Navigating Behavioral Interview Questions

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES
APRIL 7, 2020
Welcome!
NACE is conducting a second round of COVID-19 polling, focusing this time on how employers and colleges are adapting their plans and operations in response to the epidemic.

**Revoking Offers to Full-Time Recruits and Interns (N=135)**

- 64% are not revoking offers to full-time recruits and interns
- Another 25% are not revoking offers yet but are considering it

**Changes to Summer 2020 Internship Programs (N=130; Select All That Apply)**

- 35% are making no changes
- 35% are reducing length of internship by delaying start date
- 29% are moving interns to virtual program
- 20% are moving events online such as end of program presentations
- 15% are reducing the number of interns

**Expectations for Recruiting Class of 2021 (N=134)**

- 67% are planning to recruit at the same level as for the class of 2020
- 13% are decreasing the number of recruits compared to class of 2020
- 6% are increasing the number of recruits compared to class of 2020

**Expectations for Attending Career Fairs in the Fall (N=135)**

- 62% plan to attend on-campus and virtually
- 17% plan to attend on-campus only
- 5% plan to attend only virtually

**Expectations for Increasing Virtual Recruiting (N=135)**

- 42% Yes
- 53% not sure yet, still deciding
Poll

Which of the following most applies to you?

A. I am actively on the market and applying to positions, but haven’t interviewed yet
B. I have an upcoming interview
C. I have had interviews recently, but am looking for ways to improve
D. I am planning to go on the job market soon (through summer 2020)
E. I’m just planning ahead for a future job search (fall 2020 or later)
What is the purpose of an interview?

◦ Opportunity for employer to “meet” you and learn about your experiences, skills, and competencies

◦ Helps you assess if the employer/position is a good fit for you based on your skills, interest, and values

◦ They want to know are you the missing piece
Are You the Missing Piece?
Preparation: Interviewing from Home
Four easy things to make your virtual interview even better:

1. SOUND  
2. LOCATION  
3. LIGHTING  
4. YOU!
How to Look Good in Skype Interviews

PRE-INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Sound
☐ Enough “stuff” in room to absorb/defect sound
☐ No loud noises in background

Location
☐ Background is appropriate
☐ Nothing distracting in background
☐ Camera height at eye-level
☐ Camera about arm’s length away
☐ Eyes two-thirds of the way from bottom of frame

Lighting
☐ Window or lamp in front of you
☐ No strange shadows
☐ No bright overhead lighting

You
☐ Dressed appropriately
☐ Put on makeup

Remember
• Look directly at the camera
• Keep your head and body reasonably still

Watch the video: http://youtube/rQwanx0mFnc
Past performance indicates future success
Three Habits of Successful Candidates:

1. Ability to speak in great depth about an experience
2. Ability to think carefully about the goal they’re referencing – why was it an important experience for them? What actions did they take to achieve X accomplishment?
3. Ability to tell stories well
Preparation: Identifying Skills & Accomplishments

You can’t advocate for yourself as being a good fit for a job without knowing what you have to offer.

- What is the employer looking for and what can you offer them based on your skillset?
- What have you accomplished both inside and outside the academy?
Top 10 Skills Employers Seek*

1. Verbally Communicate
2. Work as a Member of a Team
3. Make Decisions & Solve Problems
4. Plan, Organize, & Prioritize Work
5. Research, Read Critically, Collect & Process Information
6. Use Quant. Skills & Analyze Data
7. Language & Technical Skills
8. Knowledge of Software & Tech.
9. Create and/or Edit Written Reports
10. Ability to Sell or Influence Others

Document your skills using the OCS Skills Tracker in Crimson Careers!

* National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook Survey
World Economic Forum: Top 10 Skills for 2020

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Complex Problem Solving</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>People Management</td>
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<td>Coordinating with Others</td>
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<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
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<td>Judgment and Decision Making</td>
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<td>Service Orientation</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Negotiation</td>
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<td>Cognitive Flexibility</td>
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A Hiring Manager’s Mind Set:

- What do you know?
- Why should I care?
- Why should I hire you?
- Do you have confidence and ability to take on new challenges?

They are only looking for **skills and competencies that are important to meet their needs**, solve their problems, fix what’s broken, etc.
Behavioral Interview Question Examples:

• **Give me an example** of a time you faced a challenge. How did you deal with it?

• **Tell me about** a conflict you had with a professor, lab mate, supervisor...why was there a conflict? What did you do?

• **Tell me about** a time when you used your leadership skills to get a project done.

• **How in the past have you** influenced other people and their actions?
How to Answer: **PAR Format**

You will want to walk the employer through a story in the following order:

- 1. Briefly tell them the **overall problem/situation** (set the stage)
- 2. Next you will want to **provide specific actions** you took
- 3. End **with the outcome** or result. Were you successful? **Quantify whenever possible.**
Problem
Action
Result
Prepare Stories to Demonstrate:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Skills that are relevant to the employer! (Use the job description and your research as your guide)
Tell me about yourself...

What NOT to do...

“Well, I was born in ...”

“Haven’t you read my resume and cover letter?”

Drown them in jargon:

◦ “I’m getting my PhD in BBS in the Spring. I’ve found that in CH-128 cells in culture, a low oxygen, high pH environment induces dephosphorylation of the 5’ end of the ABX-Hatch gene, resulting in upregulation of the upstream inhibitory primer and subsequent decrease in expression of the beta-amyloid repressor protein, and finally, increased amyloid expression. Coming from Harvard, I’m sure I could do a great job at your company.”
Tell me about yourself...

Try something like this...
◦ “I’ll be graduating with a PhD in Genetics from Harvard in May, and my research has focused on gene expression in Alzheimer’s disease. In addition, I managed our lab’s monthly journal club for four years and successfully established a mentoring program for incoming graduate students in our department. With my deep knowledge of genetics and neurodegenerative diseases, along with my strong communication, analytical, and teamwork skills, I know I can make an immediate contribution to the market research team at NeuroSystems.”

Tell me about yourself

= 

Why should we hire you?
Tips for Discussing “Weaknesses” or “Failures”

- Set the stage
- Be mindful of demeanor, tone (practice having difficult conversations)
- Define your role and the players involved without giving any personal information
- Don’t blame
- Reframe as an area for improvement
- Illustrate self-awareness and adjustments you’ve made since
Prepare 5 to 10 Behavioral Examples

1. ________________________________
   P_____________________________________________________________________
   A_____________________________________________________________________
   R_____________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________
   P_____________________________________________________________________
   A_____________________________________________________________________
   R_____________________________________________________________________

   ...
### Important Day of Interview Tips

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<th>VIRTUAL</th>
<th>IN PERSON</th>
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<td>Login just a couple of minutes early</td>
<td>Arrive at least 15 minutes early</td>
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<td>Be nice &amp; respectful to everyone</td>
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<td>Solid Greeting!</td>
<td>Solid Handshake</td>
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<td>Eye contact</td>
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<td>Stand/Sit tall and confidently</td>
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<td>Prepare questions to ask at end of interview</td>
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<td>Get a sense of hiring timeline</td>
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After the Interview:

- While things are fresh in your mind, reflect on what you did well, what you could improve?
- Send a thank-you email to interviewers
- Remind interviewers of anything additional you want to mention
Resources for Practicing

1. LinkedIn Interview Tool
2. LinkedIn Learning
3. InterviewStream

4. Prepare for case interviews if you are applying for consulting jobs or internships:
   ◦ Join the Harvard Graduate Consulting Club – participate in their case practice meetings
   ◦ Access CaseQuestions.com (Free, PIN protected)
   ◦ Attend the Fast Math workshop that is held in early fall.

5. Reference Vault Guides (Free, Harvard Key protected, requires one-time registration) for interview prep in specific fields or industries.

6. Make an appointment with an OCS adviser for a 30-minute mock interview.

7. Sign up for a mock interview with alumni through Firsthand Advisers.
Five Remote Work Resources

1. Crimson Careers (filter employers seeking graduate students!)
2. Global Wonks
3. Parker Dewey
4. GigNow
5. Remote filters on job sites (HigherEdJobs.com, Idealist, etc.)
Upcoming Programs

• APRIL 8th: MIT Spring Career Fair (Virtual)
• APRIL 14th: Navigating Careers in STEM: Virtual Panel Discussion
• APRIL 16th: Job Search Strategy for International Students Webinar (Interstride Event)
• APRIL 21st: Career Opportunities at the World Bank & International Finance Corp. (IFC)
• APRIL 30th May 1st: Social Impact Expo (Virtual)
• OCS Employer Event Calendar
• OCS is Engaged!
Questions?