

# Successful Interviewing



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**WESTMONT**

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND CALLING

# **SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING**

A good interview is probably the most significant part of the job search process, and yet it is something that is often shortchanged. An interview is a difficult experience for most everyone, and experienced interviewers expect a certain amount of nervousness. Your primary aim is to present yourself as you most truly are, and when you are nervous, you are not natural. Prayer and giving the interview into God's hands can work wonders! It is a brief period of time that demands a great deal of preparation. **The success of the interview will be directly related to the preparation time you give it.**

## **Know Yourself:**

There are many tools and exercises available, designed to help you in the process of self-assessment, including:

1. **Career Class (APP-080-1)**: a one-unit class specifically designed to bring focus and direction, and help you sort out your unique attributes and abilities.
2. **Personal career counseling**, including a variety of assessment tools which can help you understand your personality, values, interests, skills and abilities. Call 6031 or use Job Spot to make an appointment.
3. Be able to **translate your goals and abilities** and show how they would be an asset to the company/organization with which you are interviewing.
4. **Develop your 'Story Statement'**- a 30 second dialogue to describe WHO you are, WHAT type of work you want, and explain the STRENGTHS you bring to the position as well as your next ACTION step.

## **Know The Job:**

We know from talking to those who hire that they are impressed when candidates have done their homework and know about the company/organization and about the field they are pursuing. You will want to be sure to:

1. **Research the organization** by thoroughly reviewing their web presence. Consider the Riley Guide, which has the complete listing of links to research companies.
2. Consider an **Informational Interview** with a current employee or alum who in the field that interests you. Visit Career Development & Calling, Alumni Office or use LinkedIn for more information/contacts.

## **Practice and Perform:**

Go through the interview questions at the end of this handout which will help you answer any question an interviewer may ask. Very few people will be effective in an interview without practice ahead of time. Consider one or more of the following:

1. **Scheduling a "mock interview"** with one of the CD&C Staff.
2. **Formulate answers** to be specific and concise, with examples and stories. See the list of possible interview questions at the end of this handout.
3. **Relate personality traits** that brand you as the ideal candidate.
4. **Demonstrate** your ability to perform the job (search & job description)

### **Preparation and Follow Through:**

- Be VERY sure of your appointment time and place. Do not hesitate to call and ask for directions and instructions about parking. Arrive about 15-20 minutes early.
- Allow enough time for bad traffic - that is not considered a legitimate excuse for lateness.
- Know the name of the person you will be talking to and be able to pronounce it correctly.
- Think about what you are going to wear and how you are going to look. The saying goes: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Knowing how to dress can be tricky.
- Bring two copies of your resume and copies of references
- After the interview, send a personalized hand-written thank you card to the interview(ers), including specifics from the interview.
- Reflect on what you did well, what you need more practice in, and what you will do differently at a future interview.
- Be prepared to ask questions of the interviewers. It is helpful to come with some in mind.

### **Things to consider:**

The interviewer is evaluating you against criteria that have been established for the position you have applied for. These are not usually as concrete as it might appear. **Personal qualities can be more important than specific skills.** The College Placement Council found these are the traits employers frequently seek in candidates:

1. **Ability to Communicate** - Do you have the ability to organize your thoughts and ideas effectively?
2. **Intelligence** - Do you have the ability to understand the job assignment?
3. **Self-Confidence** - Do you demonstrate a sense of maturity that enables you to deal positively and effectively with situations and people?
4. **Willingness to Accept Responsibility** - Are you someone who recognizes what needs to be done and is willing to do it?
5. **Initiative** - Do you have the ability to identify the purpose for work and take action?
6. **Leadership** - Can you guide and direct others to obtain the recognized objectives?
7. **Energy Level** - Do you demonstrate a forcefulness and capacity to make things move ahead?
8. **Imagination** - Can you confront and deal with problems that may not have standard solutions?
9. **Interpersonal Skills** - Can you bring out the best efforts of individuals so they become effective, enthusiastic members of a team?
10. **Flexibility** - Are you capable of changing and being receptive to new situations and ideas?
11. **Self-Knowledge** - Can you realistically assess your own capabilities?
12. **Ability to Handle Conflict** - Can you successfully contend with stress situations?
13. **Competitiveness** - Do you have the capacity to compete with others?
14. **Goal Achievement** - Do you have the ability to identify and work toward specific goals?
15. **Vocational Skills** - Do you possess the positive combination of education and skills required for the position you are seeking?
16. **Direction** - Have you determined what type of position will satisfy your knowledge, skills and goals?

# INTERVIEWING FOR INFORMATION

What is an interview for information? It is a meeting you request with a professional who has a job or works for a company that interest you. You want to find out what that person does on the job and to gather information for further exploration of that career. **It is not a job interview**, but puts you in touch with a role model who can provide you with significant information.

Informational interviewing is an invaluable tool that students rarely take full advantage of. It may be an intimidating experience at first, but it is well worth the effort. Most of us do not know what people actually do day to day, though we may think we do. This simple activity will clarify your perceptions, give a feel for an occupation, and provide you with important networking contacts for the future.

Some guidelines:

1. Avoid a phone interview if possible; there is no substitute for face to face contact. Initial outreach should be concise and professional. State the who and why:  
*"I am currently a student at Westmont College, and I plan to pursue a career in entertainment law in Los Angeles. I found your profile on Job Spot, LinkedIn, Alumni Database, and noticed that you have had great success in the entertainment industry. I would be grateful for the opportunity to speak with you about your experiences and your career path. Please let me know if there is a convenient time for us to talk. Thank you in advance for your help."*
2. If you ask for a half-hour, keep on schedule unless it is clear the individual wants to go longer.
3. Don't put the person on the spot by asking for a job; that shows a lack of integrity.
4. Dress and carry yourself as if you were going on a job interview; though that is not the goal, it may end up being just that.
5. Be sure and send a thank you note the day after the interview.

## INFORMATION INTERVIEWING: QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. How did you decide to enter this field?
2. What steps did you take to enter this field?
3. What are your activities and responsibilities? What is a typical day like?
4. What do like best about your job?
5. What is challenging about your job or industry?
6. How and by whom are work decisions made that affect you?
7. How much influence do you have over decisions affecting you?
8. If you could try any other job for a day what would it be?
9. Is there any specific advice you would give to someone entering this field?
10. Are there academic programs that you would recommend that would be good preparation for entering this field?
11. Can you suggest the names of other people I might speak with?

## **QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER BEFORE AN INTERVIEW**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in this organization and this position?
3. What did you do to prepare for this interview?
4. What are your greatest strengths? What are your chief weaknesses?
5. What career options do you have at this moment?
6. What qualifications do you have that you feel will lead to your success?
7. What have you learned from some of the jobs you have had?
9. What can you contribute to this job if you were to be hired?
10. How do you determine or evaluate success?
11. Share an example of when you failed or solved a problem or dealt with conflict.
12. How do you work under pressure?
13. What three factors are most important to you in your job?
14. How do others describe you?
15. Discuss a situation in which you influenced someone or a group.

## INTERVIEW BRAINSTORM

	Theme	Story			Relevance to Position Applying to and/or Lesson Learned
		Position 1: Advertising Intern	Position 2: Camp Counselor	Position 3: Study Abroad Experience	
1	Analytical/Academic	EX: I have a creative eye for seeing trends in data and the ability to interpret this data to others	EX: I had to think critically and quickly in order to make the best decisions for solving various problems that occurred among campers.	EX: I can adapt to new and various surroundings, as well as learn new concepts quickly.	EX: Each experience increased my ability to see details and facts that enables me to make decisions when adapting to different environments and people, which will directly assist the position.
2	Influence/Persuasion				
3	Challenge/Failure				
4	Teamwork				
5	Leadership				
6	Service Orientation				
7	Individual Triumph				