

YOUR INTERVIEW

The interview is your optimal opportunity to distinguish yourself from other candidates and there is always room to improve. Preparation is the key to minimizing interview anxiety and maximizing performance. We encourage you to leverage the many opportunities at Yale SOM to participate in mock interviews, both formally with the CDO Coaches and Career Advisors, and among your friends and classmates.

Industry & Company Research

You will learn a lot about an organization during the interview like whether the structure and culture are a good fit for you. This is not the time to learn basic information about the company so make sure you are prepared. Researching employers is one of the best ways to become a stand-out candidate during the hiring process. Here are tips for researching companies before the interview:

- **Visit the company website** - Here, you can review the organization's mission statement and history, products and services, and management, as well as information about the company culture and values.
- **Browse Social Media** - Check the company's social media accounts. Visit their Facebook, Google+, Instagram, and Twitter pages. Like or follow the company to get updates.
- **Use LinkedIn** - Company profiles are a good way to find, at a glance, more information on a company you're interested in. You'll be able to see your connections at the company, new hires, promotions, jobs posted, related companies, and company statistics. Also use LinkedIn to research your interviewers.
- **Use Google and Google News** - Search both Google and Google News for the company name. You may find out that the company is expanding into Asia, for instance, or received a round of start-up funding. Or, you may find out that a recent product underperformed or had to be recalled. This knowledge can help shape your responses to interview questions.
- **Tap your Connections** - Do you know someone who works at the organization? Ask for a quick informational call to learn more about the company's career trajectory, culture and more.
- **Get to know the industry** - As well as researching the company, it makes sense to review the overall industry. Visit the CDO website and use industry pages for research through Firsthand/Vault guides.

Interest Questions - Interviewers are trying to gauge your interest in the role, passion for the opportunity, and fit with the organization. These are typically the first questions you'll get in an interview.

Examples:

- Walk me through your resume.
- Why are you interested in this organization?
- What excites you about this role?

Approach: Interviewers looking for passion, focus and depth of industry knowledge. Emphasize the experience, skills, and education that relate directly to the role for which you are interviewing.

Preparation: Company research should include: products/services, basic financials, news, and deals. Industry research should cover competitive landscape and trends. Identify alumni and personal contacts within the organization to facilitate informational conversations to capture additional thoughts and insight on both the industry and organization.

Behavioral Questions - Most interviews are behavioral questions, using a style of questioning meant to gauge your behavior in past or hypothetical situations to assess your soft and hard skills, judgment, professional maturity, and fit for a particular role.

Examples:

- Describe a time when you were part of a difficult team? What was the situation? What role did you play? How did you handle it? And, what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a situation where you were able to find a new and better way of doing something.
- What was the most difficult decision you've ever had to make?

Approach: Use Situation – Action – Result framework to communicate Accomplishment Stories

- **Situation:** Describe the situation giving a brief description of the circumstances you faced
- **Action:** Describe the action you took to address it, including analysis, decision making, resources employed, and steps taken
- **Result:** Describe results obtained. Be as specific and quantitative as possible, though results can also be qualitative

Technical Questions - The purpose of the technical interview is to evaluate your level of knowledge or skill in the topic areas relevant to the position for which you're being considered. While the level of difficulty of questions vary from firm to firm, you may be quizzed on technical questions in at least one round.

Examples:

- Sell me on your quantitative skills.
- Say you knew a company's net income. How would you figure out its cashflows?
- We are having trouble managing our _____ division. What do you think are the key performance metrics and how might you go about improving them?

Approach and Preparation: Tap into appropriate CDO and club resources, Career Advisors and sessions for best practices and approaches to technical questions in your industry. Speak to Second Year students who have worked with or interviewed with the organization before. Don't be afraid to ask the recruiter what to expect.

Preparing for Case Interviews – One specific technical interview is a case interview. This type of interview is common when recruiting for consulting and marketing positions but increasingly being incorporated in many other industries. Such interviews put candidates in hypothetical situations, have you solve business problems and test your ability to function under pressure. These interviews assess your thinking and communication more than your answer.

Case-Interview Styles:

- **Open-Ended Cases:** The interviewer gives you a sentence or two of information, and then expects you to run with only that information and your own assumptions.
- **More Structured Cases:** The interviewer gives you information, and then proceeds to guide you through the problem-solving process.
- **Paper-Driven Cases:** You're handed a "deck" of information, and the interviewer sometimes leaves the room while you pore over the text and graphs contained in the deck. You then prepare a brief analysis, presenting it when the interviewer returns.

Case Interviews are often used to assess the following skills:

- Listening skills
- Analytical and problem solving skills
- Ability to manage ambiguity
- Ability to organize information and create recommendations
- Ability to maintain professional poise under pressure
- Business judgement
- Intellectual curiosity
- Enthusiasm

5 Step Approach to Guide your Response:

1. Understand the issue; ask clarifying questions as needed
2. Identify the underlying assumptions
3. Summarize key issues and findings
4. State your recommendations
5. Outline next steps and expected results/impacts

YOUR INTERVIEW RESOURCES:

- Exponent - Interactive, skill-based platform that helps students prepare for technology case interviewing.
- Firsthand – Find industry guides, career guides and employer profiles. To access, see <https://yale.firsthand.co/>
- Rocketblocks – An interactive, skills-based platform that helps students prepare for case interviews. Follow Your Interview Resources link above for access code.
- Vmock: ElevatorPitch - Provides a platform for practicing your story and interview skills with AI analysis of your speech patterns, posture, content, and more. Log into Vmock with your @yale.edu account.
- Wall Street Prep - Provides a catalog of online finance prep courses, such as self-study Excel, financial modeling, and technical interview prep courses.
- Student Professional Clubs (*if applicable*) and Career Advisors for industry/function specific

Questions for the Interviewer – Questions for your interviewer demonstrate interest in the role, knowledge of the industry and organization, and can provide information to further determine cultural fit. They fall into 5 categories:

1. About the job or role
2. About the organization and culture
3. About industry trends and impact of current events
4. About the manager and team
5. About feedback and timeline (next steps)

Approach and Preparation: Plan 3 – 4 questions for each interviewer you meet, though you may not get to ask them all. The best questions are customized and specific based on your knowledge of the industry, company, and interviewer. The samples provided below, while generic, can be tailored effectively for most interview situations. Also, be sure to ask questions about next steps in the process at the end of your interview.

Post-Interview Communication: Thank You Notes

- Thank you notes are an essential part of the interview process. They reinforce a strong first impression, strengthen your relationship with the recruiter, and summarize your key strengths. The thank you note also gives you an opportunity to speak to any points not covered in the interview.

Important Tips:

- Send note in a timely manner after the interview, preferably within 24 hours of your meeting
- Thank individual for their time and consideration
- Reiterate your interest in the organization, the key components of your candidacy, and briefly restate how you can contribute
- Use email - it's quickest and can easily be attached to any electronic files on your candidacy
- If you were interviewed by more than one person, send a personalized note to each interviewer referencing the particular conversation you shared

Post- Interview Thank You Note Example:

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning about the Summer Associate position in the Supply Chain department at Whole Foods. My interest in the position has grown after our conversation about the highly innovative ways in which your team is overcoming the challenges of increasing transportation costs. I am confident that my experience as an Operations Analyst at UPS, as well as my success in increasing profits through better inventory management at our campus eatery "Food for Thought," has prepared me well to contribute to your team this summer. I look forward to the next steps in the interview process and hope to hear from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Post-Interview Communication: Outreach

- If you have not heard back from the organization about next steps or a hiring decision within the timeframe established, you may want to reach out to your main contact within the guidelines below.

One week after decision timeframe: Outreach to main contact is appropriate

Ten days after decision timeframe: Leverage your network within the organization (including LinkedIn contacts), to capture intelligence on process

Two weeks after decision timeframe: Outreach to main contact is appropriate

Important Tips:

- Don't exceed more than two outreach attempts to main contact
- Keep inquiries about process as opposed to decision
- Feel free to forward articles or other material relevant to previous interactions as part of outreach

Post-Interview Outreach Example:

Dear Joe,

I hope this message finds you well after the holiday and that your Board Meeting after our last conversation was productive! I wanted to touch base to see if there might be anything else I can send you; I remain tremendously interested in your organization's Executive Program Director position, and I would be happy to share references or provide you with anything else that may be helpful.

Thank you again for your consideration. I truly hope to hear from you with good news about next steps.

Best regards,

Jane Smith

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

- Tell me about a challenging situation you faced.
- Describe a time when you were part of a particularly difficult team. What was the situation? What role did you play? How did you handle it? And, what was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you successfully worked within a team. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about the last time you had to take the initiative to move a project forward. What happened?
- Tell me how you reacted to feedback on one of your projects/responsibilities that wasn't going as well as others had expected. Who was providing the feedback?
- What have been your major successes and accomplishments? How did you achieve those?
- What is your major weakness (or an area of development)? Another one?
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem at work.
- Describe a time when you have had to influence the actions or decisions of more senior people, yet did not have the authority to dictate the behavior. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a leadership role you have played in an event, meeting, presentation, or project, when everything did not go as planned. How did you handle it? What was the outcome? What did you learn from this experience? What might you do differently next time?
- What was the most difficult decision you've ever had to make?
- Discuss a major setback that you have had to overcome.
- Describe a problem/situation where you had to seek out and prioritize relevant information. How did you define key issues, decide which steps to take to achieve the desired results, and gain approval to implement them?
- Tell me about a time when you have successfully resolved a conflict. What was your role in the situation? How did you handle it?
- Give me an example where you sought out a problem to solve because it represented a challenge for you.
- What motivates you?
- Give me an example of a creative or innovative idea you have had recently. What was the context? What made your idea innovative? What did you do with this idea? Where does it stand today?
- How do you stay abreast of industry/functional news?
- Describe a project in which you went beyond what was expected of you.
- Give me an example of how you assessed a situation and achieved good results by focusing on the most important priorities. How did you determine what the priorities were? What was your strategy and plan to achieve the desired outcome?
- Tell me your biggest regret.
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Questions about the Role

- What types of skills do you NOT already have on board that you're looking to fill with a new hire?
- Thinking back to the person who you've seen perform most effectively in this role, what made their performance so outstanding?
- What are the most immediate challenges of the position that need to be addressed in the first three months?
- What are the opportunities for progression and increased responsibility within the organization?
- Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to within the company?
- How often can I expect to relocate during the initial years of employment with your organization?

Questions about the Organization

- What do you consider to be your firm's most important assets?
- What are a few things that really drive results for the company?
- What is the background of most middle and senior level personnel?
- Could you describe your company's management style and the type of employee who fits well with it?
- What would you say is the most important aspect of your company culture?
- Are there any company-sponsored social events such as a company softball or golf league in place?
- What kind of partnerships does your organization have with others in the community?
- I'm anxious to get active in the local community. Is this something that you encourage?

Questions about/for Manager

- Can you please tell me how your career has developed at this organization? Would someone entering the firm today have similar opportunities?
- What tangible and intangible qualities attracted you to the company?
- What excites you about coming into work?
- What do you appreciate the most about your company/organization?
- If you could change one thing about this organization or department, what would you change?
- How would you describe your management style?
- Can you explain how you let someone take a project and run with it?
- What are the various ways employees communicate with one another to carry out their work?
- How and by whom will my performance be reviewed? Are there specific criteria upon which I would be evaluated?
- How frequently is formal and informal review given to new employees?

Questions about Team

- What are the long- and short-term goals of the department?
- What have been the department's successes in the last couple of years?
- How are teams assembled? How are team members selected? What are the selection criteria?
- How are your teams structured?
- What kinds of processes are in place to help teams work collaboratively?
- How much freedom and support is provided to mentor and consult with colleagues?



Questions about Feedback and Next Steps

- Is there anything you'd like me to clarify or explain in more detail?
- Do you have any specific concerns about my candidacy I can address?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- Who I should follow up with about next steps?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- May I contact you if any further questions arise?
- Would you like a list of references?

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Practice using Zoom, Skype or other designated platform if you're not familiar with it.** Your first virtual experience can be awkward. Set up time with a friend to become comfortable with the experience and ensure your technical components are in order.
- **Look at the camera, not the screen.** The only way to maintain eye contact with your interviewer is by looking at the camera. It can feel a bit counterintuitive, so practice ahead of time!
- **De-clutter your surroundings.** When you decide where you're going to take your virtual call, make sure the area is clear of personal items and clutter. A simple backdrop is ideal.
- **Consider lighting.** Natural lighting or a lamp aimed at your face from *behind* the computer screen are most effective. Light coming from behind you will darken your face and light from above will cast distracting shadows.
- **Dress as you would for a live interview.** Avoid stripes and small patterns, as they can appear "messy" on a computer screen. And if your background is white, avoid light colored clothing.
- **Eliminate potential noise and distractions.** Consider employing a pet sitter if you are home and have a dog prone to barking. If you have roommates, let them know when your call is taking place.
- **Have a copy of your resume, paper, and pen.** You'll want to refer to your resume at some point in the conversation. Also, be prepared to take notes as needed, but stay focused on the call.
- **Have a "pleasantry in your pocket."** Know ahead of time how you'll greet the interviewer when the call begins. For instance, "Hi Ann, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today."
- **Keep your energy up.** Smile through the call. Everyone's energy has a tendency to wane over the course of a virtual interview, so be sure to work at keeping yours consistently high.

PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Use a land line.** This will cut the odds of a dropped call to a minimum.
- **Consider dressing as you would for a live interview.** This will help boost your energy and move the call closer to a face-to-face experience.
- **Eliminate potential noise and distractions.** Find a quiet place to make your call, free of pet and street noise. Be sure to let roommates know about your call to avoid any interruptions.
- **Have a copy of your resume, paper, and pen.** Your interviewer will almost always refer to it during your conversation, and you'll want it handy. Be ready to take notes as needed.
- **Have access to the internet.** Though you want to give your full attention to your interviewer, you may want to begin the call with the organization's website open as well as another window with a browser of your choice. Never let the interviewer hear you typing—you may want to invest in a quiet keyboard.
- **Answer the call with your name.** This will minimize the chances for awkward beginnings. In addition, know how you will greet the interviewer ahead of time. For instance, "Hello, John, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today."
- **Smile and maximize your energy.** Your voice loses about half its energy over transmission. Smiling boosts your energy levels. Don't be afraid to convey your enthusiasm by overcompensating.
- **Listen carefully and slow your cadence.** Without being able to see the cues of the interviewer's body language, you need to listen very carefully for tone and inflection. Leave a brief pause before responding to avoid "cutting off" the interviewer. Slowing your pace down will enhance your listening ability while ensuring you're clear to the interviewer, minimizing any miscommunication or awkward exchanges.

Navigating Meals – Some final interviews and networking events may include lunch or dinner, particularly roles that interact with clients. Although meals feel less formal than in-office interviews, they are still interviews and you are being evaluated. Avoid topics that are too personal, inappropriate, or may be controversial. Below are a few additional tips before your meal:

- If you know in advance where you'll be eating, review the menu beforehand allowing more time to engage with the interviewer.
- Ask the interviewer for meal recommendations or let them order first. This will give you an idea on the price point.
- Keep in mind you will be talking while you eat so avoid foods that may be messy or hard to eat.
- Err on the side of being over professional and consider avoiding alcohol, even if your interviewer orders something to drink. Keep your head clear and stay on top of your game.
- Courtesy and professionalism shouldn't be limited to your interviewers; be polite to the wait staff and host, thanking them appropriately.

Interview Attire - You only get one chance to make a first impression and how you dress sets the initial tone for the interview. Below are a few tips for choosing your interview attire.

- Dress for the Industry. Do your research in advance to learn about the culture of the organization, and the dress code.
- It is recommended that perfumes or cologne be avoided all together, as many people are sensitive to perfumes and colognes.

Illegal Interview Questions - In the United States it is illegal for an employer to discriminate against a job applicant because of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), age, national origin or disability.

If you feel an interviewer or employer has acted inappropriately, please contact the CDO. More information on federal laws regarding prohibited employment policies/practices can be found on the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission website](#).