A Guide to Teaching

INTERVIEWING

SKILLS

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INTERVIEWING SKILLS

OBJECTIVE: Upon successful completion, patrons will understand the components of an interview and participate in a mock interview.

NECESSARY SUPPLIES:

- Sheet containing 12 Interview Questions
- Knowing how to interview sheet
- Sample questions to ask during an interview
- 50 Interview questions you could be asked to discuss
- Reasons why people aren’t hired

TIME REQUIRED:
90 minutes without individual interviews, 3 hours with participant interviews

LESSON PROCEDURE:
1. Ask the class if they have participated in an interview before and what they thought about it. Were they prepared for the interview?
2. Describe how the interview process is used:
   a) Employers making hiring and promotion decisions.
   b) Questions are asked to help give insight about work ethic, attitude, and personality.
   c) Interviewing helps to screen out persons who are not considered a fit for the organization when they provide interesting, unusual, or what may be considered incorrect answers.
3. Stress to the class the importance of being a salesperson during an interview. The interviewee’s goal is to convince the interviewer that they should be selected. Good salespeople know their product. Self-knowledge and the ability to express it are the keys to successful interviewing.
4. Hand out copies of The Parts of an Interview. Talk the class through the stages of the interview process. Emphasize that small details are very important in interviews.
5. Have patrons review the sheet “Reasons why people aren’t hired”.
6. In closing discuss the importance of promptly sending a thank you letter to the interviewer. This can be a written thank you note, as a card, or a personalized email.

The sheet containing the 12-Interview questions can be used in a variety of ways.
   a) If the class is small the questions can be cut apart so that each question is separated and given to each participant. Give patrons time to think of how to respond to the question. Remember to keep a non cut list so that you can ask the questions! Give patrons feedback on their answers.
   b) For a large class use 50 Interview questions you could be asked to discuss.
   c) Hand out either sheet based on your class size and assign each person or group a question. Then ask them to share their responses aloud. Others in the class may want to hear how to respond to the various questions. Offer positive feedback to patrons that have answers that give “too much information, negative viewpoints, or become very judgmental in sentiment”.

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d) If possible have a practice interview session using the questions. This will require some preparation beforehand.
   a. Interview patrons individually with a few of the questions while offering feedback.
   b. Ask a few patrons to volunteer being interviewed in front of the class. This will help offer a variety of perspectives on how people answer questions. **When providing feedback ensure that comments will not embarrass or demean patrons in anyway. Smile, and be energetic when giving advice. Ask each participant if you may offer a suggestion before providing it outright.**
   c. Have the class come fully dressed in interview attire to offer a more realistic interview.
   d. Ask an HR representative from a local employer, or a staffing company representative to interview a few patrons and provide feedback.

**SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP:** If a video camera is available, it may be useful for patrons to watch their interviews on tape. They could then complete a *Mock Interview* critiquing their own performance.
Knowing How To Interview

THINGS TO DO BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. Do your homework on the organization that you are about to interview with. Learn as much as you can about the company before the interview. Do some research: ask people who work there, go to the library, and go look on the internet. Find out what services/products the company provides, how long they have been in business, whether the company is growing or downsizing, the company’s reputation, etc. An interviewer should be impressed that you have made an effort to learn about the company.

2. Know where the company is located. Drive by the site of the interview a day or two before the interview.

3. Arrive 5 - 15 minutes early. That way you can get yourself together or in some cases calm down.

4. Have extra copies of your resume, your portfolio, a notepad with some questions prepared for the interview, and a pen.

5. Dress to impress.
   - Hair should be clean and combed.
   - Fingernails must be clean with no gaudy polish.
   - Keep perfume, cologne and aftershave to a minimum.
   - Brush your teeth and don’t forget deodorant.

6. **Women:** dress, skirt (not too short), or dress pants with a nice blouse or blazer. No excessive jewelry, make-up, or “big hair.”

7. **Men:** pants (not jeans!), collared shirt, tie, sport coat and shoes. A suit is not always necessary.

THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

8. If there is a secretary/receptionist that greets you, inform them that you have an interview, who it is with, and the time of the interview.

9. As you greet your interviewer, look straight into his/her eyes, shake hands firmly, introduce yourself with your full name, smile, be confident and wait until you are offered a seat.

10. Be positive in your communication. Don’t get too relaxed; try not to be too bold or too shy. Let the interviewer lead the interview. Express that you are happy to have the opportunity to interview.

11. SMILE!!

12. Even if you are nervous don’t do the following: Smoke, chew gum, curse, slouch, put your hands on items on the interviewer’s desk, fidget with rings, pens, ties, change, or other things in your reach.
DURING THE INTERVIEW
13. Always face the interviewer with good posture and body language.
14. Stay positive with your attitude and your answers. Let the interviewer know about the skills, knowledge and experience that make you a qualified candidate.
15. Know your resume and portfolio well and be prepared to answer questions about them.
16. Express your willingness to learn.
17. Be honest with all answers. Experienced interviewers can see right through “little white lies.”
18. Be thorough with your answers. Never answer with just a “yes” or “no.” Always provide explanations and examples.
19. If you don’t understand the question, ask the interviewer to explain.
20. Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying.
21. Organize your thoughts before speaking. Feel free to think for a moment about tough questions.
22. Watch for illegal questions, such as information about your age, religion, race, ethnicity or marital status.
23. Don’t do any of the following:
   - Emphasize your weaknesses.
   - Discuss negative topics such as poor attendance, grades, being fired, etc.
   - Criticize former employers, co-workers.
   - Discuss personal issues, good or bad, which are irrelevant.
   - Discuss salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings it up first.

THE END OF THE INTERVIEW
24. Ask the job-related questions you prepared for the interview.
25. You may be offered the job immediately. In that case, you should ask about specific salary, benefits, and work hours. You do not have to give them an immediate answer. Ask for a day to think about it.
26. If you are told you will be contacted, ask about how long it will be. Offer to call in a few days to find out the decision. This shows your continued interest.
27. Make sure the interviewer knows how best to contact you and that you are available for any additional information that may be needed.
28. Thank the person for the interview and their interest in you as a potential employee or student. Shake hands firmly on the way out.

THE FOLLOW-UP
29. Send the interviewer a thank-you letter soon after the interview.
30. Call the company about a week after the interview to find out if they have made a decision. If they have not, find out when they expect to have a decision.
REASONS WHY PEOPLE AREN’T HIRED

♦ Having a poor personal appearance

♦ Inability to communicate clearly, poor voice, and grammar

♦ Lack of purpose or goals

♦ Lack of enthusiasm and confidence in the interview

♦ Negative comments about past employers

♦ Failure to look the interviewer in the eye

♦ Weak handshake

♦ Arriving late to the interview

♦ Does not thank the interviewer for his/her time

♦ Asks no questions
12 Common Interviewing Questions

1. What can you tell me about yourself?

2. Why do you want to work here?

3. What training and experience have prepared you for this job?

4. What are your weaknesses? What are your strengths?

5. What can you bring to this company?

6. What do you plan to be doing 5 years from now?

7. How well do you work with other people?

8. How well do you work under pressure?

9. What are your hobbies?

10. Why are you leaving your present company?

11. Why should I hire you?

12. What would you like to ask me?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS YOU COULD BE ASKED TO DISCUSS

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Why did you leave your last job?
3. What experience do you have in this field?
4. Do you consider yourself successful?
5. What do co-workers say about you?
6. What do you know about this organization?
7. What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?
8. Are you applying for other jobs?
9. Why do you want to work for this organization?
10. Do you know anyone who works for us?
11. What kind of salary do you need?
12. Are you a team player?
13. How long would you expect to work for us if hired?
14. Have you ever had to fire anyone? How did you feel about that?
15. What is your philosophy towards work?
16. If you had enough money to retire right now, would you?
17. Have you ever been asked to leave a position?
18. Explain how you would be an asset to this organization
19. Why should we hire you?
20. Tell me about a suggestion you have made
21. What irritates you about co-workers?
22. What is your greatest strength?
23. Tell me about your dream job.
24. Why do you think you would do well at this job?
25. What are you looking for in a job?
26. What kind of person would you refuse to work with?
27. What is more important to you: the money or the work?
28. What would your previous supervisor say your strongest point is?
29. Tell me about a problem you had with a supervisor
30. What has disappointed you about a job?
31. Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.
32. Do your skills match this job or another job more closely?
33. What motivates you to do your best on the job?
34. Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?
35. How would you know you were successful on this job?
36. Would you be willing to relocate if required?
37. Are you willing to put the interests of the organization ahead of your own?
38. Describe your management style.
39. What have you learned from mistakes on the job?
40. How do you work under pressure?
41. If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for?
42. Do you think you are overqualified for this position?
43. How do you propose to compensate for your lack of experience?
44. What qualities do you look for in a boss?
45. Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute between others.
46. What position do you prefer on a team working on a project?
47. Describe your work ethic.
48. What has been your biggest professional disappointment?
49. Tell me about the most fun you have had on the job.
50. Do you have any questions for me?
Sample Questions to Ask During an Interview

A job interview is a two-way process. Appropriate questions show interest in the particular employer and an awareness of how you can fill their needs. Questions should not be so basic that the interviewer thinks you have not researched the company.

Guidelines: Your questions should help you get the job or learn things you should know about the job and company. Do not ask questions about your needs first, especially during the first interview (i.e. salary, benefits).
You will probably be given the opportunity to ask your questions during the last minutes of the interview, you can also ask a question at any time if it relates to the discussion you are having.

Write out your questions as it will help you with your thoughts. Do not read them to the interviewer while staring directly at the page.

Sample Questions:

1. If you had an ideal candidate, what skills and personal qualities would that person have?
2. If I perform well in this position, where could I be in three to five years?
3. Could you describe what a typical week or month on the job might be like?
4. Can you tell me how your career has developed at this company?
5. What sort of personnel turnover have you experienced in your department?
6. What are some of the objectives outlined for this position?
7. How will this position be evaluated?
8. What kind of support does this position receive in terms of people, budget, etc..?
9. Tell me about your customers. Describe an ideal customer. How close to ideal are your customers?
10. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this company?
11. Tell me about your initial and future training programs.
12. How would you describe your corporation’s personality and management style?
13. How will problems (economy, government action, etc…) affect your operations? Your services?
14. What is management’s policy about promotion within the organization?
15. Is overtime the norm in this office?
16. Do you work with daily, weekly, monthly, or annual deadlines?
17. What kind of orientation and training is available to a new employee?
18. How often will I be evaluated?
19. Can you tell me about the history of this position and any planned changes?

The most important strategy is to enter the interview prepared!