

Interviewing Tips

Business Career Center | 114 Business Building | careerconnections.smeal.psu.edu

Prepare:

- Research the company and the position
- Prepare the questions you are going to ask in the interview
- Confirm the time, place, directions and parking for the appointment

The Day of the Interview

- Wear business professional attire
- Bring several copies of your resume printed on professional paper
- Bring a padfolio and 2 pens
- Turn your cell phone completely off (not on vibrate)
- Arrive 15 minutes early

Upon Arrival

- Greet the employer with a firm handshake. If you encounter a receptionist, treat the receptionist with the same level of respect
- Be enthusiastic, smile, and stand with confident posture

During the Interview

- Be prepared to answer the question "Tell me about yourself"
- Answer behavioral based questions ("Tell me a time when...") using the STARR format
- Answer all questions succinctly and confidently
- Ask several questions at the end of the interview to truly find out if the company and position are a good fit for your career goals
- Have a strong close; thank the interviewer for taking the time to interview you and reiterate your interest in the job and think your skills would be an asset to the company
- Ask what the next steps are and when you should expect to hear
- Ask for a business card!

After the Interview

- Send a thank you email or handwritten thank you note
- If you didn't hear anything in the specified time, call/email to follow up on the status

Virtual Interviewing Tips:

- Do not wait until last minute to ensure technology works properly
- Prepare for the interview the same you would for an in-person interview
- Dress in business professional attire
- Look at the camera, not the screen – ensure the camera shows you straight-on so you aren't looking up or down at the camera
- Make sure there are no distractions in the background (posters, clutter, clothes, etc.)
- You can reserve interview space in the Business Career Center, Bank of America Career Services, the Penn State Library
- Ensure you have proper lighting and test the camera and mic before starting interview
- Make sure you have a reliable internet connection
- If you are given additional attempts, still take the first attempt seriously
- Try not to fidget, it is more noticeable on camera
- Be clear and concise
- Utilize InterviewStream as resource to practice virtual interviews

Behavioral Based Interviews:

("Tell me about a time when")

Answer all behavioral based interviews using the STARR method – be specific!

- **Situation:** Describe the situation
- **Task:** Describe what you were trying to achieve
- **Action:** Describe the steps YOU took to resolve the situation
- **Result:** Discuss what happened or what the result was
- **Reflection:** What is the takeaway or what did you learn

Areas you will likely be asked about (those in bold are especially popular):

Leadership–Teamwork–Overcoming Failure–Customer Service/Difficult People–Communication–Problem Solving/Analytical Skills–Prioritizing/Time Management–Adaptability–Handling Challenges–Motivating/Inspiring Others–Goal Setting–Dealing with Stress–Delegating

Case Interviewing Tips

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What is a case interview?

- Individuals are presented with information (a case) and asked to analyze, synthesize and articulate a solution

What is the objective of a case interview?

- It is to demonstrate a logical thought process and present a relevant recommendation for the client, it is not to determine the “right answer”

What is tested during a case interview?

- Candidates are evaluated on how well they understand the given information, analyze the problem and recommend a solution under pressure. While problem-solving is the primary skill tested, consulting firms are equally concerned with evaluating self-confidence and interpersonal skills.

How are case interviews structured?

- Cases will either be presented orally or in written format. First round case interviews are typically 30 minutes, and then you will have 5-10 minutes to listen or read the case and make notes. From here you will start to ask questions and analyze the problem. Finally, you will present your conclusions and make a recommendation. Second round case interviews may last an hour and will typically be more exhaustive.

12 Steps to Ace the Case

1. Listen to the question and take notes
2. Summarize the question
3. Verify the objective(s) and ask clarifying questions
4. Organize your answer by utilizing a framework
5. Present your analysis verbally to demonstrate logical thought process
6. Present logical conclusions that flow from your analysis and make recommendation
7. Manage your time
8. Utilize numbers and demonstrate you are comfortable with numbers
9. Be coachable
10. Be creative and brainstorm
11. Exude enthusiasm and a positive attitude
12. Bring closure and summarize

Types of cases/questions

- Entering a New Market
- Industry Analysis
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Developing a New Product
- Pricing Strategies
- Growth Strategies
- Starting a New Business
- Competitive Response
- Reducing Costs

Tools & Frameworks

- BCG Matrix
- Porter's Five Forces
- The 4 C's
- The 4 P's
- Contribution Analysis
- Market Sizing and Segmentation
- Operation Concepts
- Profitability Framework
- Improving the Profits/Bottom Line