

Interviews: Procedures and Techniques

WHEN YOU APPLY for a job, you submit an application or résumé, detailing your skills, education, and experience. It is difficult for an employer to choose an applicant based solely on that information. Generally, an employer needs to meet the applicant in an interview to look for that “something extra” that sets him or her apart from other applicants. You have to find a way to “market” yourself to make the interviewer believe you are the best person for the job. In this unit, you will learn more about the interview process and the procedures and techniques that will help you earn the job you want.



Objective:



Describe the job search processes.

Key Terms:



deselect

interviewer

job interview

job seeker

panel/group interview

screening interview

simulations

situation interview

social interview

structured interview

video conference

Understanding the Job Search Process

Being interviewed for a job can be a nerve-wracking experience. You want to make a good impression, but that can be difficult if you are nervous. It is beneficial to practice the procedures and techniques commonly used in interviews to be prepared when you are interviewed by a potential employer.

DESELECTION

Some job openings generate several potential employees, while others draw thousands of candidates. It is difficult for the employer to choose one person to hire when there are so many applicants. Therefore, each step of the job search process will **deselect**, or remove from consideration, some candidates.

Steps

The steps of the process usually include a letter of interest, an application or résumé, interviews (which may include screening and structured interviews), and the follow up after the interview.

Reasons

The reasons for deselection vary. Candidates whose skills, aptitudes, and abilities may not meet the job requirements will be removed from consideration. Likewise, the job description may call for a certain amount of education or training. If the job requires a college degree or two years of experience, the employer will discard any applications that do not meet those requirements. Also, candidates may be excluded if their interpersonal skills do not mesh with the company needs or with the current work team.

Other job candidates may be deselected based on their interview performance. Poor interview skills, problems in the past, or a failure to make a connection with the interviewer may lead to the deselection of an applicant. In addition, the candidate may be excluded if he or she fails to follow up after the interview.

Subjectivity

There may be numerous qualified candidates who apply for each job. Once their qualifications are confirmed, the process becomes more subjective. Interviewers believe they make connections with the people who are right for the jobs for which they are applying. In other words, employers want to hire people with whom they “click.” As a job seeker, you have opportunities throughout the interview process to stand out from the pool of candidates if you understand the process, prepare for each step, and present yourself enthusiastically.

JOB INTERVIEWS

Job interviews vary at different types of companies and for various positions. A **job interview** is a process in which a person authorized to hire personnel for a company communicates with a potential employee (job seeker). The **job seeker** is a person who has the necessary qualifications to meet the requirements for the available job opening in the company.

Stakeholders (people who are invested in or have an interest in a business, industry, etc.) are always involved in the interview process. The **interviewer** is an employee who is authorized

to screen and/or hire new employees. He or she communicates the needs of the company and attempts to match the job description and interpersonal requirements with the available candidates. In contrast, the job seeker/candidate/applicant is a person who communicates the desire to work for a company when applying for an employment opportunity and engaging in the interview procedure.

There are several types of interviews: screening, structured, social, panel/group, situation, and video conference. The numerous types are used for various purposes and situations.

Screening Interview

The **screening interview** is a prescreening of the larger applicant pool to narrow job seekers to a few candidates who meet the job description and the company's needs. The smaller group is forwarded to the person authorized to hire for a structured interview. This interview may involve a face-to-face meeting with personnel or lower management, or it may involve a telephone or videoconference to assess skill levels for the job opening.

Structured Interview

The **structured interview** is a one-on-one meeting between the interviewer and the job seeker. The interviewer tries to assess competencies, skills, and training of the job seeker to meet the requirements of the job description. Then the interviewer attempts to match qualified job seekers with current employees who will work with the new hire, with the goal of building a strong team. An interviewer tends to hire job seekers with whom he or she feels personally connected during the job interview.

Social Interview

The **social interview** is a meeting that takes place when the job seeker and the interviewer meet in a social situation. The interviewer and job seeker converse, assess mutual goals, and move forward to the more formal interview process. Sometimes the interview comes with a meal. Regardless, the interviewer assesses the candidate's job skills, training, and experiences, as well as his or her social skills.



FIGURE 1. A social interview may include a meal where the interviewer will assess the job seeker's job skills, training, experience, and social skills.

Panel/Group Interview

The **panel/group interview** is a meeting with two or more people, working as a coordinated team, who ask a series of questions. The group generally covers multiple departments.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Mind Your Manners

Social interviews can be nerve-racking experiences. The interviewer will be evaluating your job skills and the responses you give. But you also will make an impression with your table manners. You have to remind yourself to speak clearly and concisely. In addition, you must keep your elbows off the table and remember not to talk with your mouth full. It is a lot to think about.

You can ease your nerves by practicing before an interview. Visit the following website to review the tips on interview etiquette. Then practice by having a “mock interview” with a friend during a meal. If you have access to a video recorder, you can review the interview. Use the website tips to critique your own behaviors and manners. You also could ask a parent or friend to observe your practice interview and point out any slips in etiquette. When you are confident in your social skills, you will be more confident in your interview.

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/interviewdining.htm>

As a result, various stakeholders generally are involved, such as co-workers, supervisors, and personnel.

Situation Interview

The **situation interview** is a meeting that provides the job seeker with behavioral problems to assess how he or she would react/respond to typical or stressful job-related situations. **Simulations** are case studies, situational tests, or skill demonstrations. In a work station observation, an interviewer may observe the applicant’s interaction in an actual work situation to assess his or her interpersonal skills. For instance, the interviewer may spend an hour in a child care teacher’s classroom.

Video Conference

In some cases, interviewers may request a video conference. A **video conference** is a meeting that requires a job seeker to go to a predetermined location to interview on a camera or on a computer. This method reduces long-distance costs (e.g., travel, hotel accommodations, and food) for companies and job seekers. Yet because of technological glitches, it is essential to research camera-related issues in advance.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE WORKER TRAITS

Employers look for certain characteristics for specific jobs. As a potential employee, you should demonstrate that your training, skills, and abilities meet the requirements of the job description. Employers will try to determine whether your interpersonal skills would be a good fit with the current team. Therefore, emphasize your experience and ideas that are related

to the business earning profits. When ideas work, business should increase and costs should decrease.

As job seeker, you may be deselected in the first five minutes of the job interview if you display a poor or inappropriate appearance or poor hygiene. This includes strong odors, such as smoke or too much perfume.

Body Language

Interviewers will watch your body language to see if you seem uninterested or unenergetic. So avoid dull facial expressions, and do not slump in your chair. In addition, a poor handshake is viewed as a negative trait. A voice that is too loud or too quiet is also seen as a negative. Other negative traits are skill levels that are below company standards—in education, skills, abilities, and/or experience.

Interpersonal Skills

Poor interpersonal skills also make a negative impression. A lack of confidence and too much confidence are negatives, too. In addition, an I-focused rather than a team-focused attitude is a negative. If the job seeker controls the interview and talks too much or if he or she gives short and incomplete answers, it is deemed to be negative.

JOB CHOICES AND QUALITY OF LIFE

A job interview may impact all parts of your life, especially the six areas of a quality life. A typical structured interview is a 60-minute exchange, but that hour will affect your job choices. You can remember the six areas of a quality life by using the acronym Very Excellent PIES. The letters stand for the vocational, ethical, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social parts of your life.

Vocational

A job salary financially impacts your standard and level of living. Skills, aptitudes, and abilities may be suitable for a specific career development path. This could be the difference between a job versus a step in a career ladder toward goals or future advancement opportunities.

Ethical

The “E” stands for the ethical/moral/spiritual part of your life. A job and company should coincide with your standards of ethical business behavior and ways of dealing with others in business practices.

Physical

“P” stands for physical. The job should promote health, good nutrition, low stress, and physical activity.

Intellectual

The job should expand your knowledge or provide the opportunity to expand your knowledge and training.

Emotional

The emotional part of your life is another area. You may love or hate going to work. Feelings about work-related accomplishments and stress levels impact how you feel emotionally.

Social

As an employee, you will have interpersonal relationships with co-workers, customers, and supervisors. You should know if the position requires working individually or in a team setting. The work environment should be suitable to the applicant’s personality and desires.

Summary:



Each step of the job search process deselects, or removes from consideration, some candidates. The steps include a letter of interest, an application, a résumé, interviews, and follow up. There are several different types of interviews, including screening, structured, social, panel/group, and situational. Employers seek positive worker traits, such as skills related to the job and interpersonal skills. Likewise, they may deselect a candidate based on negative worker traits, such as inappropriate appearance or poor interpersonal skills. Job choices impact the six areas of a quality life: vocational, ethical, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social. Consider how those areas will be affected when making choices about your job.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are the steps of the job search process?
2. What are the types of interviews?
3. How does a social interview differ from the other types?
4. What are some reasons a job seeker may be deselected from the interview process?
5. What are the six areas of a quality life that are impacted by your job choice?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Speak with a person who routinely conducts job interviews. Find out what types of interviews he or she uses most often. How many interviews does an applicant have before a job offer is made? Inquire about the sequence of the interviews. For example, is the screening interview first, followed by a panel interview, or is the second interview typically a social interview? You should find out how long the typical interview lasts and how long the whole hiring process is, from advertising the job opening to hiring a candidate.

Web Links:



Acing the Interview

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/aceinterview.htm>

How to Get a Second Interview

<http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/03/08/how-to-get-a-second-interview>

Job Interview Types

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobinterviewtypes/tp/jobinterviewtypes.htm>

Panel Interview

http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2000_12_15/noDOI.13270463381342766512

Screening Interview

<http://www.money-zine.com/Definitions/Career-Dictionary/Screening-Interview/>