred to this company? What would cause me to leave the company? How mobile can I be?

APPENDIX E, cont'd

Products and services. Has the company thought of going in the direction of xxx? What impact will current legislation have on the company? What impact did your recent service (or logo, product, marketing campaign, etc.) have on the company? What do you see as the biggest areas for improvement within the company?

Employment trends. What significant changes has the company experienced in the past year? What are the short- and long-term strategic directions of the company? What have been the successes (or failures) of the company? What is the company doing in order to succeed in this changing global economy? What are the company's goals for the future? What is the greatest challenge, from your perspective, that the organization faces during the next year?

Measures of work performance. How would you describe the most successful employees in your company? Can I expect opportunities for advancement with the company if I work hard to prove myself? If I do well, what will I be doing in five years? How will I be evaluated in my job? How often will I be evaluated? Who supervises this position? What is the chain of command for this position? Where would my career progress from my first advancement? How does your company encourage their new hires to keep pace with advancing technologies? What characteristics do you possess that have made you successful? What can I do within the first five years to help ensure my success within the company? What was your career path within the company? What feedback has your company received from new hires?

Salary and benefits. What is the pay for this position? What are advanced education opportunities with this organization (MA, MS, MBA, etc.)? Would I be eligible to invest in the company? What training would I receive if hired?

Interview closures. How soon will I hear from you regarding this opportunity? What does your company want from successful candidates for this job? What would distinguish one candidate from another for this job? How do I prove myself and my commitment to the company?

APPENDIX F

Dress for Success

The way you dress for job interviews can make a huge impression on your potential employers. In fact, before you say a single word to the interviewer, you have already made an impression based on how you're dressed. The guidelines we provide here are appropriate for interviewing.

Most important, remember that your clothing should enhance—not detract from—your professional image. The interviewer's attention should always be focused on what you say and your qualifications, rather than your strong perfume or dangling earrings.

You should also feel comfortable in the clothing you select, even if you're not used to wearing a suit or dress shoes. Take plenty of time to choose clothes that fit well and feel good, and be sure to give your complete outfit a test run at least a few days before the interview. Walk around, sit down, stand up, bend over—and make sure you can do all these things without your blouse gaping open or your pants binding.

General Guidelines for Interview Attire

- Always err on the side of being too dressed up: a suit will always be appropriate. Never assume that business casual attire is appropriate, because if it's not, and you're wearing khakis, you could blow your chances at the interview.
- When you're assembling a wardrobe, select fabrics that you can wear year-round, such as tropical weight wools or gabardines. Natural fabrics tend to breathe better than synthetics, and can therefore help you avoid the awkward problem of being sweaty during your interview.
- Be certain that your hair is clean and neatly styled. Avoid styles that you constantly find yourself fiddling with or adjusting.
- Remove visible facial or body piercings for interviews. Simple earrings are an exception for women.
- Make sure your clothes are clean and neatly pressed. For men, this includes your tie.
- Less is more. Limit accessories to a minimum, and keep your look as simple and tasteful as possible.

Specifics for Women

- Select a pantsuit, skirted suit, or tailored dress that draws attention to your face. Good color choices include black, navy, gray, or taupe. Simple patterns, such as herringbone or pinstripe, are also acceptable.
- Skirts are traditionally knee-length, although slightly shorter or slightly longer lengths are also acceptable.
- Visually interesting blouses or sweaters are a good idea, but be sure to avoid transparent, clingy, or revealing garments. Arms should be covered at least to your biceps, and more traditionally, to your wrists.

- Always wear hose to interviews. Neutral colors are the safest bet, although colors that coordinate with your skirt or pants may also be acceptable. Carry an extra pair in case of runs.
- Slips, camisoles, and other undergarments should not be visible. Perfume must always be subtle; strong fragrances can trigger allergic reactions in some people! When in doubt, don't wear perfume.
- Wear natural-looking makeup and clear nail polish.
- Don't carry both a purse and a briefcase: choose one or the other.
- Wear simple, polished, and comfortable flats or low pumps in subtle colors that coordinate with your clothes. Avoid open-toed shoes and stiletto heels.
- Carefully choose accessories to express your personality and accentuate your best features. But remember: less is more. Avoid dangling earrings, loud bangle bracelets, and multiple rings.

Specifics for Men

- Wear a suit in navy, black, or gray (pinstripe or solid). If you don't have a suit, a reasonable option is a navy blazer with gray trousers.
- Wear a long-sleeved white or light-colored dress shirt. Straight collars without buttons are the best choice for suits.
- Select a tie that coordinates with your suit. It should contrast with your shirt, but avoid loud colors or wild patterns. Tie the knot so the tip of the tie touches your belt.
- Socks should be dark colors (navy, black, or charcoal) and cover your calves. Choose natural fibers that wick moisture.
- Wear a white undershirt, either crewneck or v-neck.
- Wear conservative, clean, and polished shoes. Choose lace-ups, rather than slip-ons. Wingtips are always a safe choice, and the color should coordinate with your trousers.
- Choose a leather belt that matches your shoes.
- The standard for hair is a short, tidy cut and no facial hair. Always shave the morning of your interview. If you have long hair and are unwilling to cut it, tie it back very neatly. The same goes for facial hair: if you don't want to shave it, it must be very neatly trimmed.
- Avoid excessive jewelry. One ring per hand and a dress watch is acceptable.
- In cold or rainy weather, wear a full-length topcoat or trench coat over your suit. Whenever possible, avoid casual jackets, parkas, or fleeces.
- Any cologne or aftershave you wear must be subtle; strong fragrances can trigger allergic reactions in some people! When in doubt, avoid the situation altogether, and refrain from wearing cologne or aftershave.
- A briefcase or portfolio is part of the image you create. Select something trim and simple that coordinates with your clothes and shoes.

