



The Interview Series: (2) Interview Styles Exposed

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Interviews occur in various mediums and forms. They also are conducted in a variety of styles, utilizing different techniques to assess your fit with the organization and the position. You will often be confronted with multiple styles – not just one – throughout an interview. Awareness and preparation for these styles will not only ease your nerves when you are faced with them, but will also allow you to tailor your response to successfully answer the underlying questions.

- **Behavioral Interview:** Behavioral interviews are a great opportunity to demonstrate that you are well-suited for a job. They allow you to express your competencies – skills, knowledge and abilities – by giving specific examples from your past. The philosophy behind this interview type is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance; the interviewer wants to know not that you think you can do something for their company, but that you have actually done it. Typical questions include, “Tell me about a time when you had to make a tough decision and what made it tough,” and “Give me an example of when you took into account another’s style and flexed your own communication approach to better present your idea.” Prepare for these interviews by anticipating questions based on the characteristics and abilities you included in your resume, as well as the transferable skills and qualities required for the job. Develop a story for each competency. Behavioral interview responses should be three-fold: 1) define the situation or task you had to perform; 2) present the action you took in response; 3) demonstrate the end-result.
- **Brainteaser Interview:** Designed to separate the outstanding candidates from the merely great candidates, the brainteaser interview gauges your ability to analyze problems and create solutions. These puzzling questions usually start out with the words “just for fun.” Examples include “I’m going to put this coin in the bottle and then stop the opening with the cork; how would you get the coin out without breaking the bottle?” and “Why are manhole covers round?” Control your nerves; even if you are stumped, don’t let the interviewer see that. If you don’t get to the correct answer, at least impress them with your strategy and delivery.
- **Directed Interview:** Directed interviews are a very structured format in which the interviewer asks a laundry list of questions in order to gain key information. These interviews are very impersonal and the employer often uses a checklist to ask specific questions and takes notes. Directed interviews are often employed as a screening technique.
- **Non-directed (Meandering) Interview:** A more conversational-oriented method, the interviewer asks broad, open-ended questions, allowing you to talk freely. This gives you the opportunity to take control of the interview, more openly discuss your qualifications, and sell yourself. A skillful interviewer can learn a great deal about a candidate during this type of interview: organizational fit, personality, leadership strengths and organizational skills.
- **Situational Interview:** Using hypothetical situations based on challenging, real-life, job-related circumstances, the situational interview requires candidates to explain how he/she would handle the specific situation. The basis of this style is that intentions can predict future behavior; people tend to do what they say they will. Examples include role playing, such as asking you to deal with an angry customer played by one of the interviewers, or requesting a step-by-step strategy to solve a business problem.
- **Stress Interview:** As its name suggests, this interview’s goal is to upset you to see how you react under pressure. Common techniques include interrupting you while you are speaking,



disagreeing with your beliefs or opinions, and asking you uncomfortable questions, including, "Why should I hire you?" "What is the worst thing you heard about our company?" and "I just don't think you are suited for this job." Take a deep breath; do not get flustered or become defensive. Stay focused on your ultimate goal: demonstrate that you will be an asset to their organization and prove that you are made to withstand their culture, clients and potential job-related stress.

- **Work Sample Interview (Audition):** The work sample interview or audition gives you the opportunity to exhibit your accomplishments or reveal your abilities by showing your portfolio or completing a simulation or a brief exercise, such as a sales applicant making a sales presentation or an IT professional creating a program. This allows the employer to see you in action before committing and gives you a simplified sense of what the job would be like. When you encounter an audition, make sure that you understand the instructions and expectations, and don't be afraid to ask for clarification.