

# Interview Skills Guide

*Amica Center for Career Education*

**BRYANT UNIVERSITY**

*[www.bryant.edu/career](http://www.bryant.edu/career)*

# Interviewing

## THINGS TO KNOW

### SELF KNOWLEDGE:

***The product in an interview is you! Know your product!*** You must be prepared to sell your marketable skills to the employer. Be prepared to offer behavioral examples of your skills and abilities. Such examples will come from your work, internship, co-curricular, and leadership experiences. Know your resume inside and out and be prepared to highlight experiences and accomplishments that relate to the qualifications that the employer is seeking.

Know your short and long-term goals and be prepared to discuss them with the employer. Employers are impressed with candidates who articulate clear, well-defined goals. *Your short term goal should always be the immediate position for which you are interviewing.* Lastly, clarify your values. Be cognizant of what is important to you and how these values shape your career decisions.

### COMPANY KNOWLEDGE:

***The employer is your target market! Know your target market!*** First, be fully informed about the job for which you are interviewing. Start with the job posting - this will describe the job qualifications. Secondly, read the published "company literature". The Career Center has "company literature" for some companies that participate in the Corporate Recruiting Program. For companies that do not have a recruiting relationship with Bryant, or do not provide the Center with literature, simply call the company and request literature prior to your interview. If the company has a web site, this would be an ideal place to gather information.

Your research on the company should go beyond the "company literature" to newspaper articles, annual reports, trade journals and major business directories. Your awareness of the position, company, and industry will put you at a distinct advantage over the candidate who fails to do his/her homework on the company. The fully informed candidate has demonstrated to the employer his/her commitment to securing a position in the company. **Vault.com** is an excellent site for in-depth information on a company.

Lastly, whenever possible, obtain an insider's view of the company or specific position by talking with people who work there. **The Alumni Career Link** is a valuable online database of alumni who can share career information. You can access the site from the Career Center's website.

# TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

## SCREENING INTERVIEW:

Most first interviews are considered screening interviews. On-campus interviews are always screening interviews and generally last 30-45 minutes in length. The goal of the employer in a screening interview is to narrow the field of candidates. The screening interviewer usually does not have the final say in the hiring process, but certainly can reject you in the initial stage. Thus, be as prepared as possible and make a solid first impression.

At times, an objective rating system is used in the screening process. An example of this is the behavioral interviewing system, whereby candidates are asked to describe situations from their past that highlight particular behaviors that the employer values. For instance, an employer has decided that they are seeking the following attributes in their candidates: self-control, goal orientation, adaptability, verbal skills and interpersonal skills. The employer will probe the candidate for behavioral examples of these attributes. See examples of "Traditional" and "Behavioral" interview questions at the end of this booklet.

## SELECTION INTERVIEW:

Most often called the "second" or "site" interview, this interview can last anywhere from one hour to an entire day. Be prepared to be interviewed by a manager and/or potentially your direct supervisor. It is also possible that you may be interviewed by more than one person at a time. The questioning during a selection interview tends to be more in-depth and it is likely that you may be asked the same questions by different people during the course of the interviewing process. The goal is to be consistent, yet fresh with your answers. Also, do not be afraid to show your personality. The employer is looking for a fit between your style of operating and the company's culture.

## TIPS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

- ✓ Review "Sample Questions Asked by Employers" (in this booklet) and be prepared to answer questions about yourself, the position, the company and how all three relate to one another.
- ✓ Prepare a few questions to ask the employer. These questions will highlight your level of interest in the position and also imply the level of research you have done on the position and company. See "Sample Questions to Ask Interviewers" in this booklet.
- ✓ Do not ask questions regarding salary or benefits until you have been issued an offer of employment.
- ✓ However, you may respond to such questions, if they are asked of you. Be sure you have done your research to know what you are worth and what salary range to give an employer, if asked.
- ✓ Purchase at least two professional looking, classically-styled suits. Do not purchase a suit that may be perceived as trendy. Women should avoid short skirts. In terms of color, men generally wear navy or gray, while women have more flexibility and can wear most colors, as long as they are not flashy. Shoes should match or complement the suit. Keep jewelry, make-up, perfume and cologne subtle.
- ✓ Arrive for your interview 15 minutes earlier than expected. Tardiness is not acceptable. If you cannot keep the interview appointment due to unforeseen circumstances, call the employer to explain your circumstances and reschedule. **\*See the Career Center's cancellation policy with regard to the Corporate Recruiting Program.**

## THE INTERVIEW

- ✓ **Offer a firm handshake.** Make good eye contact and remember to smile. Be prepared to respond to small talk - the interviewer is trying to establish rapport and put you at ease. Be friendly, show your personality, and demonstrate your interest in the position. Take your cues from the interviewer. Above all, be yourself, within the bounds of professional behavior.
- ✓ **Answer questions directly.** Avoid both one word responses and long, rambling explanations. Give concise examples to illustrate your points. Listen carefully and request clarification from the interviewer if you do not understand a question. Do not interrupt, use slang or profanity. Avoid repetitive phrases such as, "you know". In a group interview situation, direct your comments to all and always maintain eye contact with some member of the group.
- ✓ **Remember, interviewing is about selling yourself** - get your message across to the employer. Your message should always be defined by your ability to meet the company's needs. Be prepared to discuss what you have to offer and how this meets the employer's requirements. Make this connection for the interviewer throughout the conversation. As stated previously, give concrete examples from past experiences to highlight skills and achievements. Stay positive! Avoid negative comments about yourself and about others. Always highlight the positive aspects of past experiences.
- ✓ **The interview is a two-way exchange of information.** By the end of the interview, you should be aware of the job responsibilities, possible career paths that may be available and finally about whether the job is a good match for you. Close the interview by reiterating your interest in the position and inquire as to when you can expect to hear from the company. Remember to ask for a business card if one is not offered, to be used for appropriate information in your thank you letter.

## TIPS AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- ✓ Send a thank you note, letter or e-mail to the interviewer (s), expressing your continued interest in the position and summarizing your qualifications for the job. Highlight something unique about yourself that may help the interviewer remember you. See the Career Center's "Employment Letters" handout for more information.
- ✓ Keep accurate records of your phone calls, letters, interview dates and any other contact made with the company. Always follow-up with a phone call, if you have not heard from the company in the time frame that they stipulated.
- ✓ Review what went well for you in the interview and what did not go well. Focus on the good points and prepare for the next interview.

**Tip →: Attend an "Interviewing for Success" workshop offered by the Amica Center for Career Education for more interviewing strategies.**

# MARKETABLE SKILLS

-Selling Points-

## PLANNING/ORGANIZATION

- Generate ideas
- Initiate projects
- Identify problems and needs
- Make and keep a schedule
- Schedule/coordinate operations
- Set realistic goals
- Set priorities
- Develop efficient systems

## DETAIL/FOLLOW THROUGH

- Follow through on plans
- Get projects done on time
- Handle many tasks at once
- Work under pressure
- Collect materials, purchasing
- Accurate memory for details
- Be orderly/organized

## WORKING WITH NUMBERS

- Manage money
- Keep financial records
- Be exact and accurate
- Develop and follow a budget
- Prepare financial reports
- Use math or statistics to answer questions
- Use computers to calculate and analyze

## RESEARCH/INVESTIGATION

- Identify appropriate information sources
- Survey, interview, gather information
- Organize information
- Analyze information

## COMMUNICATION

- Speak effectively to individuals
- Speak effectively to groups
- Think on your feet
- Persuade, convince, promote, sell
- Define, explain, interpret
- Translate/interpret language
- Summarize/write clearly and concisely
- Use media to present ideas creatively
- Teach/train
- Critique, edit, proofread
- Write creatively

## INTERPERSONAL

- Relate well to public
- Listen/understand feelings of others
- Work well on a team
- Deal patiently with difficult people
- Accept differing opinions
- Express feelings appropriately
- Advise/counsel/encourage
- Use tact, diplomacy, discretion

## LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

- Take initiative
- Work without supervision
- Make decisions
- Take risks
- Organize others to achieve a goal
- Supervise others
- Mediate/negotiate

## ADDITIONAL

- Knowledge of computer languages & software
- Persistence

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

### **TRADITIONAL**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work here?
- What interests you most about this position?
- Why should I hire you? What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Are you willing to relocate? To travel?
- How long do you expect to stay with the company?
- What qualifications do you have for this job?
- Tell me about your internship (job, extracurricular activity).
- Why did you choose Bryant University?
- How did you choose your major or concentration?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What college subjects did you like best? Why? Least? Why?
- What are your short-range and long-range goals?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- What are the most important rewards you expect from a business career?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- How has your college experience prepared you for this job?
- What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- What do you know about our company?
- Do you have plans for continued study? Why?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate companies?
- How do you work under pressure?
- Do you have a geographical preference?

### **BEHAVIORAL**

- How would you respond to this scenario? (Interviewer invents a situation that could happen on the job)
- Name a problem you have encountered and tell how you dealt with it.
- Tell me about a time when you made something happen.
- Talk about a time when you failed at something.
- Share a time you had to compromise over something you really believed in.
- Tell me about a conflict you have had with someone in authority and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a group or team and how you handled it.
- Give me an example of when you felt you were able to motivate others.
- Give me an example of an important goal you set, and tell me about your success in reaching that goal.
- Describe the worst customer or coworker you have ever had, and tell me how you dealt with him/her.
- Describe the most creative work-related project you have ever completed.

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWERS**

Here is a list of sample questions which are appropriate to ask an interviewer. Using these general guidelines, generate your own questions based on the position you are applying for, the research you've done on the company, and your own curiosity.

- What is the potential growth of your organization?
- What is the organizational structure and how does this position fit into the organization?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- What is the typical career path for someone in this position?
- Is this a newly created position?
- Is there a job description for this position?
- What is the normal routine of a ..... like?
- Who would evaluate my work?
- Does the company endorse promotion from within?
- What opportunities are there to transfer to other departments?
- Typically, how often does one relocate?
- What skills have you found to be valuable in this job?
- Does your company encourage professional development? Tuition benefits?
- Would it be possible to speak to someone who currently holds this position?
- What is the work environment like?
- What are the housing arrangements and economic conditions of the general area?
- Will it be possible to meet the person who will be supervising me?
- What do you view as the most positive aspect of the organization? Least positive?
- How soon may I expect to hear from you?
- Can I provide you with any other information to help you in the decision-making process?
- How do you think I would fit into your organization?
- How much travel is involved?
- Will I be exposed to other job functions?
- How much visibility does the position have?
- What is the turnover rate in the company?

## **QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC FIELDS/PROGRAMS**

- About how many individuals are accepted into this program each year?
- Are there new product lines that will be announced soon?
- At the end of the training program, does one have input as to where he/she will relocate?
- How many of last year's graduates are still in the training program?
- Who are some of your company's clients?
- Do salespeople work on commission?
- What is the probability of a salesperson moving into management? Within how many years?
- As a salesperson, does commission start with the first dollar sold?
- Is the territory newly established?
- It is possible to spend a day on the road with a salesperson?
- Does your firm tend to work with a particular type of client?

# CONSIDER A MOCK INTERVIEW!

**What is it?** A Mock Interview is your opportunity to improve your interviewing skills before actually interviewing for a real position. Students and alumni use this service offered by the Career Center to experience the interview process and then get immediate feedback regarding their strengths as well as areas they may want to work on.

**How does it work?** All you need is a current resume and an hour of your time. Make an appointment with the Career Center. We will accommodate your schedule. On the day of your mock interview, arrive 10 minutes early with a current resume; (professional dress is optional if you wish to have your attire critiqued). A career professional will interview you for approximately 20 minutes while you are also videotaped.

Once the interview is completed, you will have the opportunity to view the videotape and discuss with the career professional how you did. Many students find the videotape helpful in seeing what they need to change or improve about their appearance, body language, answers to questions, etc.

**How should I prepare?** A great way to prepare for a mock interview is to attend one of the Career Center's Interviewing for Success workshops. They are offered several times each semester and you can find them on the BCC calendar on the Career Center's website.

**Can I do more than one?** You can do as many mock interviews as you like. Some students like to have more than one experience to get comfortable with the interviewing process before venturing out into their job search. ***Make an appointment today!***

## INTERVIEWING RESOURCES IN OUR CAREER RESOURCE LIBRARY

A Foot in the Door

Ace the Technical Interview

Case in Point

Ditch the Flip-Flops

Fearless Interviewing

How to Interview Like a Top MBA

The Quick Interview & Salary Negotiation Book

Interview Power: Selling Yourself Face to Face

Competence-Based Employment Interviewing

Knock 'em Dead 2004

Killer Interviews

Mastering the Job Interview

Mastering the Case Interview

Naked at the Interview

Savvy Interviewing

Interview for Success

Sweaty Palms

The Interview Rehearsal Book

***Sign one out today!***

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[www.collegegrad.com/intv/](http://www.collegegrad.com/intv/)

[www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html)