

APSEA So Chap. Mini-Trng Session November 2012

TOPIC: “ 5 Interview Types and How to Ace Them “

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All interviews were not created equal. Depending on the role, the industry and the ruthlessness of your potential employer, you may encounter one -- or a combination -- of the common interview types. Each one is unique, and demands a tailored approach to its preparation.

1. The Traditional Interview : Interviews -- no matter their style -- are always tough. With traditional interviews, you need to be able to answer broad-based questions in a very specific, personalized way. And to sound sincere while doing so. You'll face questions like, "Why do you want to work here?" and "Tell us about yourself." The interviewer's goal is to identify your skills, experience and enthusiasm for the job. The interviewer will closely follow your resume structure. He or she will probe you about the experience, education and achievements listed. Practice, practice, practice!

Take a look at some of the most common questions from traditional interviews, and write down your answers. Keep in mind that if ever you're faced with a question that is too broad, ask for clarification. For example, if the question is "Tell us about yourself," it's perfectly fair for you to reply with "What about me do you want to know?". Often, it's helpful to practice your answers out loud. Find a friend who's willing to play "interviewer" and go through a mock interview from beginning to end.

Know your resume inside out. Think hard about the accomplishments you list, and be prepared to express what you learned through each. As with all interviews, prepare a handful of examples to back up every skill or quality your claim to possess. Real life examples make the difference between a vague, fluffy, might-as-well-be-made-up answer, and the winning response that gets you the job.

2. The Behavioral Interview : The behavioral interview assumes that the most accurate indicator of future success is past performance in a similar situation. The interviewer will have in mind a set of skills they're looking for in a candidate, and will assess whether or not you have said skills based on how you've demonstrated them in the past. Instead of asking more general questions, like "Why do you want to work in this industry?", someone conducting a behavioral interview will say "Give an example of when you faced XYZ situation." Once you've answered the initial question, they'll probe further, asking you how you felt, what you said, what you did and what the final outcome was. The behavioral interview is growing more and more common, so it's essential you learn how to prepare for it.

At first, it may seem an impossible task. After all, there's no telling what specific scenarios an interviewer might ask you to describe. But don't fret. By preparing -- in detail -- a few stories from your professional experience, you can likely adapt one of them to any question they throw at you. Think of instances where you overcame a challenge, performed memorably, and motivated yourself and others.

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For each story, be prepared to address the following points:

- **The situation**
- **What actions you took**
- **How it made you feel**
- **What you learned**

The more familiar you are with the job description, the better your chances for success. By looking at what qualities they're looking for in a candidate, you may be able to predict what type of questions they'll ask. Whatever you do, don't lie or give an overly vague response. Behavioral interviews are especially useful at exposing made-up answers – which is one reason employers like them. Make sure you know what you're talking about and that you're ready to provide more detail if necessary.

3. The Case Interview : Just because you've never heard of it doesn't mean you never will. In a case interview, the interviewer will present a real or hypothetical business problem, and ask you to analyze the situation and present how you might go about solving it. These types of interviews are typically used when applying for investment banking or management consulting posts. The interviewer is usually trying to assess your critical thinking skills and general business knowledge. Normally, you're not given enough information in the outset to identify the problem and come up with a solution. In fact, you are expected to ask smart questions to get to the desired outcome. In a case interview, there really is no perfect answer. You're going to be judged more on how you approach the problem than on the specific solutions you come up with.

Start by fully **understanding** the situation, based on the information you've been given. Remember, this type of interview is a two-way conversation, and the interviewer will likely deliberately leave key information out to make sure you ask the right questions. If at any point, you are unsure what is being asked, make sure to ask for clarification before proceeding. Once you are sure you understand the problem at hand, take time to organize your thoughts and present a possible solution. If you need to ask more questions, go ahead and do so. One way to prepare in advance for this type of interview is to practice with case examples you can get for free online.

4. The Stress Interview : It's just as it sounds: an interview designed to stress you out. The point? To see how you cope. The interviewer will try to intimidate by asking off the wall questions (like, "if you were an animal, which would you be?"). Or perhaps a panel of interviewers will greet you, firing questions at you in quick succession. They might make you wait for an hour before seeing you, give you the silent treatment, or respond to your answers with rudeness and/or mockery. If you're really unlucky, they'll use a combination of the aforementioned techniques. It's all part of a game to see just how much abuse you can withstand before you crack.

Although these types of interviews tend to be frowned upon by the experts, who claim they are not useful or fair, they continue to be used from time to time. Stress interviews may be unfair, unrealistic or downright cruel. Unfortunately, they're here to stay. And while you're unlikely to experience the whole sadistic shebang, you may, at the very least, endure a few isolated stress questions. The key to surviving this nightmare is to stay calm. And the first step to doing so is to recognize that you are in the midst of a stress interview.

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Instead of taking their ill-treatment personally, learn the rules of the game and play it well. Be firm about your main message is so that if you are asked a stress question, you'll be less flustered and can quickly adapt an appropriate answer.

One way to prepare is to ask for an agenda beforehand. They can tell you how many people you're going to meet on the day. They may even tell you what type of interview you're going to experience. Whatever you do, don't get aggressive or argumentative. Be courteous and polite, even if no one else is. Don't, as one Lehman Brothers interviewee allegedly did, throw a chair through the window in a fit of rage.

5. The Phone Interview : For some, there is nothing more terrifying than an over-the-phone job interview. Unfortunately, they're used more and more as a way to screen a large pool of candidates before deciding who to invite for an in-person meeting. Phone interviews can be set up in advance, but they can also be completely spontaneous. At any point while you are job searching, a recruiter can call you up for a quick chat. Be forewarned -- this quick chat is anything but. It may feel informal, but it's still an interview.

First thing's first -- always be prepared! Since the phone interview can come at any time, have your desk set up accordingly. Tape up your resume and some bullet points of your accomplishments for quick reference. Have a pen and paper handy at all times. And if, as it turns out, the timing is bad or your location less than ideal, don't be afraid to say so and reschedule. The last thing you want is to try and talk over a crying baby or while navigating through traffic.

If you're lucky enough to have fair warning, it's a good idea to get dressed for the interview -- nothing will make you feel less professional than taking questions in your Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles pajamas.

Remember, unlike an in-person interview, you can't rely on body language to help carry your message or express enthusiasm. One way to overcome this is to stand up while you're on the phone. Everyone speaks more confidently and clearly when they are standing. And smile. It sounds crazy, but people on the other end can *hear* you smiling.

Finally, don't let a pause or awkward silence throw you off. They're a natural part of conversation, albeit more noticeable over the phone. Your interviewer is probably just taking notes or preparing their next question. Don't feel the need to fill the silence with a nervous giggle or pointless comment. If you are finished with your answer, wait patiently for the interviewer to pick up the conversation.

What Is It? “How to Ace It” .

See you at the next APSEA Mtg where we will continue to discuss these Mini-Trng sessions.

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