“Powering Through the Interview”

B2B Seminar Series
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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 1\textsuperscript{st} 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....”
Preparation: Behavioral Questions

S.O.A.R. Method – Achievement
- **Situation** you encountered
- **Opportunity/Obstacle** you faced
- **Action(s)** you took to address the opportunity/obstacle
- **Results: Quantifiable or specific results of your action(s)**

S.O.F.T. Method - Failure
- **Situation** you encountered
- **Opportunity/Obstacle** you faced
- **Failure**: 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

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<tr>
<th>Type of question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Strategies for responding</th>
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| Behavioral       | • Tell me about a time when your opinion was challenged. How did you handle it?  
                  • Tell me about your last experience working in a team? | • Situation  
                  • Obstacle  
                  • Action  
                  • Result |
| Analytical/Technical | • What are the different ways to value a company?  
                        • Which is a better long-term investment, Priceline.com or Ebay? | • 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  | • What was the most challenging or riskiest decision you have made?  
                   • What do you consider to be your greatest achievements to date? Why?  
                   • What things give you the greatest satisfaction at work?  
                   • What things frustrate you the most? How do you usually cope with them? | • 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              | • Why do you want to work here? | • 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    | • Why are manhole covers round?  
                   • How would you find a needle in a haystack? | • 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           | • Interviewers may ask Qs quickly—using a “rapid fire” approach.  
                   • Interviewers may act disinterested, bored, or begin answering emails during your conversation. | • 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             | | • 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

**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

R-E-L-A-X!
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?