

14

Interviewing, Writing Follow-Up Messages, and Succeeding in the Job

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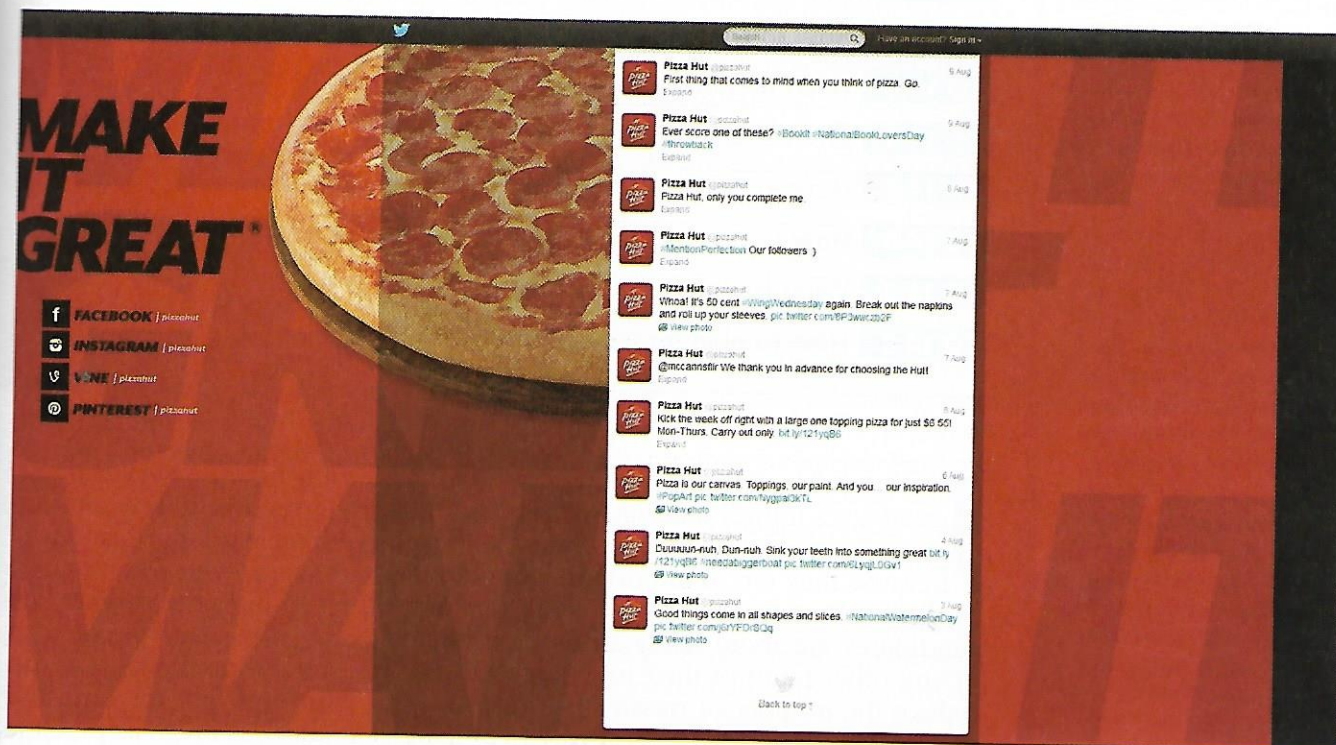
Starting Your Career

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- A Long-Term Strategy

Summary by Learning Objectives

NEWSWORTHY COMMUNICATION

The Twitter Interview



Many companies are working to improve how they handle their social networking presence. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and even Instagram have become vital parts of many companies' marketing and public relations strategies. It's no longer enough to assign someone to pay attention to social media; now companies are hiring specialized social media experts to design organized marketing campaigns.

But where do companies find a social media expert? How do they

determine who will succeed in this relatively new field?

When Pizza Hut was looking for an expert, the company decided to do something different: hold interviews that tested the candidates' abilities to communicate in short formats. Rather than conducting traditional job interviews, each candidate was given 140 seconds (inspired by Twitter's 140-character message limit) to say why they would be best for the position.

According to Caroline Masullo, Pizza Hut's director of digital and

social marketing, "We're specifically looking for people who are quick on their feet, know who they are, [and are] passionate about pizza and [about] Pizza Hut specifically." She says that the super-short interview allows Pizza Hut to find someone who can communicate in "the way [consumers] communicate with brands."

The Twitter-style interview is not appropriate for every job, of course. But more and more, job interviews are designed to test candidates' abilities to succeed in actually doing the job, not just talking about it.

Source: Laurel Nakkas, "Pizza Hut Takes on Interviewing, Twitter-Style," *QSR Magazine*, March 8, 2013, <http://www.qsrmagazine.com/news/pizza-hut-takes-interviewing-twitter-style>.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

- LO 14-1** What interview channels you may encounter.
- LO 14-2** How to create a strategy for successful interviewing.
- LO 14-3** What preparations to make before you start interviewing.
- LO 14-4** What to do during an interview.
- LO 14-5** How to answer common interview questions.
- LO 14-6** How to prepare for less common interview types.
- LO 14-7** What to do after an interview.
- LO 14-8** How to plan for a successful career.

Job interviews are an important part of the hiring process. A survey of 600 managers found that they overwhelmingly preferred evaluating job candidates in person, either by interviews or temporary work performance.¹ Because they are so important, job interviews are scary, even when you've prepared thoroughly. Surveys show that, according to hiring managers, job candidates are more likely to make mistakes during their interviews than at any other point of their job search.² But when you are prepared, you can reduce the number of missteps so that you put your best foot forward and get the job you want. The best way to prepare is to know as much as possible about the process and the employer. The following steps will help you prepare well for the interview process:

- Learn the kinds of interview channels you may encounter.
- Create a strategy for interviewing.
- Prepare for your interview.
- Be aware of the customs and expectations of interviews.
- Be prepared to answer common interview questions.
- Prepare to accept an offer and succeed in your career.

Interview Channels **LO 14-1**

Although you may picture a job interview in a traditional office setting, modern interviews use other channels as well. Knowing about different interview channels can help you prepare for a successful interview. As a college student, you may well find yourself being interviewed on campus. You may also find you have a phone interview or videoconference, as more and more companies use technology to keep hiring costs in check. Most of the interview advice in this chapter applies to all settings, but some channels do have unique particulars you should consider.

Campus Interviews

Most campus career offices have written protocols and expectations for campus interviews arranged through them. Be sure to follow these expectations so that you look informed.

Remember that campus job fairs are the first places to make an impression on recruiters and interviewers (see Chapter 12 for more information). As you approach the booths at a job fair, show interest, be engaged, and be prepared with a résumé, business card, or other professional materials. If you make a good impression at a job fair, you already have an advantage when you enter the formal campus interview later.

Because campus interviewers will see so many students who are all following the same protocols, it is important that you have good details and professional stories about your work to help you stand out from the crowd. Focus on three to four selling points you most want the interviewer to remember about you. If you have a choice, do not schedule your interview late in the day when interviewers are getting tired.

Phone Interviews

Your job search will involve a lot of time on the phone. You should place special emphasis on developing your phone skills for before the interview, during the interview, and when you are following up. Be polite to everyone with whom you speak, including administrative assistants and secretaries. Find out the person's name on your first call and use it on subsequent calls. Be considerate, both on the phone and when leaving voice mail messages. Keep your messages concise, and make sure to give both your name and your phone number slowly and distinctly.

Some organizations use phone interviews to narrow the list of candidates they bring in for office visits. Phone interviews give you some advantages. Obviously, you do not have to dress up for them, or find an office. You can use all the materials you want as you speak. You can also take all the notes you want, although copious note-taking will probably impact your speaking quality, and you certainly don't want the sound of keyboard clicking to be heard by your interviewer.

On the other hand, phone interviews obviously deny you the important component of visual feedback. To compensate for this loss, you can ask your interviewer for verbal feedback (e.g., Is this sufficient detail? Would you like more on this topic?).

Here are some additional tips for a good phone interview:

- **Speak distinctly.** Although you always want to speak distinctly at an interview, doing so is even more crucial for a phone interview.
- **Treat the interview like an in-person interview.** Although you don't need to dress up, doing so may help you focus and be appropriately formal. Speech experts recommend that you smile, lean forward, and gesture, even though no one can see you. Such activities add warmth and personality to your words.
- **Find a quiet, private location.** Don't interview in a room where people are coming and going. Be sure to eliminate all background noise such as music or TV.
- **Make sure your phone works.** If you are using your cell phone, make sure it is fully charged before the interview *and* that you can get good reception in the room where you will be speaking. If possible, use a landline instead to get a better, clearer, and more consistent connection.
- **Focus on your selling points.** Just as you did for a campus interview, focus on three to four selling points you most want the interviewer to remember about you.

Getting Hired by the "Best"



To get a job at one of *Fortune* magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For," you need to ace your interview, but you also need to take advantage of opportunities.

- Ryan Browning had always wanted to work for Mercedes-Benz. While he was in an MBA program at Duke University, he met a company rep on three occasions over three years. She was impressed that he remembered her name. He got a job, and now supervises the Pre-Owned Sales Department for Mercedes-Benz, USA.
- Amanda Thompson took a half-day temp job as a receptionist at Hilcorp Energy Company. The HR recruiter for the company had to wait in the lobby for a delayed order for 45 minutes, and she saw Amanda interacting with customers and employees. The next day Hilcorp offered Amanda a full-time position.
- When Perry Erdahl's young son was diagnosed with cancer, he took the boy to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where doctors saved his life. Years later, Perry took a job in the IT department at Mayo, eager to contribute to the company. Using his experience as the parent of a patient, he improved Mayo's payment system. Bosses noticed, and Perry is now a project manager at the Mayo's Center for Innovation.

Adapted from Shelley Dubois, "2013 Best Companies to Work For: How I Found My Job at a Best Company," *CNNMoney*, January 17, 2013, <http://money.cnn.com/gallery/pf/jobs/2013/01/17/best-companies-find-a-job.fortune/index.html>.

Career Fair Advice



Stanford University's Career Development Center offers the following tips for career fairs:

1. Prepare for the career fair. Answer the following questions before you attend:
 - What organizations are attending?
 - How will the employers be organized at the event?
 - What is the starting and ending time?
 - What attire is appropriate?
2. Prepare a résumé to hand out to potential employers. However, if you do not have a résumé, you can still attend the fair to gather information.
3. Set up a plan: Make a prioritized list of organizations you want to visit. However, be open to interesting organizations you run across at the fair.
4. Create a one-minute presentation to give to potential employers outlining your background and qualifications that will meet the organization's needs.
5. Bring questions to ask.
6. Bring a pen and notepad to stay organized during the fair.
7. Collect business cards and write a fact on the back to remember when you write a thank-you.
8. Thank employers at the fair for materials you are given.
9. Write a thank-you note to those organizations you wish to pursue.

Adapted from "Preparing for a Career Fair," Stanford University Career Development Center, accessed June 27, 2013, <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/cdc/services/career-fair-prepare>.

Video Interviews

Video interviews are becoming more common. You may experience two different kinds. In one, the organization sends you a list of questions and you prepare a video to send back to them. In the other, the organization conducts live interviews using videoconferencing equipment or programs such as Skype.

If you are preparing a video,

- **Practice your answers so you are fluent.** You don't want to stumble over your responses, but you also don't want to sound like you have memorized the answers.
- **Be thorough.** Since the employer can't ask follow-up questions, you want to consider what those questions could be and then be sure to answer them.
- **Pay attention to your surroundings.** Make sure you choose a location for your video with a background that is not visually distracting. If you choose a background with objects, make it someplace interesting and, if possible, related to your field (for example, a laboratory or a set of bookshelves). But take care that the background is not cluttered or distracting and that it does not include objects or pictures that could hurt the professional image you are trying to establish.

If you are participating in a videoconference,

- **Do a practice video ahead of time.** Listen to your pronunciation and voice qualities. Watch your video with the sound turned off: check your posture, gestures, facial expressions, and clothing. Do you have nervous mannerisms you need to control?
- **During the actual interview, keep your answers under two minutes.** Then ask if interviewers want more information. People are generally more reluctant to interrupt a speaker in another location, and body language cues are limited, so ask for feedback ("Would you like to hear about that?").
- **Treat the interview as if you are in the same room.** Remember that even though you are not in the same room with the interviewers, they are still judging your appearance and mannerisms as if you were sitting in front of them. Use the tips for an in-person interview to help your videoconference interview go well.
- **Be prepared for a technology failure.** While the technologies that support videoconferencing are improving quickly, they still may have glitches. Be prepared for a technology failure by providing your telephone number in a polite e-mail before the interview and having your phone handy and charged just in case.

Interview Strategy LO 14-2

One of the most important steps in preparing for your interview is to have a successful interview strategy. Develop an overall strategy based on your answers to these three questions:

1. **What about yourself do you want the interviewer to know?** Pick two to five points that represent your strengths for that particular job and that show how you will add value to the organization. These facts are frequently character traits (such as enthusiasm), achievements, and experiences that qualify you for the job and separate you from other applicants, or unique abilities such as fluency in Spanish. For each strength, think of a specific accomplishment to support it. For instance, be ready to give an

example to prove that you're hardworking. Be ready to show how you helped an organization save money or serve customers better with specific numbers and details: "I saved my department \$250,000 over three years with my redesigned training program."

Then at the interview, listen to every question to see if you could make one of your key points as part of your answer. If the questions don't allow you to make your points, bring them up at the end of the interview.

2. **What disadvantages or weaknesses do you need to minimize?** Expect that you may be asked to explain weaknesses or apparent weaknesses in your record such as lack of experience, so-so grades, and gaps in your record.

Plan how to deal with these issues if they arise. Decide if you want to bring them up yourself, particularly disadvantages or weaknesses that are easily discoverable. If you bring them up, you can plan the best context for them during the interview. Many students, for example, have been able to get good jobs after flunking out of school by explaining that the experience was a turning point in their lives and pointing out that when they returned to school they maintained a B or better grade point average. Although it is illegal to ask questions about marital status, married candidates with spouses who are able to move easily sometimes volunteer that information: "My husband is a dentist and is willing to relocate if the company wants to transfer me." See the suggestions later in this chapter under "Traditional Interview Questions and Answers," "Behavioral Interviews," and "Situational Interviews."

3. **What do you need to know about the job and the organization to decide whether you want to accept this job if it is offered to you?** Plan *in advance* the criteria on which you will base your decision (you can always change the criteria). Use "Deciding Which Offer to Accept" below to plan questions to elicit the information you'll need to rank each offer.

Interview Preparation LO 14-3

With your strategy in place, you can prepare for a specific interview. Preparing for your interviews is vital in these days of intense competition for jobs. It can also help you to feel more confident and make a better impression.

Final Research

Research the company interviewing you. Read its web pages, Facebook page, Twitter page, company newsletters, and annual reports. Many companies now have YouTube videos and employee blogs to give you insight into the company and its culture. Some of them even offer interview tips. Read about the company in trade journals and newspapers. Search the Internet. Ask your professors, classmates, friends, family, and co-workers about the firm. If possible, find out who will interview you and research them, too.

Also research salaries for the job: What is average? What is the range? Use web tools like those found at indeed.com/salary or salary.com to find salary information by job title and location.

Elevator Speech

After you have finished your research, prepare your elevator speech, a short—60–90 seconds—powerful statement of why you are a good candidate for this particular job. (The name comes from the scenario of being alone with the recruiter for a multifloor elevator ride. What can you say in that short period

What Not to Wear at an Interview



CareerBuilder surveyed hiring professionals to discover the top fashion mistakes interviewees make:

1. Too-short skirts.
2. Overly bright or vividly patterned clothing.
3. Wrinkled or stained clothing.
4. Poorly fitted clothing.
5. Socks that are too short, or don't go with the shoes.
6. Patterned hosiery or bare legs.
7. Scuffed or inappropriate footwear, including sneakers, stilettos, sandals, and open-toed shoes.
8. Extra buttons or tags attached to a new suit.
9. Earrings on men; multiple sets of earrings on women.
10. Visible tattoos, tongue jewelry, facial piercings.
11. Heavy makeup.
12. Long or bright fingernails.
13. Unnatural hair colors or styles.
14. Strong aftershaves, perfumes, or colognes.
15. Backpacks, fanny packs, or purses (use a briefcase).
16. Sunglasses on top of your head or headphones around your neck.

Adapted from "What Not to Wear to an Interview: Top 20 Wardrobe Malfunctions," CareerBuilder, accessed June 27, 2013, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-462-Getting-Hired-What-Not-to-Wear-to-an-Interview/>.

com/Article/CB-462-Getting-Hired-What-Not-to-Wear-to-an-Interview/.

to convince the recruiter to consider you?) Even though it is short, your elevator speech will need some carefully selected details to be convincing. It will come in handy for questions like "Tell me about yourself" or "Why should I hire you?" It is useful in a variety of situations, including group interviews and receptions where you meet a variety of the company's employees in brief, one-on-one conversations.

Travel Planning

Before your interview, make sure you can find the building and the closest parking. Plan how much time you will need to get there. Leave time cushions for stressors such as traffic jams or broken elevators. If you are fortunate enough to be flown to an interview, don't schedule too tightly. Allow for flight delays and cancellations. Plan how you will get from the airport to the interview site. Take enough cash and credit cards to cover emergencies.

Attire

First impressions are important; employers start judging you from the first second they see you. A major part of that first impression is your appearance.

The outfit you wear to an interview should meet your interviewer's expectations. The most conservative choice is the traditional dark business suit with a light blouse or shirt plus tie, shoes with matching dark socks for men and close-toed pumps with nude, unpatterned hose for women. Although this outfit is probably still the most common choice, you cannot count on it being the right choice. Many companies now expect more casual attire: sport jackets for men, coordinated jackets for women. Skirts should come at least to the knee; tight or low-cut tops should be avoided. Sneakers and sandals are inappropriate.

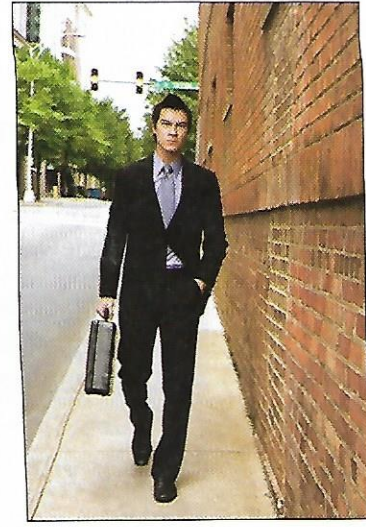
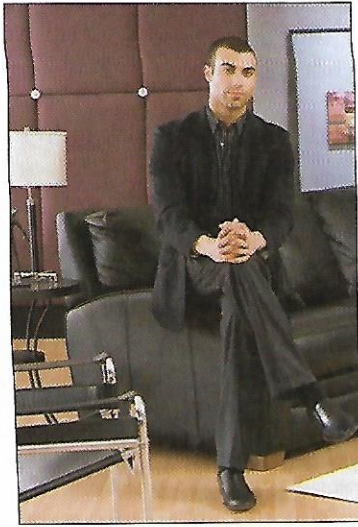
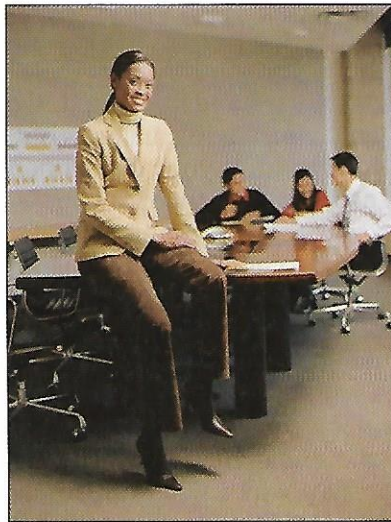
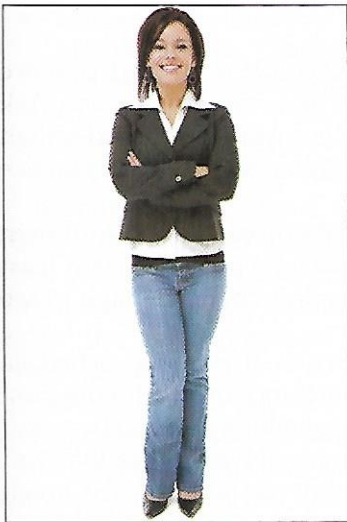
For campus interviews, you should still be professional in your attire. Although recruiters and interviewers on campus know they are interviewing students, you shouldn't dress like a student. Treat the interview like an off-campus interview and dress up (within the guidelines and dress code of your campus career center). If possible, leave your backpack, laptop, and other items you would take to class at home or in a safe location. Take only those things that you need, like a pen or pencil, some paper, your résumé, and any work samples or other materials you may need during the interview.

For office interviews, you should show that you understand the organization's culture. Try to find out from your career contacts what is considered appropriate attire. While some interviewers do not mind if you ask them what you should wear to the interview, others do, so be careful. Use your other contacts first before you ask the interviewer. Find out what other employees wear each day, and dress a little nicer.³

No matter what outfit you choose, make sure it fits well (especially important if it has been a few months since you wore it), is comfortable, and does not show too much cleavage or chest. Avoid casual items such as skintight pants, shorts, or sandals.

Choose comfortable shoes. You may do a fair amount of walking during an onsite interview. Check your heels to make sure they aren't run down; make sure your shoes are shined.

Make conservative choices. Have your hair cut or styled conservatively. Jewelry and makeup should be understated; face jewelry, such as eyebrow and nose studs, should be removed. If possible, cover tattoos. Personal hygiene must be impeccable, with close attention paid to fingernails and breath. Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed. Avoid cologne and perfumed after-shave lotions.



You can wear a wide range of apparel to interviews. Find out what is appropriate—and inappropriate—for each interview. Which of these outfits would you wear?

Professional Materials

Take extra copies of your résumé. If your campus placement office has already given the interviewer a data sheet, present the résumé at the beginning of the interview: "I thought you might like a little more information about me."

Take something to write on and something to write with. It's OK to carry a small notepad with the questions you want to ask on it.

Take copies of your work or a portfolio: an engineering design, a copy of a letter you wrote on a job or in a business writing class, an article you wrote for the campus paper. You don't need to present these unless the interview calls for them, but they can be very effective: "Yes, I have done a media plan. Here's a copy of a plan I put together in my advertising seminar last year. We had a fixed budget and used real figures for cost and rating points, just as I'd do if I joined Toth and Rawlins."

Take the names, street addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of references. Take complete details about your work history and education, including dates and street addresses, in case you're asked to fill out an application form.

If you can afford it, buy a briefcase in which to carry these items. At this point in your life, an inexpensive vinyl briefcase is acceptable. Women should let the briefcase replace a purse.

Interviewing with Amazon



Amazon hires hundreds of undergraduates and MBAs each year. What does the company look for in an interview?

- "A really strong sense of ownership, customer obsession, a strong bias for action and teamwork."
- "The ability to influence others, to invent and deliver on behalf of the customer."
- "It doesn't really matter where you've been, the school name that's on your résumé. What we're really looking for is the experience you've had, what you've actually delivered."

Bullets quoted from Melissa Korn, "What It's Like to Interview at Amazon," *Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2013, B7.

Interview Practice

Rehearse everything you can: Put on the clothes you'll wear and practice entering a room, shaking hands, sitting down, and answering questions. Ask a friend to interview you. Saying answers out loud is surprisingly harder than saying them in your head. If your department or career center offers practice interviews, take advantage of them.

Some campuses have videotaping facilities so that you can watch your own sample interview. Videotaping is particularly valuable if you can do it at least twice, so you can modify behavior the second time and check the tape to see whether the modification works.

Your interviewing skills will improve with practice. If possible, schedule a few interviews with other companies before your interview with your first choice company. However, even if you're just interviewing for practice, you must still do all the research on that company. If interviewers sense that you aren't interested, they won't take you seriously and you won't learn much from the process. Also, interviewers talk to each other, sharing impressions and stories, sometimes with names attached.

Interview Customs LO 14-4

Strategy, preparation, and practice help you get ready for your interviews. But you also need to be aware of what will be expected of you during the interview. Not all interviews are question-and-answer sessions. More employers are starting to use other screening devices; they are asking candidates to provide on-the-spot writing samples, or to take critical thinking, intelligence, writing, skills, personality, emotional intelligence, and drug tests. Some also use complicated computer algorithms to screen their applicants.⁴

Behavior

How you act at the interview is as important as what you say, and first impressions of behavior are as important as they are for appearance.

Employers start judging you from the first second they see you. If you meet multiple people, first impressions will begin anew with each encounter. Always act professionally. Have a firm, pleasant handshake; avoid the limp, dead-fish handshake or the overly aggressive knuckle-crusher. Be polite to everyone, including people such as security agents, receptionists, and people in the restroom. Learn names and introduce yourself whenever possible. Their input about you may be sought.

Politeness extends to the interview itself.

- Be punctual, but not too early (no more than 10 minutes early). Many recruiters don't like someone hanging around their reception area.
- Practice active listening (see Chapter 4); it makes speakers feel appreciated and you will likely pick up clues you can use effectively during your interview.
- Do not monopolize the interview time with lengthy monologues. Generally your interviewer will have many questions to cover and will not appreciate an undue amount of time wasted on just one. Check the interviewer's verbal cues and body language for the amount of detail and depth desired. After two to three minutes, ask if the interviewer wants more detail. The best interviews are conversations in which you and your interviewer enjoy your interactions.

- Never say anything bad about current and former employers, a category that includes schools. Candidates who snipe about their employers and instructors will likely continue to do so on their new job and thus appear to be unattractive colleagues.

Be enthusiastic about the job. **Enthusiasm** helps convince people you have the energy to do the job well. Show how you are a good choice for their job by clearly presenting your carefully chosen accomplishments and strengths. If you are attending an onsite interview, where you could well be asked the same questions by different people, prepare to repeat yourself—with enthusiasm.

Should you be yourself? There's no point in assuming a radically different persona. If you do, you run the risk of getting into a job that you'll hate (though the persona you assumed might have loved it). Furthermore, as interviewers point out, you have to be a pretty good actor to come across convincingly if you try to be someone other than yourself. Yet keep in mind that all of us have several selves: we can be lazy, insensitive, bored, slow-witted, and tongue-tied, but we can also be energetic, perceptive, interested, intelligent, and articulate. Be your best self at the interview.

Interviews can make you feel vulnerable and defensive; to counter this, review your accomplishments—the things you're especially proud of having done. You'll make a better impression if you have a firm sense of your own self-worth.

Every interviewer repeats the advice that you've probably heard: sit up straight, don't mumble, look at people when you talk. It's good advice for interviews. Be aware that many people respond negatively to smoking. Remember to turn off your cell phone.

As much as possible, avoid **nervous mannerisms**: playing with your hair, jingling coins in your pocket, clicking your pen, or repeating verbal spacers such as "like" and "uh." These mannerisms distract your audience and detract from your interview. It's OK to be a little nervous, however; it shows that you care.

Sometimes you will be asked to visit the company for a day or more of interviews. Because they may last longer, sometimes site interviews will present you with **minor problems** such as being brought back late from lunch, or being kept overtime with one interviewer so you are late for your appointment with another. Don't let these minor problems throw you. Think of them as a new opportunity to show that you can roll with the punches; move forward calmly.

If you have any **expenses**, be sure you keep all receipts for reimbursement. Many people forget to get taxi or shuttle receipts and thus are not reimbursed for those expenses.

The interview is also a time for you to see if you want to work for this organization. Look for signs of organizational culture (see Chapter 4). How do people treat each other? Are offices or cubbies personalized? How many hours a week do the newest employees work? Is this the place where you want to become another new employee?

Meal Etiquette

Site visits that involve meals and semi-social occasions call for sensible choices. Remember that as long as you are with any person from the company, you are in an interview. They are evaluating how you behave in different situations.

Body Language Mistakes



CareerBuilder surveyed over 2,500 hiring managers and found that body language mistakes can lessen the chances of being hired. Managers reported that poor eye contact (67%), no smile (38%), and fidgeting too much (33%) would lessen hiring chances.

Other negative mannerisms listed by hiring managers were

- Poor posture.
- Weak handshake.
- Crossed arms over the chest.
- Repeated hair or face touching.
- Too many hand gestures.

Videotaping a practice interview is a good way to check body language.

Adapted from CareerBuilder, "New CareerBuilder Survey Reveals Top Body Language Mistakes Candidates Make in Job Interviews," press release, July 28, 2010, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleases/detail.aspx?id=pr581&sd=7/29/2010&ed=7/29/2009>.



Meals may be an important part of the interview process. Be sure your manners measure up.

The meals during a site visit are more relaxed, but do not make the mistake of relaxing too much. Here are some tips:

- When you order, choose something that's easy to eat without being messy.
- Watch your table manners. Sit up straight, keep your arms off the table, and use your napkin. Silverware is used from the outside in. So you grab the correct glass or bread plate, remember BMW for table settings: bread on the left, meal in the center, water on the right.
- Take small bites that allow you to maintain the conversation—you are still answering interview questions.
- Eat a light lunch, so that you'll be alert during the afternoon.
- Do not drink alcohol at lunch. At dinner or an evening party, accept only one drink, if any. A survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 96% of human resources professionals believe job candidates should not drink at interview meals.⁵ Your best bet is to decline alcohol during your site visit, even if everyone else is drinking. You're still being evaluated, and you can't afford to have your guard down.

Note-Taking

During or immediately after the interview, write down

- The name of the interviewer (or all the people you talked to, if it's a group interview or an onsite visit).
- Tips the interviewer gave you about landing the job and succeeding in it.
- What the interviewer seemed to like best about you.
- Any negative points or weaknesses that came up that you need to counter in your follow-up messages or phone calls.
- Answers to your questions about the company.
- When you'll hear from the company.

The easiest way to get the interviewer's name is to ask for his or her card. You may be able to make all the notes you need on the back of the card.

Some interviewers say they respond negatively to applicants who take notes during the interview. However, if you have several interviews back-to-back or if you know your memory is terrible, do take brief notes during the interview. That's better than forgetting which company said you'd be on the road every other week and which interviewer asked that *you* get in touch with him or her. Try to maintain eye contact as much as possible while taking notes.

Interview Segments

Every interview has an opening, a body, and a close.

In the **opening** (two to five minutes), most good interviewers will try to set you at ease. Some interviewers will open with easy questions about your major or interests. Others open by telling you about the job or the company. If this happens, listen so you can answer questions later to show that you can do the job or contribute to the company that's being described.

The **body** of the interview (10 to 25 minutes) is an all-too-brief time for you to highlight your qualifications and find out what you need to know to decide if you want to accept a site trip. Expect questions that give you an opportunity to showcase your strong points and questions that probe any weaknesses evident from your résumé. (You were neither in school nor working last fall. What were you doing?) Normally the interviewer will also try to sell you on the company and give you an opportunity to raise questions.

You need to be aware of time so that you can make sure to get in your key points and questions: "We haven't covered it yet, but I want you to know that I . . ." "I'm aware that it's almost 10:30. I do have some more questions that I'd like to ask about the company."

In the **close** of the interview (two to five minutes), the interviewer will usually tell you what happens next: "We'll be bringing our top candidates to the office in February. You should hear from us in three weeks." Make sure you know who to contact if the next step is not clearly spelled out or you don't hear by the stated time.

The close of the interview is also the time for you to summarize your key accomplishments and strengths and to express enthusiasm for the job. Depending on the circumstances, you could say: "I've certainly enjoyed learning more about Zappos." "I hope I get a chance to visit your Las Vegas office. I'd really like to see the new computer system you talked about."

Traditional Interview Questions and Answers LO 14-5

One of the best ways to prepare for an interview is to practice answering specific common interview questions. As Figure 14.1 shows, successful applicants use different communication behaviors when answering questions than do unsuccessful applicants. Successful applicants are more likely to use the company name, show they have researched the company, support their claims with specific details, use appropriate technical language, and ask specific questions about the company and industry. In addition to practicing the content of questions, try to incorporate these tactics.

The ultimate questions in your interviewers' minds are probably these three: What can you do for us? Why should we hire you instead of another candidate? Will you fit in our company/division/office? However, many interviewers do not ask these questions directly. Instead, they ask other questions to get their answers more indirectly. Some of the more common questions

Figure 14.1**The Communication Behaviors of Successful Interviewees**

Behavior	Unsuccessful Interviewees	Successful Interviewees
Statements about the position	Have only vague ideas of what they want to do.	Specific and consistent about the position they want; are able to tell why they want the position.
Use of company name	Rarely use the company name.	Refer to the company by name.
Knowledge about company and position	Make it clear that they are using the interview to learn about the company and what it offers.	Make it clear that they have researched the company; refer to specific website, publications, or people who have given them information.
Level of interest, enthusiasm	Respond neutrally to interviewer's statements: "OK," "I see." Indicate reservations about company or location.	Express approval nonverbally and verbally of information provided by the interviewer; "That's great!" Explicitly indicate desire to work for this particular company.
Nonverbal behavior	Make little eye contact; smile infrequently.	Make eye contact often; smile.
Picking up on interviewer's cues	Give vague or negative answers even when a positive answer is clearly desired ("How are your writing skills?").	Answer positively and confidently; and back up the claim with a specific example.
Use of industry terms and technical jargon	Use almost no technical jargon.	Use appropriate technical jargon.
Use of specifics in answers	Give short answers—10 words or less, sometimes only one word; do not elaborate. Give general responses: "fairly well."	Support claims with specific personal experiences.
Questions asked by interviewee	Ask a small number of general questions.	Ask specific questions based on knowledge of the industry and the company. Personalize questions: "What would my duties be?"

are discussed below. Do some preparation before the interview so that you have answers that are responsive, honest, and positive. Choose answers that fit your qualifications and the organization's needs.

Initial interviews often seek to screen out less qualified candidates rather than to find someone to hire. Negative information will hurt you less if it comes out in the middle of the interview and is preceded and followed by positive information. If you blow a question near the end of the interview, don't leave until you've said something positive—perhaps restating one of the points you want the interviewer to know about you.

Check your answers for hidden negatives. If you say you are the kind of person who is always looking for challenges, your interviewer may wonder about hiring you for this entry-level position, which needs someone who does mostly routine work with care. Similarly, if you say you want lots of responsibility, your interviewer may again not see you as a good fit for entry-level positions, which are not known for providing lots of responsibility.

Rehearse your answers mentally, so you feel confident you have good answers. Then get family and friends to interview you. You may be surprised at how much work good mental answers still need when you give them out loud.

1. **Tell me about yourself.** Focus on several strengths that show you are a good candidate. Give examples with enough specifics to prove each strength. Don't launch into an autobiography, which will have too many details the interviewer will not care about. Provide professional, not personal, information. This is often one of the first questions asked in an interview; be prepared for it. Use it to set the tone of the interview and to establish your selling points.
2. **Walk me through your résumé.** Highlight your best features and offer reasons for major decisions. Why did you choose this college? Why did you take that job? Have professional reasons: You went to State U because it has a top-ranked accounting department, not because it is close to home; you took that summer job because it allowed some interaction with the company's accounting department, not because it was the only one you could find.
Don't try to cover too much; your résumé walk-through should be no longer than three minutes. Tie your résumé into your selling points, and add some interesting details that are not on your résumé. Above all, do maintain eye contact; do not read your résumé.
3. **What makes you think you're qualified to work for this company? Or, I'm interviewing 120 people for two jobs. Why should I hire you?** This question may feel like an attack. Use it as an opportunity to state (or restate) your strong points. Remember, though, that most of the candidates who are interviewing meet the basic qualifications. Your focus should be on the qualities that separate you from other applicants.
4. **What two or three accomplishments have given you the greatest satisfaction?** Pick accomplishments that you're proud of, that create the image you want to project, and that enable you to share one of the things you want the interviewer to know about you. Focus not just on the end result, but on the problem-solving, thinking, and innovation skills that made the achievement possible.
5. **Why do you want to work for us? What is your ideal job?** Even if you're interviewing just for practice, make sure you have a good answer—preferably two or three reasons you'd like to work for that company. If you don't seem to be taking the interview seriously, the interviewer won't take you seriously, and you won't even get good practice.
If your ideal job is very different from the ones the company has available, the interviewer may simply say there isn't a good match and end the interview. If you're interested in this company, do some research so that what you ask for is in the general ballpark of the kind of work the company offers.
6. **What college subjects did you like best and least? Why?** This question may be an icebreaker; it may be designed to discover the kind of applicant they're looking for. If your favorite class was something outside your major, prepare an answer that shows that you have qualities that can help you in the job you're applying for: "My favorite class was a seminar in the American novel. We got a chance to think on our own, rather than just regurgitate facts; we made presentations to the class every week. I found I really like sharing my ideas with other people and presenting reasons for my conclusions about something."
7. **What is your class rank? Your grade point? Why are your grades so low?** If your grades aren't great, be ready with a nondefensive explanation. If possible, show that the cause of low grades now has been solved or isn't relevant to the job you're applying for: "My father almost died last year, and my schoolwork really suffered." "When I started, I didn't have any

Tell Me a Story



One effective way to stand out from the hordes of people being interviewed is to tell a memorable story about yourself.

- Choose a story that shows your personality as well as professional abilities.
- Use a story highly relevant for the particular job.
- Use colorful details, including sensory ones.
- Keep it short—two minutes at the very most.
- Your story is to be an honest anecdote about your professional self, not a fiction.

firm goals. Once I discovered the field that was right for me, my grades have all been B's or better." "I'm not good at multiple-choice tests. But I am good at working with people."

8. What have you read recently? What movies have you seen recently?

These questions may be icebreakers; they may be designed to probe your intellectual depth. The term you're interviewing, read at least one book or magazine (multiple issues) and see at least one serious movie that you could discuss at an interview. Make thoughtful selections.

9. Show me some samples of your writing. Many jobs require the ability to write well. Employers no longer take mastery of basic English for granted, even if the applicant has a degree from a prestigious university.

The year you're interviewing, go through your old papers and select a few of the best ones, editing them if necessary, so that you'll have samples to present at the interview if you're asked for them.

10. Describe a major problem you have encountered in your work and how you dealt with it. Choose a problem that was not your fault: a customer's last-minute change to a large order, a flu outbreak during Christmas rush. In your solution, stress skills you know the company will be seeking.

11. What are your interests outside work? What campus or community activities have you been involved in? While it's desirable to be well-rounded, naming 10 interests is a mistake: the interviewer may wonder when you'll have time to work. Select activities that show skills and knowledge you can use on the job: "I have polished my persuasion skills by being a cabin counselor at a camp for troubled preteens."

If you mention your fiancé, spouse, or children in response to this question ("Well, my fiancé and I like to go sailing"), it is perfectly legal for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions ("What would you do if your spouse got a job offer in another town?"), even though the same question would be illegal if the interviewer brought up the subject first.

12. What have you done to learn about this company? An employer may ask this to see what you already know about the company (if you've read the recruiting literature and the website, the interviewer doesn't need to repeat them). This question may also be used to see how active a role you're taking in the job search process and how interested you are in this job.

13. What adjectives would you use to describe yourself? Use only positive ones. Be ready to illustrate each with a specific example of something you've done.

14. What are your greatest strengths? Employers ask this question to give you a chance to sell yourself and to learn something about your values. Pick strengths related to work, school, or activities: "I'm good at working with people." "I really can sell things." "I'm good at solving problems." "I learn quickly." "I'm reliable. When I say I'll do something, I do it." Be ready to illustrate each with a specific example of something you've done. It is important to relate your strengths to the specific position.

15. What is your greatest weakness? Use a work-related negative, even if something in your personal life really is your greatest weakness. Interviewers won't let you get away with a "weakness" like being a workaholic or just not having any experience yet. Instead, use one of these strategies:

- a. Discuss a weakness that is not related to the job you're being considered for and will not be needed even when you're promoted. (Even if you won't work with people or give speeches in your first job, you'll need those skills later in your career, so don't use them for this question.) End your answer with a positive that *is* related to the job.

[For a creative job in advertising:] I don't like accounting. I know it's important, but I don't like it. I even hire someone to do my taxes. I'm much more interested in being creative and working with people, which is why I find this position interesting.

[For a job in administration:] I don't like selling products. I hated selling cookies when I was a Girl Scout. I'd much rather work with ideas—and I really like selling the ideas that I believe in.

- b. Discuss a weakness that you are working to improve.

In the past, I wasn't a good writer. But last term I took a course in business writing that taught me how to organize my ideas and how to revise. I may never win a Pulitzer Prize, but now I can write effective reports and letters.

- c. Describe advice you received, and how that advice helped your career.

The professor for whom I was an undergraduate assistant pointed out to me that people respond well to liberal praise, and that I was not liberal with mine. As I have worked on providing more positive feedback, I have become a better manager.

16. **What are your career goals? Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?** This question is frequently a test to see if you fit with this company. Are your goals ones that can be met at this company? Or will the company have the expense of training you only to see you move on promptly to another company?

17. **Why are you looking for another job?** Do not answer this with a negative—"My boss didn't like me," "I didn't like the work"—even if the negative is true. Stress the new opportunities you're looking for in a new job, not why you want to get away from your old one: "I want more opportunity to work with clients."

Also be careful of hidden negatives: "I couldn't use all my abilities in my last job" sounds like you are complaining. It also suggests that you don't take the initiative to find new challenges. If you are looking for a job with a bigger salary, it is better to use other points when answering this question.

If you were fired, say so. There are various acceptable ways to explain why you were fired:

- It wasn't a good match. Add what you now know you need in a job, and ask what the employer can offer in this area.
 - You and your supervisor had a personality conflict. Make sure you show that this was an isolated incident, and that you normally get along well with people.
 - You made mistakes, but you've learned from them and are now ready to work well. Be ready to offer a specific anecdote proving that you have indeed changed.
18. **Why do you have a gap in your employment history?** Answer briefly and positively; do not apologize for family decisions.

I cared for an ill family member. Because of the time it took, it wasn't fair to an employer to start a new job.

I stayed home with my children while they were young. Now that they are both in school, I can devote myself to top performance in your company.

If you were laid off, be prepared to explain why you were one of the people let go. It helps if you can truthfully say that all new employees with less than three years' experience at the firm were laid off, or that legal services were outsourced, or that the entire training department was disbanded. Be careful you do not display bitter, angry feelings; they will not help you get a new job. It may help you to realize that in tight economies, being laid off is not an issue for many interviewers.

19. **What questions do you have?** This question gives you a chance to cover things the interviewer hasn't brought up; it also gives the interviewer a sense of your priorities and values. Almost all interviewers will ask you for questions, and it is crucial that you have some. A lack of questions will probably be interpreted as a lack of interest in the company and a lack of preparation for the interview. Figure 14.2 lists some questions you might want to ask.

Do not ask these questions:

- Questions about information you can easily find (and should have found) on the company's website.
- Questions that indicate dissatisfaction with the job for which you are being interviewed (How soon can I get promoted?).
- Questions about salary and benefits (wait until you have a job offer).

Not all questions asked by interviewers are proper. Various federal, state, and local laws prohibit questions that would allow employers to discriminate

Figure 14.2 Questions to Ask about a Potential Job

- What would I be doing on a day-to-day basis?
- What's the top challenge I would face in this job?
- What kind of training program do you have?
- How do you evaluate employees? How often do you review them?
- What will a good employee have done by the time of his or her first evaluation?
- Where would you expect a new trainee (banker, staff accountant) to be three years from now? Five years? Ten years?
- What happened to the last person who had this job?
- How would you describe the company's culture?
- This sounds like a great job. What are the drawbacks?
- How are interest rates (new products from competitors, imports, demographic trends, government regulations, etc.) affecting your company? Questions like these show that you care enough to do your homework and that you are aware of current events.
- What do you like best about working for this company? Ending with a question like this closes your interview on an upbeat note.

on the basis of protected characteristics such as race, sex, age, disability, and marital status. If you are asked an improper or illegal question during an interview, you have several options:

-
- You can answer the question, but you may not get hired if you give the “wrong” answer.
 - You can refuse to answer the question. Doing so is within your rights, but it may make you look uncooperative or confrontational, so again you may not get hired.
 - You can look for the intent behind the question and provide an answer related to the job. For example, if you were asked who would care for your children when you had to work late on an urgent project, you could answer that you can meet the work schedule a good performance requires.
-

Keep in mind in each situation that legal and illegal questions can be very similar. It is legal to ask if you are over 18, but illegal to ask you how old you are. It is legal to ask you which languages you speak (if that talent is relevant for the job), but it is illegal to ask you what your native language is. Also be careful of variants of illegal questions. Asking when you graduated from high school gives the interviewer a pretty good idea of your age.

You won’t be able to anticipate every question you may get. Check with other people at your college or university who have interviewed recently to find out what questions are currently being asked in your field. Search the Internet for the most common interview questions.

Kinds of Interviews LO 14-6

Although traditional interviews are still the most popular form of interview, many companies are turning to alternative kinds of interviews that may help them find the best employees. Many companies will inform you about what to expect during the interview, but you should be prepared for these less common interview types. Some of the other kinds of interviews include behavioral, situational, stress, group, and multiple interviews.

Behavioral Interviews

Using the theory that past behaviors predict future performance, **behavioral interviews** ask applicants to describe actual past behaviors, rather than future plans. Thus instead of asking “How would you motivate people?” the interviewer might ask, “Tell me what happened the last time you wanted to get other people to do something.” Follow-up questions might include, “What exactly did you do to handle the situation? How did you feel about the results? How did the other people feel? How did your superior feel about the results?”

Additional behavioral questions may ask you to describe a situation in which you

-
- Created an opportunity for yourself in a job or volunteer position.
 - Used writing to achieve your goal.
 - Went beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
 - Communicated successfully with someone you disliked.

Panel Interviews



If you've seen a Senate committee grill a person nominated for a federal job, you've seen a panel interview. This trend is growing even in the private sectors. If you will have a panel interview, here are some tips to help you.

- Write down the names of panel members, in their seating order, as they introduce themselves.
- Focus on one question at a time rather than getting overwhelmed by the entire experience.
- Address the current questioner, but also make eye contact with other panel members.
- Try to identify the person with the most authority, and use his or her body language for cues about your performance. The body language of the other people usually helps you make this identification. For instance, everyone may look to that person for the answer to a question.
- Try to ask at least one question of each panel member. Doing so makes you look prepared and invested in the job, and the responses from various panel members help you get a better idea about the company.
- Write a thank-you note to each panel member.

- Had to make a decision quickly.
- Took a project from start to finish.
- Used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Worked under a tight deadline.
- Worked with a tough boss.
- Worked with someone who wasn't doing his or her share of the work.

In your answer, describe the situation, tell what you did, and explain what happened. Think about the implications of what you did and be ready to talk about whether you'd do the same thing next time or if the situation were slightly different. For example, if you did the extra work yourself when a team member didn't do his or her share, does that fact suggest that you prefer to work alone? If the organization you're interviewing with values teams, you may want to go on to show why doing the extra work was appropriate in that situation but that you can respond differently in other situations.

A good way to prepare for behavioral interviews is to make a chart. Across the top list jobs, accomplishments, and projects. Down the left side, list qualities employers will want in candidates for the jobs you seek. These qualities should include skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, networking, influencing people, and leadership; traits such as honesty, reliability, and a developed ethical sense; and the ability to meet situations such as those in the list above. Then you fill in the boxes. How does that presentation you made to skeptical administrators demonstrate your communication skills? Your ethics? Your ability to perform under pressure? Make sure each item in your boxes casts you in a favorable light: the ability to work under pressure is generally valued, but if you had to pull three all-nighters to finish your marketing project, employers might see you as a procrastinator.

Situational Interviews

Situational interviews put you in situations similar to those you will face on the job. They test your problem-solving skills, as well as your ability to handle problems under time constraints and with minimal preparation. While behavioral interviews asked how you handled something in the past, situational interviews focus on the future. For instance, for jobs with strong service components you could expect to be asked how you would handle an angry client. For jobs with manufacturing companies, you might be asked to imagine a new product.

Frequently situational interviews contain actual tasks candidates are asked to perform. You may be asked to fix some computer coding, sell something to a client, prepare a brochure, or work with an actual spreadsheet. Two favorite tasks are to ask candidates to prepare and give a short presentation with visuals or to work through an online in-box. Both of these tasks test communication and organization skills, as well as the ability to perform under time constraints.

Stress Interviews

Obviously, if the task is complex, performing it at a job interview, particularly with time constraints, is stressful. Thus situational interviews can easily move



Stress interviews can use physical conditions and people placement to see how candidates respond to uncomfortable situations. You have the option to change some uncomfortable conditions, such as lights shining in your eyes.

into stress interviews. The higher you move in your career, the more likely it is that you will have situational or stress interviews. **Stress interviews** deliberately put applicants under stress to see how they handle the pressure. The key is to stay calm; try to maintain your sense of humor.

Sometimes the stress is physical: for example, you're given a chair where the light is in your eyes. Speak up for yourself: ask if the position of the blind can be changed, or move to another chair.

Usually the stress is psychological. Panel interviews, such as those for many political appointments, may be stressful (see "The Four-Day Interview" sidebar on page 472). The group of interviewers may fire rapid questions. However, you can slow the pace with deliberate answers. In another possibility, a single interviewer may probe every weak spot in your record and ask questions that elicit negatives. If you get questions that put you on the defensive, rephrase them in less inflammatory terms, if necessary, and then treat them as requests for information.

- Q: Why did you major in physical education? That sounds like a pretty Mickey Mouse major.
- A: Are you wondering whether I have the academic preparation for this job? I started out in physical education because I've always loved team sports. I learned that I couldn't graduate in four years if I officially switched my major to business administration because the requirements were different in the two programs. But I do have 21 hours in business administration and 9 hours in accounting. And my sports experience gives me practical training in teamwork, motivating people, and management.

Respond assertively. The candidates who survive are those who stand up for themselves and who explain why indeed they *are* worth hiring.

Sometimes the stress comes in the form of unusual questions: Why are manhole covers round? How many tennis balls would fit inside a school bus? If

STAR: An Interviewing Technique



"One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR technique, as outlined below. (This technique is also referred to as the SAR and PAR techniques.)

Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Action You Took

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did—not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

Results You Achieved

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?"

Quoted from "STAR Interviewing Response Technique for Success in Behavioral Job Interviews," Quint-Careers, accessed June 27, 2013, http://www.quintcareers.com/STAR_interviewing.html. Reprinted with permission.

The Four-Day Panel Interview



When President Barack Obama nominated Elena Kagan to fill a place on the United States Supreme Court, she had to perform well in a four-day panel interview with the 16 members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was split between the two political parties.

Here are some techniques she used during her interview that may help during yours:

- Kagan answered the most difficult questions candidly and thoughtfully, with occasional humor.
- She acknowledged the complexities of the questions and explained her positions without apologizing.
- When she was grilled about her past, she held her ground politely and professionally.

By the end of the hearings, she had won over some of her harshest critics. In fact, Senator Tom Coburn, who had criticized her answers early in the process, said at the end that her hearings had been some of the best in his experience.

Adapted from Ariane De Vogue and Ann H. Sloan, "The Kagan Hearings: Were They Necessary and Worthwhile?" ABC News, July 2, 2010, http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Supreme_Court/elena-kagan-hearings-worthwhile/story?id=11068199&page=1.

you were a cookie/car/animal, what kind would you be? If you could be any character from a book, who would you be? How you handle the question will be as important as your answer, maybe more important. Can you think creatively under pressure?

Silence can also create stress. One woman walked into her scheduled interview to find a male interviewer with his feet up on the desk. He said, "It's been a long day. I'm tired and I want to go home. You have five minutes to sell yourself." Since she had planned the points she wanted to be sure interviewers knew, she was able to do this. "Your recruiting brochure said that you're looking for someone with a major in accounting and a minor in finance. As you may remember from my résumé, I'm majoring in accounting and have had 12 hours in finance. I've also served as treasurer of a local campaign committee and have worked as a volunteer tax preparer through the Accounting Club." When she finished, the interviewer told her it was a test: "I wanted to see how you'd handle it."



Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan survived a four-day, highly publicized interview to win her position. See "The Four-Day Interview" sidebar on this page.

Group Interviews

In group interviews, sometimes called "cattle calls," multiple candidates are interviewed at a time. While many interview tips still apply to these interviews, successful candidates will also practice other techniques. Researching the job and company becomes even more important, because your time to show how you fit the job will be so limited. Have a two-minute summary of your education and experience that shows how you fit this job. Practice it so you can share it during the interview.

Arrive early so you have time to meet as many interviewers and interviewees as possible. Get business cards from the interviewers if you can. This pre-interview time may be part of the test, so make the most of it.

During the interview, listen carefully to both interviewers and interviewees. Make eye contact with both groups as well. Participate in the discussion, and look engaged even when you aren't. Watch your body language (see Chapter 4) so you don't give off unintended signals.

Some group interviews are organized around tasks. The group may be asked to solve a problem. Another scenario is that the group will be split into teams, with each team performing a task and then presenting to the whole group. Remember that your participation in these activities is being watched. You will be judged on skills such as communication, persuasion, leadership, organization, planning, analysis, and problem solving. Do you help move the action forward? Are you too assertive? Too shy? Do you praise the contributions of others? Do you help the group achieve consensus? Are you knowledgeable?

Many group interviews particularly test how you interact with other people. Talking too much may work against you. Making an effort to help quiet people enter the discussion may work in your favor. Connecting your comments to previous comments shows you are a good listener as well as a team player. Be careful not to get caught up in a combative situation.

At the end of the interview, thank each interviewer. Follow up with a written thank-you to each interviewer.

Multiple Interviews

Some companies, dissatisfied with hires based on one interview, are turning to multiple interviews. Geoff Smart and Randy Street, in their business best seller *Who: The A Method for Hiring*, present a four-interview system for finding the best employees:

1. Screening interview, which culls the list (done by phone).
2. "Topgrading" interview, which walks job candidates through their careers so far.
3. Focused interview, which focuses on one desired aspect of the candidate's career.
4. Reference interview, which checks in with candidates' references.⁶

Granted, this system is not for hiring entry-level people, but you won't be entry level very long, even if you are now. If you are scheduled for multiple interviews, you need to pay extra attention to your interview strategy so you provide the interviewers with a consistent view of you and your qualifications. Be prepared to answer some of the same questions multiple times with the same level of enthusiasm each time. Multiple interviews will likely draw on traditional interview questions in the early stages and some of the more focused types of interview questions in the later stages.

Final Steps for a Successful Job Search LO 14-7

What you do after the interview can determine whether you get the job. Many companies expect applicants to follow up on their interviews within a week. If they don't, the company assumes they wouldn't follow up with clients.

If the employer sends you an e-mail query, answer it promptly. You're being judged not only on what you say but on how quickly you respond. Have your list of references (see page 402) and samples of your work ready to send promptly if requested to do so.

Following Up with Phone Calls and Written Messages

After a first interview, make a follow-up phone call to show enthusiasm for the job, to reinforce positives from the first interview, to overcome any negatives, and to provide information to persuade the interviewer to hire you. Do not stalk the recruiter. Call only once unless you have excellent reasons for multiple calls. If you get voice mail, leave a message. Remember that caller ID will tell the recruiter that you were the person making the multiple hang-ups.

A thank-you note, written within 24 hours of an interview, is essential. Some companies consider the thank-you note to be as important as the cover letter. Figure 14.3 lists what a good thank-you note does.

Interview Bloopers



A recent survey asked executives for the most embarrassing interview moments they had encountered. Here are some examples.

- Candidate brought a "how to interview book" with him to the interview.
- Candidate asked, "What company is this again?"
- Candidate put the interviewer on hold during a phone interview. When she came back on the line, she told the interviewer that she had a date set up for Friday.
- Candidate wore a Boy Scout uniform and never told interviewers why.
- Candidate talked about promptness as one of her strengths after showing up 10 minutes late.
- On the way to the interview, candidate passed, cut off, and flipped the middle finger to a driver who happened to be the interviewer.
- Candidate referred to himself in the third person.
- Candidate took off his shoes during interview.
- Candidate asked for a sip of the interviewer's coffee.
- A mature candidate told the interviewer she wasn't sure if the job offered was worth "starting the car for."

Bullets quoted from The WorkBuzz, "10 Unusual Interview Mistakes, and 6 That Are All Too Common," *TheWorkBuzz.com*, February 22, 2012, <http://www.theworkbuzz.com/get-the-job/interviews/unusual-interview-mistakes>. Copyright 2012, CareerBuilder LLC. Reprinted with permission.

The Four-Day Panel Interview



When President Barack Obama nominated Elena Kagan to fill a place on the United States Supreme Court, she had to perform well in a four-day panel interview with the 16 members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was split between the two political parties.

Here are some techniques she used during her interview that may help during yours:

- Kagan answered the most difficult questions candidly and thoughtfully, with occasional humor.
- She acknowledged the complexities of the questions and explained her positions without apologizing.
- When she was grilled about her past, she held her ground politely and professionally.

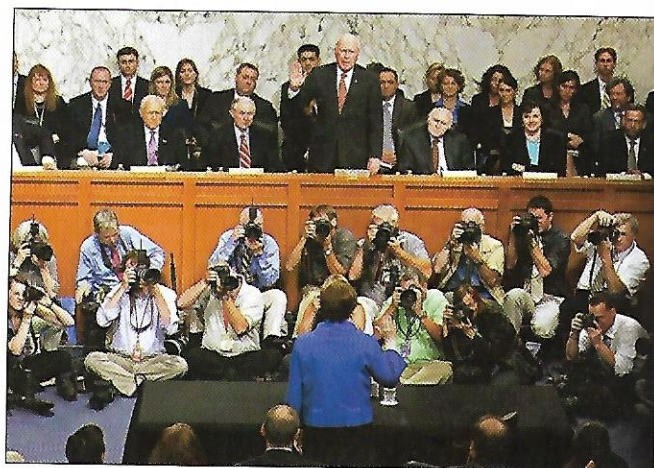
By the end of the hearings, she had won over some of her harshest critics. In fact, Senator Tom Coburn, who had criticized her answers early in the process, said at the end that her hearings had been some of the best in his experience.

Adapted from Ariane De Vogue and Ann H. Sloan, "The Kagan Hearings: Were They Necessary and Worthwhile?" ABC News, July 2, 2010, http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Supreme_Court/elena-kagan-hearings-worthwhile/story?id=11068199&page=1.

you were a cookie/car/animal, what kind would you be? If you could be any character from a book, who would you be? How you handle the question will be as important as your answer, maybe more important. Can you think creatively under pressure?

Silence can also create stress. One woman walked into her scheduled interview to find a male interviewer with his feet up on the desk. He said, "It's

been a long day. I'm tired and I want to go home. You have five minutes to sell yourself." Since she had planned the points she wanted to be sure interviewers knew, she was able to do this. "Your recruiting brochure said that you're looking for someone with a major in accounting and a minor in finance. As you may remember from my résumé, I'm majoring in accounting and have had 12 hours in finance. I've also served as treasurer of a local campaign committee and have worked as a volunteer tax preparer through the Accounting Club." When she finished, the interviewer told her it was a test: "I wanted to see how you'd handle it."



Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan survived a four-day, highly publicized interview to win her position. See "The Four-Day Interview" sidebar on this page.

Group Interviews

In group interviews, sometimes called "cattle calls," multiple candidates are interviewed at a time. While many interview tips still apply to these interviews, successful candidates will also practice other techniques. Researching the job and company becomes even more important, because your time to show how you fit the job will be so limited. Have a two-minute summary of your education and experience that shows how you fit this job. Practice it so you can share it during the interview.

Arrive early so you have time to meet as many interviewers and interviewees as possible. Get business cards from the interviewers if you can. This pre-interview time may be part of the test, so make the most of it.

During the interview, listen carefully to both interviewers and interviewees. Make eye contact with both groups as well. Participate in the discussion, and look engaged even when you aren't. Watch your body language (see Chapter 4) so you don't give off unintended signals.

Some group interviews are organized around tasks. The group may be asked to solve a problem. Another scenario is that the group will be split into teams, with each team performing a task and then presenting to the whole group. Remember that your participation in these activities is being watched. You will be judged on skills such as communication, persuasion, leadership, organization, planning, analysis, and problem solving. Do you help move the action forward? Are you too assertive? Too shy? Do you praise the contributions of others? Do you help the group achieve consensus? Are you knowledgeable?

Many group interviews particularly test how you interact with other people. Talking too much may work against you. Making an effort to help quiet people enter the discussion may work in your favor. Connecting your comments to previous comments shows you are a good listener as well as a team player. Be careful not to get caught up in a combative situation.

At the end of the interview, thank each interviewer. Follow up with a written thank-you to each interviewer.

Multiple Interviews

Some companies, dissatisfied with hires based on one interview, are turning to multiple interviews. Geoff Smart and Randy Street, in their business best seller *Who: The A Method for Hiring*, present a four-interview system for finding the best employees:

1. Screening interview, which culls the list (done by phone).
2. "Topgrading" interview, which walks job candidates through their careers so far.
3. Focused interview, which focuses on one desired aspect of the candidate's career.
4. Reference interview, which checks in with candidates' references.⁶

Granted, this system is not for hiring entry-level people, but you won't be entry level very long, even if you are now. If you are scheduled for multiple interviews, you need to pay extra attention to your interview strategy so you provide the interviewers with a consistent view of you and your qualifications. Be prepared to answer some of the same questions multiple times with the same level of enthusiasm each time. Multiple interviews will likely draw on traditional interview questions in the early stages and some of the more focused types of interview questions in the later stages.

Final Steps for a Successful Job Search LO 14-7

What you do after the interview can determine whether you get the job. Many companies expect applicants to follow up on their interviews within a week. If they don't, the company assumes they wouldn't follow up with clients.

If the employer sends you an e-mail query, answer it promptly. You're being judged not only on what you say but on how quickly you respond. Have your list of references (see page 402) and samples of your work ready to send promptly if requested to do so.

Following Up with Phone Calls and Written Messages

After a first interview, make a follow-up phone call to show enthusiasm for the job, to reinforce positives from the first interview, to overcome any negatives, and to provide information to persuade the interviewer to hire you. Do not stalk the recruiter. Call only once unless you have excellent reasons for multiple calls. If you get voice mail, leave a message. Remember that caller ID will tell the recruiter that you were the person making the multiple hang-ups.

A thank-you note, written within 24 hours of an interview, is essential. Some companies consider the thank-you note to be as important as the cover letter. Figure 14.3 lists what a good thank-you note does.

Interview Bloopers



A recent survey asked executives for the most embarrassing interview moments they had encountered. Here are some examples.

- Candidate brought a "how to interview book" with him to the interview.
- Candidate asked, "What company is this again?"
- Candidate put the interviewer on hold during a phone interview. When she came back on the line, she told the interviewer that she had a date set up for Friday.
- Candidate wore a Boy Scout uniform and never told interviewers why.
- Candidate talked about promptness as one of her strengths after showing up 10 minutes late.
- On the way to the interview, candidate passed, cut off, and flipped the middle finger to a driver who happened to be the interviewer.
- Candidate referred to himself in the third person.
- Candidate took off his shoes during interview.
- Candidate asked for a sip of the interviewer's coffee.
- A mature candidate told the interviewer she wasn't sure if the job offered was worth "starting the car for."

Bullets quoted from The WorkBuzz, "10 Unusual Interview Mistakes, and 6 That Are All Too Common," *TheWorkBuzz.com*, February 22, 2012, <http://www.theworkbuzz.com/get-the-job/interviews/unusual-interview-mistakes>. Copyright 2012, CareerBuilder LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 14.3**Steps for a Good Thank-You Note**

- Thank the interviewer for useful information and any helpful action.
- Remind the interviewer of what he or she liked in you.
- Use the jargon of the company and refer to specific things you learned during your interview or saw during your visit.
- Be enthusiastic about the position.
- Refer to the next move, whether you'll wait to hear from the employer or whether you want to call to learn about the status of your application.
- Thank your hosts for their hospitality if the note is for a site visit. In the postscript, mention enclosed receipts for your expenses.
- Use your best writing skills, and correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Double-check the spelling of all names.

The note can be an e-mail, but many employers are still impressed by paper thank-you notes. In either case, do not use text messaging abbreviations or emoticons. Figure 14.4 is an example of a follow-up letter after a site visit.

Negotiating for Salary and Benefits

The best time to negotiate for salary and benefits is after you have the job offer. Try to delay discussing salary early in the interview process, when you're still competing against other applicants.

Prepare for salary negotiations by finding out what the going rate is for the work you hope to do. Ask friends who are in the workforce to find out what they're making. Ask the campus placement office for figures on what last year's graduates got. Check trade journals and the web.

This research is crucial. The White House Report on the status of women shows that women earn about 75% as much as men, at all levels of education. Even when compared to direct male counterparts, the difference is substantial.⁷ Knowing what a job is worth will give you the confidence to negotiate more effectively.

The best way to get more money is to convince the employer that you're worth it. During the interview process, show that you can do what the competition can't.

After you have the offer, you can begin negotiating salary and benefits. You're in the strongest position when (1) you've done your homework and know what the usual salary and benefits are and (2) you can walk away from this offer if it doesn't meet your needs. Avoid naming a specific salary. Don't say you can't accept less. Instead, say you would find it difficult to accept the job under the terms first offered.

Remember that you're negotiating a package, not just a starting salary. A company that truly can't pay any more money now might be able to review you for promotion sooner than usual, or pay your moving costs, or give you a better job title. Some companies offer fringe benefits that may compensate for lower taxable income: use of a company car, reimbursements for education, child care or elder care subsidies, or help in finding a job for your spouse or partner. And think about your career, not just the initial salary. Sometimes a low-paying job at a company that will provide superb experience will do more for your career (and your long-term earnings prospects) than a high salary now with no room to grow.

Work toward a compromise. You want the employer to be happy that you're coming on board and to feel that you've behaved maturely and professionally.

Figure 14.4

Follow-Up Letter after a Site Visit

405 West College, Apt. 201
Thibodaux, LA 70301
April 2, 2014

*Single-space your address and the date
when you don't use letterhead.*

Mr. Robert Land, Account Manager
Sive Associates
378 Norman Boulevard
Cincinnati, OH 48528

Dear Mr. Land:

After visiting Sive Associates last week, I'm even more sure that writing direct mail is the career for me.

*Refers to
things she
saw and
learned
during the
interview.*

I've always been able to brainstorm ideas, but sometimes, when I had to focus on one idea for a class project, I wasn't sure which idea was best. It was fascinating to see how you make direct mail scientific as well as creative by testing each new creative package against the control. I can understand how pleased Linda Hayes was when she learned that her new package for *Smithsonian* beat the control.

*Reminds
interviewer
of her
strong
points.*

Seeing Kelly, Luke, and Gene collaborating on the Sesame Street package gave me some sense of the tight deadlines you're under. As you know, I've learned to meet deadlines, not only for my class assignments but also in working on Nicholls' newspaper. The award I won for my feature on the primary election suggests that my quality holds up even when the deadline is tight!

Thank you for your hospitality while I was in Cincinnati. You and your wife made my stay very pleasant. I especially appreciate the time the two of you took to help me find information about apartments that are accessible to wheelchairs. Cincinnati seems like a very livable city.

I'm excited about a career in direct mail and about the possibility of joining Sive Associates. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

*Be positive, not pushy.
She doesn't
assume she
has the job.*

Sincerely,

Refers to what will happen next.

Gina Focasio

*Writer's
phone
number.*

Gina Focasio
(504) 555-2948

*Puts request for reimbursement in P.S.
to de-emphasize it; focuses on the job,
not the cost of the trip.*

P.S. My expenses totaled \$454. Enclosed are receipts for my plane fare from New Orleans to Cincinnati (\$367), the taxi to the airport in Cincinnati (\$30), and the bus from Thibodaux to New Orleans (\$57).

Encl.: Receipts for Expenses

Deciding Which Offer to Accept

The problem with choosing among job offers is that you're comparing apples and oranges. The job with the most interesting work pays peanuts. The job that pays best is in a city where you don't want to live. The secret of professional happiness is taking a job where the positives are things you want and the negatives are things that don't matter as much to you.

To choose among job offers, you need to know what is truly important to *you*. Start by answering questions like the following:

-
- Are you willing to work after hours? To take work home? To travel? How important is money to you? Prestige? Time to spend with family and friends?
 - Would you rather have firm deadlines or a flexible schedule? Do you prefer working alone or with other people? Do you prefer specific instructions and standards for evaluation or freedom and uncertainty? How comfortable are you with pressure? How much variety and challenge do you want?
 - What kinds of opportunities for training and advancement are you seeking?
 - Where do you want to live? What features in terms of weather, geography, cultural and social life do you see as ideal?
 - Is it important to you that your work achieve certain purposes or values, or do you see work as "just a way to make a living"? Are the organization's culture and ethical standards ones you find comfortable? Will you be able to do work you can point to with pride?
-

No job is perfect but some jobs will fulfill more of your major criteria than will others.

Some employers offer jobs at the end of the office visit. In other cases, you may wait for weeks or even months to hear. Some employers may offer jobs orally. In those instances you must say something in response immediately, so it's good to plan some strategies in advance.

If your first offer is not from your first choice, express your pleasure at being offered the job, but do not accept it on the phone. "That's great! I assume I have two weeks to let you know?" Then *call* the other companies you're interested in. Explain, "I've just gotten a job offer, but I'd rather work for you. Can you tell me what the status of my application is?" Nobody will put that information in writing, but almost everyone will tell you over the phone. With this information, you're in a better position to decide whether to accept the original offer.

Companies routinely give applicants two weeks to accept or reject offers. Some students have been successful in getting those two weeks extended to several weeks or even months. Certainly if you cannot decide by the deadline, it is worth asking for more time: The worst the company can do is say *no*. If you do try to keep a company hanging for a long time, be prepared for weekly phone calls asking you if you've decided yet.

Make your acceptance contingent upon a written job offer confirming the terms. That letter should spell out not only salary but also fringe benefits and any special provisions you have negotiated. If something is missing, call the interviewer for clarification: "You said that I'd be reviewed for a promotion and higher salary in six months, but that isn't in the letter." Even well-intentioned people can forget oral promises. You have more power to resolve misunderstandings now than you will after six months or a year on the job. Furthermore, the person who made you the promise may no longer be with the company a year later.

When you've accepted one job, notify the other places you visited. Then they can go to their second choices. If you're second on someone else's list, you'll appreciate other candidates' removing themselves so the way is clear for you.

Dealing with Rejection

Because multiple people usually apply for each job opening, most job seekers get far more rejections than job offers. Learn to live with this fact of the job hunt. Form support groups with your friends who are also on the job market. Try to keep an upbeat attitude; it will show in job interviews and make you a more attractive candidate. Remember that candidate selection can be a political process. You may have been competing with the boss's daughter, an inside candidate, or a candidate who was recommended by a respected employee.

Starting Your Career **LO 14-8**

Your successful job interview is just the first step toward your career. Once you have landed the job, you need to succeed in the job so it can be a path to your professional goals. Remember that your end goal is not to just have any job; your goal should be to continue to develop your skills and to see a clear path to promotion. Planning a career successfully involves two steps: starting out in the right way in your first full-time job and creating a strategy to achieve your long-term goals.

Your First Full-Time Job

Just like the step from high school to college, the step from college to your first full-time job brings changes that you must negotiate. The new business environment is exhilarating, with many opportunities, but it also contains pitfalls. As you go to being the new kid on the block yet again, remember all the coping strategies you have developed as a newbie in middle school, high school, and college.

- Reread all your materials on the organization, its competition, and the industry.
- Get to know your new colleagues, but also keep networking with people in the field.
- Talk to recent hires in the organization. Ask them what they found to be helpful advice when they were starting.
- Fit into the corporate culture by being observant. Watch what people wear, how they act, how they talk. Watch how they interact during meetings and in the break room. Look at the kinds of e-mails and letters people send. Discover who people go to when they need help.
- Use your breaks effectively. Stop by the coffee station, water cooler, or break room occasionally to plug into the grapevine.
- Find a successful person who is willing to mentor you. Even better, find a support network.
- Ask lots of questions. It may feel embarrassing, but it will feel even worse to still be ignorant several months down the road.
- Seek early opportunities for feedback. What you hear may not always be pleasant, but it will help you become a valued employee more quickly.

- Learn the jargon, but use it sparingly.
- Be pleasant and polite to everyone, including support personnel.
- Be punctual. Arrive for work and meetings on time.
- Be dependable. Do what you say you will do—and by the deadline.
- Be organized. Take a few minutes to plan your daily work. Keep track of papers and e-mails.
- Be resourceful. Few work projects will come to you with the detailed instructions provided by your professors. Think projects through. Ask for suggestions from trusted colleagues. Have a plan before you go to your boss with questions.
- Use technology professionally. Keep your cell phone on vibrate, or turn it off. Resist the temptation to send text messages during meetings. Don't visit inappropriate websites; remember that all computer activity can be tracked. Learn the company's Internet policies.
- Be discreet. Be careful what you say, and where you say it. Above all, be careful what you put in e-mails!
- Proofread all your written messages, including tweets and texts, before you send them. At rushed times, such as the end of the day or week, proofread them twice.
- Go the extra mile. Help out even when you are not asked. Put in extra hours when your help is needed.
- Do your share of grunt work—making coffee or refilling the paper tray.
- Take advantage of company social events, but always act professionally at them. Seriously limit your intake of alcohol.
- Document your work. Collect facts, figures, and documents. You will need this information for your performance reviews.
- Enjoy yourself. Enthusiasm for your new job and colleagues will have you part of the team in short order.

A Long-Term Strategy

The *Harvard Business Review* suggests planning for your career in the same way that presidential candidates plan for a campaign: begin early, calculate how to win, and plan a detailed time line of tasks to achieve the goal.⁸ These tasks usually include the following:

- Continue to network. The people you know are not just there to help you get a job. Build real relationships that are productive and reciprocal.
- Continue seeking mentors for different aspects of your work.
- Take advantage of voluntary training opportunities.
- Plan where you want to be. Look ahead in your career, not just to your next promotion but to your goals for the next 10 to 20 years.
- Collect work for your professional portfolio.
- Prewrite your future résumé. As you plan your career, write a résumé that you may use in 10 years' time. What jobs do you have on it? What other activities? What is missing from your experience or education that would help you achieve your goals?

- Look for opportunities. Some of the advances in your career will happen by luck or because of chance encounters. Be prepared to take advantage of opportunities by always working hard, talking with people, and keeping your focus on your ultimate goals.
- Read. Read the *Wall Street Journal*, business magazines, trade journals, trade blogs. When Wharton business students asked Warren Buffett where he got his ideas, he replied that he just reads—all day.⁹

Summary by Learning Objectives

LO 14-1 What interview channels you may encounter.

- Phone and video interviews may precede face-to-face interviews.
- Campus interviews and job fairs provide you with opportunities to impress recruiters.

LO 14-2 How to create a strategy for successful interviewing.

Develop an overall strategy based on your answers to these three questions:

1. What two to five facts about yourself do you want the interviewer to know?
2. What disadvantages or weaknesses do you need to overcome or minimize?
3. What do you need to know about the job and the organization to decide whether or not you want to accept this job if it is offered to you?

LO 14-3 What preparations to make before you start interviewing.

- Conduct research about the company; spend time on its website.
- Check on dress expectations before the interview.
- Rehearse everything you can. In particular, practice answers to common questions. Ask a friend to interview you. If your campus has practice interviews or videotaping facilities, use them so that you can evaluate and modify your interview behavior.
- Prepare professional materials, including copies of your résumé, a list of references, a work portfolio, and detailed work and education histories in case you are asked to fill out an application form.

LO 14-4 What to do during an interview

- Bring an extra copy of your résumé, something to write on and write with, and copies of your work to the interview.
- Record the name of the interviewer, tips the interviewer gave you, what the interviewer liked about you, answers to your questions about the company, and when you'll hear from the company.
- Behave professionally; show enthusiasm for the job.

LO 14-5 How to answer common interview

LO 14-2 HOW TO SUMMARIZE COMMON INTERVIEW

LO 14-5 How to answer common interview questions.

Successful applicants know what they want to do, use the company name in the interview, have researched the company in advance, back up claims with specifics, use appropriate technical jargon, ask specific questions, and talk more of the time.

LO 14-6 How to prepare for less common interview types.

- **Behavioral interviews** ask the applicant to describe actual behaviors, rather than plans or general principles. To answer a behavioral question, describe the situation, tell what you did, and tell what happened. Think about the implications of what you did and be ready to talk about what you'd do the next time or if the situation were slightly different.
- **Situational interviews** put you in a situation that allows the interviewer to see whether you have the qualities the company is seeking.
- **Stress interviews** deliberately create physical or psychological stress. Change the conditions that create physical stress. Meet psychological stress by rephrasing questions in less inflammatory terms and treating them as requests for information.

14.6 Preparing an Interview Strategy

Prepare your interview strategy.

1. List two to five things about yourself that you want the interviewer to know before you leave the interview.
2. Identify any weaknesses or apparent weaknesses in your record and plan ways to explain them or minimize them.

3. List the points you need to learn about an employer to decide whether to accept an office visit or plant trip.

As your instructor directs,

- a. Share your strategy with a small group of other students.
- b. Describe your strategy in an e-mail to your instructor.
- c. Present your strategy orally to the class.