

“Powering Through the Interview”

B2B Seminar Series

September 28, 2022

Justin Lewis, P.E.



ILLINOIS

Civil and Environmental Engineering

About Me

- Born and raised in Louisville, KY
- Attended University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 - B.S. Civil Engineering, 2007 (Geotech)
 - M.S. Civil Engineering, 2008 (Geotech)
- Joined Keller (formerly Hayward Baker) in 2008
 - Currently Branch Manager for Chicago
 - FE, PE, PM, Division Manager, and Project Executive previously



“You go to a job interview to discover whether your talents, abilities, interests and direction are a good fit for the job, the company, and the company’s mission.”

Susan M. Heathfield
Human Resources Expert



Powering Through the Interview

- Purpose and Goals of Interview
- Preparation
 - Typical Interview Questions
- Tips for Before, During, and End of Interview
- Interview Follow Up
- Avoiding Anxiety & Nervousness
- Pop Quiz!



Purpose of Interview

Interviewer

Determines if you are qualified for the Job and a fit for the Company.

Interviewee

Determines if the Job and Company are a fit for you.



Purpose of Interview

An Interview Is:

- A test drive of your communication abilities
- Chance for interviewer to get to know you as a person
- An event where you control the input, but not outcome
- Opportunity to turn one way communication into two way dialogue

An Interview Is Not:

- A Conversation with a Friend
- A Place to monopolize the conversation
- Something to Fear!



Goals of Interview

- **The Obvious: GET THE JOB!**
- **Make the Argument**
 - Why You Deserve to be Hired
 - What You Bring to the Company
- **Differentiate Yourself**
 - Get Across 3-5 of Best Accomplishments
 - Unique Characteristics to “Stand Out”



Preparation: Company Research

- Industry Company Is in
 - Transportation, Water Treatment, Public/Municipality
- Understand Services Provided
 - Design, Construction, Consulting?
- Size of Firm – 5 employees? Or 10,000?
- Organizational Structure
- Office Locations – Geography
 - Local, Regional, Global Firm?
- Website – Typical/Featured Projects
- Current Events/News, Recent Announcements
- Industry salaries/benefits



Preparation: Interviewer

- Position in the firm?
 - HR, Sr. Engineer, Owner
- Professional background
 - Company Website, LinkedIn
- Personal background
 - Facebook? (If public), Web Search
 - For small talk purposes, common interests.
- More you know about the Interviewer, more comfortable you will be.



Preparation: Interview Questions

Introductory Questions

- “Walk me through your resume”
- “Tell me about yourself”

Answering Strategies

- Best opportunity to frame your candidacy by telling **Your Story**
- Clear, well-organized 1-2 minute response
- Often the 1st question and sets tone for interview
- See Handout – Responding to Introductory Questions



Preparation: Your Story

- Use “Your Story” to articulate your value
- Why do you need a “Story”?
 - Create differentiation from other candidates
 - Interviewer understands what you bring to the company
- Articulating Your Value
 - Personal qualities and strengths as common bond
 - Keep it simple with stories of impact
 - Clarity – Be clear about who you are and are not
 - Consistency – Story should align with interview goals



Preparation: Your Story

Organizing Your Story – 2 Basic Methods

- Chronological: Leading from one experience to another
 - *Describes the evolution of your interest in career*
- Story that is based on your skills and selling points

Responding to Introductory Questions Handout

- Work through worksheet to prepare



Preparation: Interview Questions

- Behavioral Questions
 - “Tell me about a time when...”
- Answering Strategies
 - No rambling: Concise and thoughtful storytelling.
 - Anticipate stories you will need to tell, write them down.
 - *“The time I overcame failure was....”*
 - Use S.O.A.R. / S.O.F.T methods for organizing stories.



Preparation: Behavioral Questions

S.O.A.R. Method – Achievement

- **S**ituation you encountered
- **O**ppportunity/**O**bstacle you faced
- **A**ction(s) you took to address the opportunity/obstacle
- **Results: Quantifiable or specific results of your action(s)**

S.O.F.T. Method - Failure

- **S**ituation you encountered
- **O**ppportunity/**O**bstacle you faced
- **F**ailure: what actions taken that did not work
- **Takeaway: lessons learned to help future performance**



Preparation: Interview Questions

- Analytical/Technical Questions
 - Engineering related
- Self Assessment
 - Strengths? Weaknesses?
 - Greatest Achievement/Failure?
- Fit
 - Why should we hire you?
 - Why do you want to work here?
- Brain Teasers
 - Thinking on your feet – cannot prepare for these!



Interview Questions Summary

Step One: Anticipate Questions

- Put yourself in shoes of interviewer – company research

Step Two: Plan Your Responses

- Write out response to each question
- Review responses with friends, roommate, parents
- Review and Edit so they are concise and on message

Step Three: Rehearse

- Deliver responses to mirror, voice recorder, friends
- Mock interviews – possibly videotape



Interview Questions Summary

Type of question	Examples	Strategies for responding
Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tell me about a time when your opinion was challenged. How did you handle it?</i> • <i>Tell me about your last experience working in a team?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>S</u>ituation • <u>O</u>bstacle • <u>A</u>ction • <u>R</u>esult
Analytical/Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the different ways to value a company?</i> • <i>Which is a better long-term investment, Priceline.com or Ebay?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by outlining your strategy/methodology/ decision framework/etc. Include the "whys" in your response. • Ask questions for clarification and additional information when needed. • Where appropriate restate/summarize your conclusions.
Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What was the most challenging or riskiest decision you have made?</i> • <i>What do you consider to be your greatest achievements to date? Why?</i> • <i>What things give you the greatest satisfaction at work?</i> • <i>What things frustrate you the most? How do you usually cope with them?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin your response by restating the question. Make sure you address the "why" factor. For example: My philosophy on management is... • Consider addressing the underlying "fit question" relative to the position/organization as you formulate your response.
Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why do you want to work here?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate the reasons why you are a good match for the position and company throughout the interview. • Ask intelligent Qs about the company.
Brain Teasers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why are manhole covers round?</i> • <i>How would you find a needle in a haystack?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes there's a "right" answer and sometimes there isn't. In either case, what matters most is how well you support your response—where possible incorporate specifics and creativity.
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interviewers may ask Qs quickly – using a "rapid fire" approach.</i> • <i>Interviewers may act disinterested, bored, or begin answering emails during your conversation.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm. Understand what they are assessing—they're trying to get a sense of how you deal with an unexpected and/or uncomfortable situation. • Practice thinking on your feet.
Case		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use traditional business frameworks to solve these business problems.



Problematic Questions

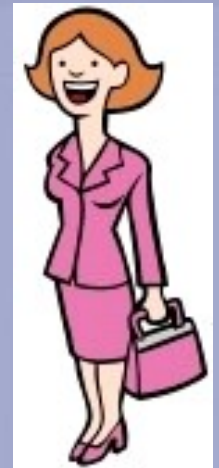
Examples

- Do you have a visual, speech, or hearing disability?
- Are you planning to have a family? When?
- Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim?
- How many days of work did you miss last year due to illness?
- Would you have a problem working with a female partner?



Before The Interview

- **Positive and Confident Attitude**
 - **Highly Ranked CEE Department!**
- **Dress for Success (even on virtual interviews!)**
- **Look Yourself Over Before Arriving/Logging On**
- **Arrive/Log On 10-15 Minutes Early – BE PROMPT**
- **Pen, Notepad, Copies of Resumes**
- **If Submitting Application – Consistent with Resume**



During the Interview – Body Language

R-E-L-A-X!

Do

- Bring Enthusiasm
- Relaxed Smile, Direct Eye Contact
- Straight Posture, Lean Slightly Forward
- Firm Handshake, Use of Hand Movement
- “Read” the Interviewer



Don't

- Arms Crossed, Looking at Watch
- Nervous Movements, Hands Clenched
- Staring at or Looking Past Interviewer
- Interrupt Conversation
- Lie



End of Interview

- Summarize Your Key Strengths and Why You are Right for Position
- Ask Any Outstanding Questions
- Thank Interviewer by Name
- Inquire About Next Step and Associated Time Frame
- Express Interest in Hearing from Them



Interview Follow-Up

- **Thank You Email within 24 Hours**
- **Reconnect by Phone or Email if No Correspondence in Discussed Timeframe**
- **Be Prepared if Next Step is Offered**
 - Second Interview or Office Visit
 - Job Offer – Employment Terms



Avoiding Nervousness and Anxiety

- Be Prepared
- Be Prompt
 - Being Late Increases Stress
- Relax
 - Take a minute to clear your mind immediately before
- Role Play
 - Practice Interview with Friends, Roommate
- Stay Focused on Goals
- Smile, Be Enthusiastic!



Pop Quiz: Interview Questions

Pop Quiz!



Pop Quiz: Interview Questions

What is your biggest weakness?

- Your response?
 - If you are completely honest, may hurt chance at getting the job.
 - Stating you don't have one is lying, nobody is perfect.
 - Cheesy responses not good either
 - *"I work too many hours and neglect my friends"*
 - *"I tend to make people jealous with my work ethic"*
 - Give small flaw you are actively working to fix
 - *Important question to be prepared for to answer*



Pop Quiz: Interview Questions

Would you rather work for money or job satisfaction?



- Your response?
 - I want to work for money! (WRONG/BAD RESPONSE)
 - *Okay to admit money is important though.*
 - Nothing is more important to me than the job! (GOOD)
 - *Money can't buy happiness, right?*
 - *If not, you're just looking for the paycheck....*
 - *Trick Question*



Pop Quiz: Interview Questions

Would you rather be liked or feared?

- Your response?
 - I want to be feared! (WRONG RESPONSE)
 - *Really? Probably doesn't work well with others....*
 - I want to be liked! (OKAY RESPONSE)
 - *Wants to at least fit in to work environment but may be a pushover....*
 - Neither, I want to be respected. (BEST RESPONSE)
 - *Trick Question*
 - *Ability to motivate people to complete the job*



Pop Quiz: Interview Questions

Would you still work if you won the lottery?

- Your response?
 - Yes, I absolutely love the work grind!
 - *Is this really the truth?*
 - No, I hate the thought of working.
 - *What message are you sending to the interviewer?*
 - My favorite: Probably, but either for myself or for a non-profit involving engineering
 - *Pursue my passion of engineering and don't have to worry about paying the bills*



Pop Quiz: Interview Questions

Who are you going to vote for in November?

- Your response?
 - Still undecided, not sure, etc.... (BEST)
 - A strong response either way is a real gamble.
- Should this question be asked by interviewer?
 - No, always avoid discussing politics AND religion



Powering Through the Interview

Great Preparation = Great Interview = Hired!



Questions?

