

# EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

## Timeline

### Before the Interview

- Do your research!
  - Explore the website, social media, history, mission, structure of the organization
  - Read position descriptions
  - Access Vault and Glassdoor through mycareer.wm.edu
  - Use LinkedIn to find potential employee connections and alumni, business insight or news articles
- Confirm all details of the interview:
  - Time, date, location of interview, parking instructions, etc.
- Consider a test drive to confirm directions and potential travel time
- Arrive 15 minutes early, any earlier may interrupt the interviewer's schedule
- Dress appropriately; business professional unless otherwise advised

### During the Interview

- Keep non-verbals in mind:
  - Solid handshake, eye contact, smile, posture
- Show interest in the job and organization; be yourself, show enthusiasm and confidence
- Provide solid examples with details; avoid one word answers
- Remember it's a conversation; ask questions
  - Be sure to have questions prepared for the end of the interview that further clarify the position, role, department, etc. and show your interest in the organization
  - Reserve questions concerning benefits for after an offer is made
- Be positive about past experiences to show what you have learned; avoid negative descriptions

### After the Interview

- Be sure to have questions for the employer at the end of the interview to illustrate your knowledge and interest in the position/organization, including:
  - Function
  - Professional development
  - Management style
  - Culture within organization
  - Timeline of process
  - Do not ask specifics about salary or benefits until you receive an offer
- Always thank the interviewer for their time and reiterate your interest in the opportunity
- Send a thank you within 48 hours after the interview; email or handwritten is appropriate
- Review what happened in the interview with yourself- what went well, what could you improve for next time?

## How to Prepare

### What's Your Story?

- What do you bring to the table that is only you? i.e. skills, abilities, experiences, knowledge
- How do your values compare to the philosophy of the organization?
- What contributions will you bring to the employer?
- What major points do you want to get across during the interview?

### STAR Method

- The STAR Method can be a great tool to utilize for responding to many kinds of interview questions
  - **Situation** – Choose a scenario with depth. "set the scene"
  - **Task** – What was the task in front of you?
  - **Action** – Describe the actions you took to address the situation/task. Give detailed examples.
  - **Results** – Describe the tangible results or outcomes of your work. What impact did you have?



## Interview Types

### Standard Interviews:

- Prepare possible responses to standard/typical questions across all industries/functions, including:
  - Tell me about yourself
    - Focus on your interest in the position and what qualifies you to be there
  - Why do you want to work for this company?
    - Be as explicit as possible
  - Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
    - Include how this opportunity fits in your professional goals
  - What do you consider as your greatest strength? Greatest weakness?

### Behavioral Interviews:

- Designed to learn about your character and your experiences, and how you will fit within an organization or team
- Showcase your best performance by talking about your past experiences
- Provide relevant examples to respond to questions related to specific skills required of the position
  - Consider how relevant skills can be transferred from less relevant experiences
- Apply the STAR Method (explained on previous page) to reply to behavioral questions. Samples:
  - Give me an example of a time when you had to analyze a situation in order to guide your action or decision?
  - Discuss a situation when you had to work with a complete stranger(s) and how you dealt with it?
  - Talk about a time when you had to complete a major task as part of a team? What was your role?
  - Describe an important professional accomplishment

### Case Interviews:

- Designed to see how you think quickly to analyze problems or situations
- Showcase your thought process, creativity, and communication skills
- Typically not searching for the right answer, except with technical questions
- Organize your answer and manage your time
- Be creative and brainstorm without commitment
- Accept coaching and listen to feedback
- Bring closure and summarize
- Show enthusiasm and a positive attitude
- Questions may be styled as
  - A brainteaser to make you think outside the box
  - A market sizing or industry related concern
  - A pattern or trend situation
- Samples:
  - *Your client is an outdoor sports gear manufacturer, how would you increase sales of reusable water bottles over last year?*
  - *Estimate how many shoes were sold in the U.S. to teenage girls last year*
  - *How would you reduce costs within an organization that is losing market share?*

## Illegal Questions/Things to Watch

- Questions should focus on functions of the position; be leery of things getting too personal or specific outside of the position, organization, or skills desired for a position
- Employers cannot ask questions regarding age, medical history, religion, etc., which is a basis for discrimination
- Answering in a way that is relevant to the position is always best; redirect the conversation to your qualifications