



Graduate College Career Services Office

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NONACADEMIC INTERVIEWING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Overview

An employment interview is an exchange of information between an organization and a potential employee. Employers use the interview as a chance to assess whether you are qualified for the available position. They also assess such personal characteristics as your interest in the job, your enthusiasm and commitment to your career goals, and your ability to get along with others and fit into the culture of the organization. You, as the potential employee, must use this opportunity to gather information in order to decide whether or not to accept an offer is one is made. Throughout the interview process, you play a major role in keeping the conversation flowing and interesting. You must be able to make your résumé come alive and highlight your strengths in a short period of time.

Graduate Student Interviewing

Graduate students entering the job market often compete with younger candidates for entry-level positions. Older candidates with advanced degrees have a distinct advantage because they have greater maturity, experience, and more highly sophisticated skills. Graduate students should beware, however, that it is important to seem flexible, since most organizations want entry-level employees whom they can train and mold. Graduate students should also be cautious not to overuse academic vocabulary, jargon, or phrases that will not be understood by interviewers.

Preparing for the Interview

Careful preparation prior to an interview is crucial, since you are often competing against dozens of other candidates for a single job. Appearing unprepared makes a poor impression.

Researching the Organization

Devoting time to researching employers is a critical component of your job search. Detailed information about conducting organizational research is available on the GCCSO Web site. However, the basics you should learn prior to the interview include:

- History, philosophy and mission of the organization
- Geographical location of the organization
- Organizational size, number of offices/plants, and potential for future growth
- Organizational culture and structure
- Annual production
- Current and potential products and/or services
- Competitors

- Organizational chart (including names of top executives)
- Financial review
- Contributions to the industry or field
- Recent news/press releases

Attire and Hygiene for Interviews

It is imperative that you are dressed professionally and that your hygiene is impeccable for job interviews. Some guidelines on what to wear include:

Women: business suit or tailored dress (skirts should be just above the knee or lower); pantyhose; neat hairstyle; polished shoes; conservative jewelry; clean, trimmed nails with clear or natural polish; natural makeup; limited perfume.

Men: Business suit with a pressed dress shirt and conservative tie, polished dress shoes and dark socks, clean and trimmed fingernails, limited cologne.

Even if professionals in this field usually dress casually, it is better to dress more formally for the interview.

What to Bring to Interviews

Be certain to bring several copies of your résumé, a notepad, and something to write with to all interviews. You may also want to bring some supporting materials with you, such as copies of printed articles, a portfolio that demonstrates your work, or a list of references.

Information Sessions

Organizations interviewing on campus often sponsor information sessions for interested students. If you happen to interview with an organization that is recruiting on campus, check to see if it is offering an information session the night before. If so, it is critical that you attend this session, since it demonstrates your enthusiasm and interest in the organization and also provides you with valuable information.

Interview Techniques

You are assessed throughout an interview not only on what you say but also on nonverbal cues and body language. Be aware of poor body language or irritating habits. A good way to practice these techniques is by signing up for a mock interview at The Career Center where they will videotape and critique your performance. This exercise provides powerful feedback that can help you hone your interviewing skills.

The Handshake

A good handshake demonstrates confidence, so be certain that you shake hands firmly and look your interviewer in the eye.

NonVerbals

Try to minimize:

- Irritating Habits – such as tapping your pen, twirling your hair, looking away from the interviewer, moving your legs, or drumming your fingers.

- Filler Words – such as “ummm,” “like,” y’know”
- Poor body language – such as slouching or gesturing too much. You should sit up straight and keep your hands in your lap as much as possible.

Answering Questions

When answering interview questions, be brief and succinct and try not to ramble. By doing this, you show the interviewer that you can listen and quickly organize your thoughts, and it gives the interviewer time to ask you other pertinent questions. Do not speak too quickly as the interviewer may have difficulty understanding you. Pausing briefly will give both you and the interviewer time to think and reflect.

Other Tips for Successful Interviewing

- Always be positive; avoid negative words and phrases as much as possible.
- Maintain good eye contact at all times.
- Be enthusiastic about the position, the organization, your skills, and how you can contribute to the organization’s success.
- Smile! A pleasant and relaxed smile will keep both you and the interviewer at ease.
- Keep in mind that it is impossible to control all aspects of an interview. If you encounter a question you are unprepared for, do your best and then move on.
- View the interview as a give-and-take, two-way conversation where you are gathering valuable information to help you make the best career choice possible.
- View each interview as an opportunity to learn and refine your interview skills.
- Interview with an organization even if it is not your top choice. The practice will be invaluable, and you may learn that the position is more attractive than first thought.

Parts of the Interview

Although every interview is different, most interviews do have a basic structure to them.

Welcome and Small Talk

A good interviewer will make a serious attempt to build a positive rapport with the candidate, usually through small talk about weather, current events, sports, etc. Be certain that you participate in the conversation; don’t just smile and nod.

Position Clarification and Company Information

Good interviewers will take a few minutes to make sure you understand the position and provide you with information about the organization. Your pre-interview research can help you to make a positive impression during this part of the interview.

Background Summary

Important screening questions about your overall background will be asked during this portion of the interview. Questions may be asked about your authorization to work in the United States, your educational history, your willingness to relocate or travel, and other basic information.

Discussion of your Qualifications and Work History

The bulk of the interview will be spent asking questions about your background and experiences. Keep in mind that not only are the interviewers interested in your answers, but they are also interested in your process for coming up with your answers. Many of these questions may be behavioral-based questions. You can anticipate many of the behavioral and standard interviewing questions that you will be asked by reading through practice questions. Prepare for these questions before the interview. Additionally, many interviewers will inquire about your future plans and outside activities.

Your Questions

You will be given the opportunity to ask the interviewer a few questions, and should use this as an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of and interest in the organization and position.

Conclusion

You may have the opportunity to make closing remarks in your interview. Touch on qualifications that you did not have a chance to discuss, and inquire about the next stage in the process. Restate your enthusiasm for the organization and position, and thank the interviewer for his or her time.

Follow-Up

It is always appropriate to send thank you notes after you interview. Hand written thank you notes are best, and should be send within twenty-four hours of the interview. Points to include in your letter are:

- Express appreciation for and enjoyment of the interview.
- Mention an interesting point of discussion that occurred during the interview.
- Reaffirm how your skills and abilities can help the organization.
- End by mentioning that you will follow-up in the future.

Behavioral-Based Interviews

Many organizations now use behavioral-based interviewing techniques, which require the job applicant to describe past situations that relate to situations they might encounter in the new position. This approach is based on the belief that past performance is the best predictor of future behavior. Even if you don't have a great deal of work experience, companies expect you to be able to relate past experiences – from graduate school, campus activities, volunteer work, etc. – to the job for which you are interviewing.

What to Expect

Behavioral-based interview questions generally start with any one of the following phrases:

- Tell me about a time when you...
- Describe a circumstance when you were faced with a problem related to...
- Think about an instance in which you...

- Tell me how you approached a situation where...

When your interview is behavioral-based, you should expect a structured interview with set questions, as opposed to a more conversational style. The interviewer is probably evaluating you against a profile of desired behaviors considered necessary for success. You will oftentimes receive follow-up questions that probe for more details and attempt to evaluate the consistency of your answers. Many of the questions will have multiple parts, and the interviewer will generally take notes during your answers.

The STAR Method

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral-based interview question by discussing the specific situation, task, action, and result of the situation you are describing.

- **Situation:** Set the stage for the interviewer by providing an overview of the situation and any relevant background information. Be specific and succinct.
- **Task:** What goal were you working toward?
- **Action:** Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.
- **Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. Your answer should contain multiple positive results.

Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method. Be as specific as possible at all times, without rambling or including too much information. Oftentimes students have to be prompted to include their results, so try to include that without being asked. Also, eliminate any examples that do not paint you in a positive light. However, keep in mind that some examples that have a negative result (such as "lost the game") can highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.

Two Sample STAR Answers

Question: Tell me about a time when you had to cope with strict deadlines or time demands.

Answer One

Situation: I had to establish and adhere to strict deadlines in order to complete my doctoral dissertation. Few deadlines are externally imposed upon graduate students, and, as a result, it is easy to fritter away weeks, months, and even years of effort without completing the dissertation. This can be particularly true if one has an adviser who offers little guidance and structure, which was precisely my situation. In order to make progress toward my degree, I created my own strict deadlines for completion and regularly met my own self-imposed deadlines.

Task: I drafted a project plan in which I defined the tasks, milestones, and deadlines associated with degree completion. Completion of each dissertation chapter was a principal task, and a few subtasks and deadlines were grouped below, such as additional library research, making an outline, and submission of the chapter to my adviser for review. My project plan also included many of the deadlines other doctoral students tend to forget, such as dissertation deposit and commencement deadlines. After I had drafted my project plan, I distributed a copy of my plan to my adviser as well as the other members of my committee, asking for “sign-off” on my plan. Members of my committee appreciated the initiative, motivation, and organization I exhibited with my plan and supported my efforts.

Action: I followed my project plan carefully, and I regularly met my self-imposed deadlines. Meeting my goals was difficult and required great self-discipline and hard work, particularly because I was already working full time at a job that required regular travel to other parts of the state. I responded by placing a moratorium on most hobbies and social activities, and I worked most weekends and many late nights. Having the project plan also helped me manage the other players in the process, principally my adviser. He was slow about reviewing my work, but by tactfully assigning him deadlines, too, I assured my continued progress. Of course, as my writing progressed, it was sometimes necessary to adjust deadlines, and I kept the timeline up-to-date, and notified my committee of changes. However, while milestone dates sometimes changed, the ultimate deadline—completion—did not.

Result: As the result of my project management and adherence to deadlines, I was able to defend, deposit, and graduate on schedule.

Answer Two:

Situation: I had a two-month internship with a large international company. During my internship, I was given a project to complete during this short time that had multiple parts. I had to give a presentation and a report to my managers before my internship ended, and I knew my job performance would be reviewed and critiqued before I left the company.

Task: In this project I had to evaluate the content and usability of various online learning programs. In order to do this, I had to distribute the programs that met my initial criteria to an international team of reviewers to get their input and perspective. After I did this, I had to compile all of their data and opinions, synthesize this data, and create a report and presentation for my managers.

Action: Since each part of the project had to be completed in a specific order, I created a project plan in MicrosoftProject with structured deadlines for each phase of the project. I built in a bit of extra time for unexpected problems or delays since I knew I had to depend on other people for data. I sent this schedule to my team so they knew my time constraints, and sent them reminders before the due date. I made certain that I consistently adhered to the schedule that I designed.

Result: I was able to complete the project, although I had to build a few additional days into my timeline since some of the reviewers were slow to send me their data. But I learned to be flexible, figured out how to motivate my team, worked efficiently on the portions of the project that depended only upon me, and was able to give an effective report and presentation to my managers on schedule. Plus I got a great evaluation at the end of my internship!

Areas of Evaluation

Some of the most common behavioral questions evaluate such attributes as:

- Integrity
- Leadership
- Initiative
- Communication Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Adaptability

See the list of sample behavioral questions for examples of each of these areas and many more. Be certain to carefully consider STAR answers for examples that you might want to share prior to your interview. As a graduate student, you may need to work a little harder to come up with behavioral answers since most of your prior experiences have been in the academic world. Draw on ALL your experiences, including teaching, serving on committees, managing multiple tasks, doing research, leading groups, etc.

Illegal Questions

According to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers who inquire about certain factors during an interview may be acting in a discriminatory manner. It is illegal for interviewers to consider an applicant's race, color, religion, sex, age, or national origin when making employment decisions. If a question of an illegal nature is asked during an interview, it is perfectly acceptable to decline to answer it. Such illegal questions include:

- Are you a U.S. citizen? (It *is* acceptable for an interviewer to ask if you are authorized to work in the U.S.).
- Where were you born? What is your native language?
- How old are you? (It *is* acceptable for an interviewer to ask if you are over the age of 18).
- What is your marital status? How many children do you have?
- Do you have any disabilities? (It *is* acceptable to ask if an applicant is able to perform the essential functions of the job).

Other Types of Interviews

Phone Interviews

Many companies conduct phone interviews to determine whether an applicant has the required minimum qualifications for a position. Telephone screening is a cost-effective

method to eliminate candidates from the search. Be prepared for a telephone interview at all times – it is important to make a positive first impression over the phone. Keep a copy of your résumé by the telephone, as well as a list of every organization to which you have applied. If you are not prepared to participate in an interview at the time the interviewer calls, it is better to try to reschedule than to make a poor first impression. Remember that a phone interview will generally not get you a job – it’s an intermediate step on the way to a face-to-face interview.

The following guidelines apply to phone interviews:

Before the call:

- Disable your phone’s call waiting feature.
- Eliminate distracting background noise and take the call in a quiet room.
- Have your résumé and list of questions handy for easy reference.
- Have a glass of water available.
- Dress professionally if possible – believe it or not, it will help you to project a professional demeanor.

During the call:

- Do not use speakerphone.
- Show interest and enthusiasm in your voice. If you smile when you speak, you will sound more upbeat.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Offer to send or email any additional information or supporting documentation at the end of the call.
- Conclude the call with an expression of interest in the position and ask what the next step is.
- Be certain you ask for the interviewer’s contact information and send a thank you note after the interview.

Site Visits

Organizations will sometimes invite a candidate for extended on-site interviews. This usually occurs only when a company is really interested in you (following at least a screening interview), and it will pay for your travel, lodging, and meal expenses. You should expect to arrive at the organization’s location the night before the interview, and to have multiple in-depth interviews the next day with several different people. You will probably have lunch with someone in the organization and depart in the late afternoon or evening. Some important factors to remember:

- Always carry the name and phone number of your contact person in case of complications or questions.
- If you are traveling by air, carry your clothing and interview materials. Don’t check necessary items that might be delayed or lost.
- Pack extra copies of your résumé, references, itinerary, etc.
- Research the company thoroughly and know the names and positions of your interviewers.

Meal Interviews

Many interviews occur over lunch or dinner. Even though these interviews seem relaxed, you must still act and speak professionally as you are being evaluated at all times. Some tips for meal interviews:

- Order a meal that is easy to eat, requires minimal concentration, and will not make a mess. For example, avoid foods like spaghetti or crab legs .
- Make small talk, but do not discuss topics that may be considered personal, inappropriate, or offensive.
- Do not order too much food or the most expensive item on the menu. Take your cue from the interviewer.
- Observe proper table manners.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages, even if the interviewer(s) imbibe.
- Ask the interviewer(s) some questions so that you can finish your meal while they talk.

45 Sample Interview Questions (Nonbehavioral)

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. Why did you choose your field of study?
3. Describe your most rewarding academic experience.
4. What things frustrate you most? How do you deal with them?
5. In what ways do you think you can contribute to our organization?
6. How do you evaluate success?
7. What things are most important to you in a job?
8. What are your long-term goals?
9. Why are you interested in this job/organization?
10. Who or what has had the greatest influence on the development of your career interests?
11. How do you solve conflicts?
12. What previous work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
13. What are your three biggest strengths? Your three biggest weaknesses?
14. What has been your biggest challenge?
15. What accomplishments are you most proud of?
16. Describe your leadership style.
17. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
18. How has your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
19. How do you motivate people?
20. How do you deal with pressure?
21. How do you manage your time?
22. Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make.
23. What frustrates you the most?
24. What can you contribute to this organization?
25. What characteristics are most important in a good manager?
26. What challenges are you looking for in a position?
27. Are you willing to travel or relocate as part of your career?
28. What is the most important lesson you have learned in or out of school?
29. Why are you the best candidate for this position?
30. How would your friends describe you? Your professors?
31. What else should I know about you?
32. What are your short-term goals?
33. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
34. What do you really want to do in life?
35. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
36. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
37. How do you determine or evaluate success?
38. Why did you select your college or university?
39. If you could do so, would you have changed anything about your academic experience?
40. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
41. In what kind of work environment are you more comfortable?
42. How would you describe your ideal job?
43. Why are you seeking a position with our organization?
44. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work for?
45. What have you learned from your mistakes?

Behavioral Based Questions by Topic¹

Coping: Ability to maintain a mature, problem-solving attitude while dealing with interpersonal conflict, hazardous conditions, personal rejection, hostility or time demands.

1. Tell me about a time when you had to cope with strict deadlines or time demands.
2. Give me an example of a time at work when you had to deal with unreasonable expectations.
3. When have you had to cope with the anger or hostility of another person?
4. Sooner or later we all deal with interpersonal conflict or personal rejection at work. Give me an example of a time when you had to cope with these demands.
5. Tell me about a high stress situation where it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude.
6. Give me an example of a time when another person really tried your patience. How were you able to speak respectfully, even when you were angry and frustrated?

Tolerance of Ambiguity: Able to withhold actions or speech in the absence of important information; deal with unresolved situations, frequent changes, delays, or unexpected events.

1. Describe a time when you were able to postpone your comments until you had all the facts necessary for a good response to a situation.
2. Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with frequent job changes or unexpected events on the job.
3. What has been your experience in working with conflicting, delayed, or ambiguous information? How did you make the most of the situation?
4. When has it been necessary for you to deal with an ambiguous situation at work?
5. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an unresolved situation on the job.

Decisiveness: Able to make decisions quickly on available information and take action; make commitments and not change decisions when challenged; deal with emergencies as necessary.

1. Describe a situation in which you had to draw a conclusion and take speedy action.
2. Describe a time when you had to commit to a plan of action in an emergency.
3. Describe a time when you were under pressure to make an immediate decision. Did you take action immediately, or were you more deliberate and slow?
4. Tell me about a situation when you had to stand up for a decision you made even though it was unpopular.

¹ This document is derived in part from an untitled handout from Behavioral Technology, Inc, 1995.

5. Give me an example of a situation in which you were especially skillful in make a decision quickly.

Spoken Communications: Able to clearly present information through the spoken word; influence or persuade others through oral presentation in positive or negative circumstances; listen well.

1. Tell me about your most successful experience when make a speech or presentation to a group.
2. Tell me about an experience of yours that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally.
3. Tell me about a specific time when your skill in listening helped you to communicate better.

Assertiveness: Able to maturely express one's feelings and opinions in spite of disagreement; accurately communicate to others regardless of their status or position.

1. Tell me about a time when you were able to express your opinions maturely in spite of disagreements or objections.
2. Give me an example of a time when you had to be assertive in giving directions to others.
3. Tell me about a time when you successful expressed your ideas/opinions in a tactful and careful way.
4. Tell me about a time when you were willing to disagree with another person in order to build a positive outcome.
5. Describe a time when you had to sell an idea to our boss, authority figure, or technical expert.

Energizing: Able to create positive energy (motivation) in both individuals and groups.

1. Give me an example of a time when your positive attitude caused others to be motivated or energized.
2. Tell me about a time when your ability to reward and encourage others created positive motivation.
3. Tell me about a time when you successfully used competition as a means of encouraging others to work hard.
4. Describe a time when you were able to use recognition to create positive energy in another person.

Policy and Procedures: Able to relate to routine operations in a manner that is consistent with existing solutions to problems; conform to established policies and procedures; log work activities.

1. Give me an example of a time when you were expected to act in accordance with a policy even when it was not convenient.
2. Describe a time when you had to adopt a well-defined work routine.

3. Give me an example of a time when you found a systematic method for solving problems to be a good routine to follow.

Alertness: Ability to be attentive to all aspects of the environment while working; to monitor environment during routine activity.

1. Tell me about a specific experience you have had in which it was necessary for you to react quickly because of a change in the environment.
2. Tell me about an experience you have had in hazardous conditions in which your alertness paid off in saving you from a bad outcome.
3. Tell me about your experience in dealing with routine work. What kinds of problems did you have to overcome in order to concentrate on the details of the job?

Analytical Problem Solving: Able to use a systematic approach in solving problems through analysis of problem and evaluation of alternative solutions; use logic, mathematics, or other problem solving tools in data analysis or in generating solutions.

1. Tell me about a time when you used your analytical skills to identify potential problems at work.
2. What was your greatest success in using the principles of logic to solve technical problems at work?
3. Give me an example of a time when you actively defined and evaluated several alternative solutions to a single problem you encountered.
4. Give me an example of a time when you used tools such as survey data, library research, or statistics as important contributors to the definition of a specific problem.

Goal Setting: Able to define realistic, specific goals and objectives; to prioritize objectives.

1. Tell me about the most important time in your work history when you successfully prioritized your goals.
2. Tell me about a time when you took the initiative to set goals and objectives even though you were not prompted or directed by others to do so.
3. Give me an example of a time when you used a systematic process to define your objectives. What type of system did you use? What payoff did you get from using the process?

Written Communication: Able to write clearly and effectively present ideas to document activities; to read and interpret written information.

1. Tell me about the writing experiences you have had that you think will contribute to your ability to do this job well.

2. In some positions it is necessary to be a thorough, meticulous reader and in other situations it is important to be able to scan through large amounts of information quickly. Describe your most significant scanning experience.
3. Describe your experiences in editing manuscripts, articles, documents or any other forms of written communication.

Perceptivity: Able to interpret verbal and nonverbal behavior; to develop accurate perception and understanding of others' feelings, needs, values, and opinions; to be sensitive to and aware of personality differences and conflicts.

1. Give me an example of how your interpretations of verbal and nonverbal behavior have helped you in communications.
2. Tell me about a time during a negotiation when your perceptiveness helped you to make sense out of another person's behavior.
3. When has your analysis of another person's motives and feeling paid off for you at work?
4. Tell me about a time that shows your skill in recognizing hidden interests or personality conflicts.

Organization and Planning: Able to organize and schedule people or tasks; to develop realistic action plans while being sensitive to time constraints and resource availability.

1. Give me an example of any time management techniques you have learned and applied at work.
2. Tell me what you have done with such tools as flow charts, production schedule, filing systems, or any other tools to help you implement a plan.
3. Tell me about how you used realistic schedules and timetables to generate a plan leading to a specific goal.

Creativity: Able to develop unique and novel solutions to problems; use intuition and a new way of thinking to give birth to new ideas; to present information in an attention-getting and interesting manner.

1. Give me an example of a time when you came up with a unique and novel solution to a common problem.
2. Give me an example of a time when you think you were particularly creative in presenting information by use of graphics, models, or displays. Focus on how your methods produced results.
3. Creativity often means stepping back from regimented ways of thinking. When have you been able to break out of a structured mind set and intuitively play with concepts and ideas?

Integrity: Able to modify one's own behavioral style to respond to the needs of others while maintaining one's own objectives and sense of dignity.

1. Tell me about a time when you were able to change in order to meet the needs of others.
2. Tell me about a time when you felt it necessary to compromise your own immediate interests in order to be socially flexible and tolerant of another person's needs.
3. Even more difficult than dealing with a difficult person is being of service to a difficult person. Tell me about a time when you have been successful with this type of situation at work.
4. Tell me about a time when you were asked to compromise your integrity.
5. Describe a time when you had to bend the rules in order to be successful or accomplish a goal.

Reading the System: Able to recognize and use information about organizational climate and key individuals to accomplish legitimate organizational goals; be aware of the importance of timing, politics, and group processes in managing change.

1. Tell me about a time in your background in which you feel you work "within the system", handling a political system effectively.
2. Tell me about a time when your understanding of organizational climate or culture helped you to achieve your desired results.
3. When have you been successful in discovering a key person's motivation and using that knowledge to bring about an important change?
4. Give me an example of a time when your timing, political awareness, and knowledge of how groups work enhanced your ability to generate a change.

Team Building: Able to work with people in such a manner as to build high morale and group commitments to goals and objectives.

1. Tell me about a time when you had your biggest success in building a team spirit.
2. Tell me about a time when you contributed to a working group's ability to direct itself by building group standards for performance.
3. Describe a time when you used the technique of collecting suggestions to build team commitment.
4. Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully with the result of building teamwork and morale.

Decision Making and Problem Solving: Able to take action in solving problems while exhibiting judgment and a realistic understanding of issues; able to use reason, even when dealing with emotional topics.

1. Tell me about a time when you were proud of your ability to be objective even though you were emotional about a problem situation.
2. Tell me about a time when your understanding of issues associated with a problem provided you with a foundation for generating a good solution.

3. Tell me about a time when you resisted the temptation to “jump to conclusions” and thoroughly obtained all facts associated with a problem before coming to a solution.
4. Give me an example of how you reached a practical business decision by an organized review of the facts and weighing of options.

Leadership: Able to influence the actions and opinions of others in a desired direction; to exhibit judgment in leading others to worthwhile objectives.

1. Give me an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.
2. Give me an example of the greatest success you ever had in the use of delegation.
3. Describe a work situation where your ability to set a positive example served as a model to others.
4. Give me an example of how you have used your own personal qualities and appeal to lead others.
5. Tell me about a time when you made an unpopular decision.

20 Sample Questions to Ask in an Interview

1. Describe a typical first year assignment.
2. What are the responsibilities of the position?
3. What are the most challenging aspects of the job?
4. What is the departmental structure?
5. How would you describe your organization's culture?
6. Why do you enjoy working for your organization?
7. What initial training will I receive?
8. What opportunities for professional and growth does the organization offer?
9. How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
10. What are the characteristics of a successful person at your company?
11. What are the organization's plans for future growth?
12. What is a typical career path at your organization?
13. What are the biggest challenges facing the organization/department?
14. What is the management style of the organization? Of the department?
15. What are the goals of the department? Of the organization?
16. How much travel is normally expected?
17. How many hours a week to employees usually work?
18. How frequently do you relocate your employees?
19. How much decision-making authority is given to new employees?
20. Does the organization promote from within or fill high-level position with outside hires?