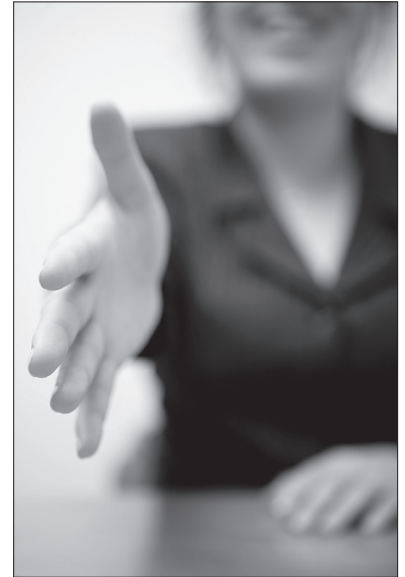


Successful Interviewing

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Attend an Interview Skills Workshop at Career Services
- View the “Interview Skills Online Workshop” on the Career Services website, www.careerservices.calpoly.edu
- View additional interviewing resources available in the Career Resource Center, Building 124, Room 117
- Research the position, the organization and the community
- Find “insider” information which might include company mission statement, strategic objectives, and corporate values
- Know the information on your resume
- Create a list of the skills/qualities you have to offer an employer that relate to the position for which you are interviewing (organization, leadership, computer knowledge, dependability, flexibility, etc.)
- Think about one or two weaknesses and what you have done to successfully overcome them
- Be prepared to describe personal, workplace, and education related challenges you overcame. Consider examples relevant to the employer/job when possible
- Research salary information so that, if asked, you have a reasonable range in mind
- Prepare questions to ask the employer (refer to the following pages)
- Practice, practice, practice



DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive early
- Meet the interviewer with a firm handshake, a friendly smile and a polite greeting
- Don't speak negatively about your peers, faculty, former employers or other companies
- Use body language to show interest (appropriate posture and eye contact)
- Listen attentively to the questions; ask for clarification if necessary
- Give complete answers, use specific examples, and cite accomplishments whenever possible
- Use projects, photos, descriptions, statistics and testimonials to support your claims
- Answer questions with honesty and sincerity; be yourself
- Be aware of the time allocated
- Ask about the next step in the process
- Thank the interviewer and collect a business card
- Conclude the interview on a strong, positive note

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Take a moment to make some notes after each interview
- Write and send a thank you letter within one to two days to everyone who interviewed you
- Forward any requested materials promptly
- If you have not heard from the company within two to three weeks, contact the interviewer and inquire about the status of the position
- Keep a record of all interviews, correspondence and subsequent follow-up
- Be persistent and maintain an optimistic outlook

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Why did you choose your major?
- Why did you choose Cal Poly?
- Describe a recent leadership experience.
- Which courses have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
- What is your GPA?
- If you could do so, how would you plan your education differently?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- Describe your most challenging college experience.
- Describe a project you have completed and the steps you used to complete it.
- Describe a specific time when you were very busy and how you prioritized your schedule.
- Tell me about a time when your professor or supervisor was not available to clarify an assignment. How did you proceed? What was the outcome? Was there anything you would do differently?

PERSONAL

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be?
- Describe a time you failed at something and how you handled it.
- What three key words would your peers use to describe you and why?
- Give me an example of something complex that you needed to effectively communicate to others. What made it complex? Why was it difficult to communicate?
- Tell me about an important goal that you set in the past. Were you successful? Why?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- Describe the most significant written document, report, or presentation you have completed.
- Tell me about something you have done that is very creative.
- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stress that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

THE JOB

- What motivated you to apply for this position?
- What interests you most about this job? Least?
- Why do you want to work for our company/organization?
- What do you know about our company/organization?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what successful characteristics would you look for in a candidate?
- Describe three key skills or qualities you would bring to this position.
- What is your philosophy of work?
- How do you like to be supervised?
- Why should we hire you?



EXPERIENCE

- Describe your job-related skills and experience and how they would relate to this position.
- What have you learned most from some of the jobs you have held?
- What did you enjoy most about your last job? Least?
- How would a former supervisor describe your work?
- Describe a workplace challenge you faced and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time you worked in a team environment and you encountered conflict. How did you handle it?
- Describe an experience involving a deadline. What methods did you use and were you able to accomplish the task on time?
- Describe a time you went above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give an example of your ability to manage or supervise others.
- Describe a situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you wish you had done more planning. What happened? How could it have been avoided? What did you learn from this experience?

CAREER GOALS

- What are your long-range career goals? How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What are your short-range career goals?
- What characteristics do you possess that will make you successful in your career?
- Who or what influenced you most with regard to your career objectives?

QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS

- Do you have a detailed description of the position for which I am being considered?
- What is a typical day like?
- Why do you like working for this company/organization?
- What are some of the challenges you think a new person in this position would face?
- What are your department goals for the next two to three years? What are the long-term goals?
- What outside influences affect your company's growth?
- What are some common characteristics of successful employees within your company?
- What is the greatest challenge facing your staff (department) now?
- What types of assignments may I expect the first six months on the job?
- What type of training is available?
- What has been your career path within this company?
- Is relocation likely or required?
- What are your expectations for new hires?
- How is one evaluated for this position?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- Prepare specific questions for each position/company (e.g. "I'm interested in knowing more about the new product line that your company just launched.")

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

- Take time to be well groomed: moderate makeup, light or no perfume or aftershave, ironed clothes, polished shoes
- Dress in business attire: for males the usual dress is a suit or sports coat and slacks; for females it is a suit or pantsuit
- Select shoes, handbags, briefcases and watches that are conservative and coordinate - avoid flashy jewelry and accessories
- Bring a portfolio/folder with extra copies of your resume
- Be courteous to everyone you meet: receptionists, secretaries and others
- Be confident, poised and enthusiastic
- Be professional and use professional language



THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

- Conduct your interview in a place that is free of distractions and background noise, and where you will have good reception if you are using a cell phone
- Be prepared by keeping resume and notes by the telephone
- Clarify and write down the name(s) of the interviewer(s) to whom you are speaking
- Speak clearly and directly into the telephone
- Exhibit personality and energy through voice tone and inflection
- Take notes

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

Employers use behavioral interviews to evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant's potential for success. Behavioral questions will center around skills, qualities, and abilities important for success on the job. For example, if teamwork is important to a job, they might ask "Tell me about a time you worked on a team and you encountered conflict. How did you handle it?"

- Utilize the **STAR** technique in answering behavioral questions: State the Situation, the Task assigned, Action taken, and the end Result. Below is an example of utilizing the STAR technique to answer the teamwork question above:

Situation/Task: "I was working in a team of five in my Services Marketing class. We were analyzing survey data to determine the effectiveness of customer service for a local retailer. One of our team members continually failed to show up for group meetings or turn in assignments."

Action you took: "After talking with other group members, I approached the team member to find out more about their lack of participation. After finding out that they had a family illness they were dealing with, we worked out a plan for them to contribute to the project, but on a smaller scale."

Result you achieved: "Our team bonded after understanding the team member's situation. The team member, after our discussion, contributed significantly to the assignment. We received an A on the project!"

- Review the job description and relate your experiences and skills to the position
- Select situations and experiences in which you have demonstrated the behaviors important to the current job
- Be detailed and specific in discussing how you contributed to the success of the project, situation, or event described