INTERVIEW SKILLS, STRATEGIES & JOB OFFERS

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There is nothing worse for an interviewer than a candidate who does not understand the basic job functions, industry or company. This is where candidates can set themselves apart. The more research you do, the easier it is to connect your experience and skills to the company and job description.

Find the answers to the following questions through:
- Company website
- LinkedIn and Current Employees
- Annual Reports
- Better Business Bureau
- Glassdoor
- Industry and Business Publications

Incorporate this research into your answers when appropriate.

1. What do you know about the company’s mission, vision and values?
2. Where does the company operate in, is there a headquarters, in how many locations and countries is it located and how many people work there?
3. What does the company do? Does it provide product or service? What is it? Is it high end or low end?
4. Who are its customers?
5. Who are its competitors?
6. Is the company family-owned, publicly traded, non-profit or government?
7. What is their office culture or organizational structure?
8. What makes the company special?
9. Any awards, recent news, industry changes/issues, etc.?
10. What departments, projects and products interest you? Why?

Write down the questions that come up during your research and save them to ask when you are asked “Do you have any questions for us?” at the end of the interview.

You may not be asked directly what you know about the organization, but get creative in order to incorporate your research in your interview answers.

QUESTION
“Why should I hire you?”

ANSWER
“Aside from being qualified for the position, I noticed in my research that..., and I...”
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Focus answers on “you as a professional;” avoid focusing answers on “you as an individual”

Background
- Tell me about yourself. See page #46
- Why are you interested in the role? / What qualifies you for the role?
- What do you do in your free time?
- What is your biggest strength/weakness? What has been your biggest achievement?
- Why should we hire you?

Behavioral
- (See STAR answers on next page)
- Give a time when you had a difficult customer and how you handled it
- What have you learned from a past mistake?
- How do you resolve conflict within a team?
- Describe a project that failed.

Company/Culture Specific
- What do you know about our company?
- What led you to apply here?
- What qualifications/personality traits would you bring to our company/office/team?
- What database/software programs are you familiar with?
- Why do you want to work for our company?

Professionalism/Work Ethic
- How do you manage your time?
- How do you evaluate success?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What do you look for in a supervisor/manager?
- Describe your ideal work environment.
- Do you work better independently or in a team?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Where do you see yourself in five (5) years? 10? 20?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?

Academic
- Why did you choose Davenport University?
- What caused you to choose your particular major?
- What was your favorite course? Least favorite?
- What was your most rewarding experience in college?
- Did you complete an internship?

Questions to ask the interviewer/employer
- How will you measure the success of the person in this position?
- What are your expectations of the person in this role in the first 90 days?
- What are some of the challenges in this position? Company?
- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to have in order to excel in this position?
- Why do you enjoy working for this company?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What are the company’s short- and long-term goals? What role would I play in those goals?
- What are the typical career paths in this company?
- Is there anything that concerns you about my background being a fit for this role?
- What is the timeline for next steps? If I haven’t heard from you by ______, is it all right if I follow-up with you?

Illegal Questions
- When do you plan to retire?
- Are you married?
- How old are you?
- Do you have or hope to have children soon?
- Do you have any health problems that would cause attendance issues?
- Where do you worship? Or, what church do you belong to?
- Are you a Republican or a Democrat?
- Is English your first language?

It is acceptable not to answer illegal questions by simply pointing out that the question is illegal and you would rather not want the interviewer to get into trouble by answering it.
**GIVE A STAR ANSWER TO BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS**

Elaborate with direction! These questions are all about the art of story-telling. When an interviewer asks for “an example of” or “a time when,” give them a STAR Answer:

It is hard to know exactly what situational questions an interviewer will ask, but look at the job description and decide what areas they will likely focus on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give an example of when you provided great customer service.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my time with Enterprise Rent-A-Car, customer service was always of the utmost importance. There was a customer that would fly into the airport every week and was always grouchy, so people always tried to avoid helping him.</td>
<td>I decided to focus on being the customer’s go-to person and made sure they consistently had a positive experience.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Result</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made a reminder every week to set aside the specific car the customer liked and made him feel like a special customer. I would have his contract ready so I only needed to check his license, swipe his credit card and send him on his way in a timely manner.</td>
<td>After only a few weeks, I had built such a great relationship with him that he would even choose to wait in my line just to work with me!</td>
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To start, be prepared for STAR answers that relate to all of the following:
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Customer Service
- Leadership
- Time Management
VIDEO & PHONE INTERVIEWING

The Basics
- Establish the right time zone (CST/EST) and DO NOT BE LATE!
- Who is calling whom?
- Get from or give the interviewer an alternative phone in the event that there are issues logging into the online interview program
- Fix your privacy settings so your username can be found

Profile
- Have an appropriate name: i.e. first.last19 vs. wild_jungle_cat
- Have a professional photo as your icon and not a vacation or couple photo
- Mind your status—set it to “available”
- Try to have everything in tip-top shape before exchanging information. Feel free to tell the interviewer that you will send them an email with your information to buy time if you’re not prepared

Be Proactive to Prevent Technical Problems
- Test your audio and video
- Make sure your audio doesn’t echo or have static
- Make sure your lighting is adequate and your face can be seen, natural light works best.

Do not have a window behind you to avoid glare
- Turn off notification sounds and close all other browsers to avoid interruptions during the interview
- Use ethernet instead of wi-fi if possible; it is more reliable
- Use a PC or laptop. Do not use a tablet or phone. This will provide steady video feed without shaking and will allow your hands to be free
- Use a headset to minimize echo and background noise
- Do a test run with a friend to make sure you can be heard and seen clearly

Look & Sound Professional
- This is an interview, treat it like one—dress professionally from head-to-toe
- Speak slowly and clearly in case there is lag or technical issues on the interviewers end
- For that same reason, this can be a good excuse to have the interviewer repeat a question if it is unclear.
- Eye contact is tricky since the interviewer(s) are on screen, but try to look at your camera directly as much as possible—otherwise, it will appear as if you are looking down
- Keep gestures to a minimum;

the interviewer can only see a limited area, you should not act outside of that space as “lag” can be an issue when gesturing

Manage Your Environment
- Roommates | Family Members: Notify them that you have an interview and put a sign on your door that tells them “Do not Disturb”
- Make sure your pets are outside or placed in a confined room far enough away that they cannot be heard making noises
- Make sure your background is clean and clear, with no posters, laundry, trash, dishes or other visual distractions that could appear to the interviewer

What To Have With You
- Bring your résumé, cover letter, job description and company research and have them ready to refer to during your interview
- Feel free to put post-it notes on your screen to remind you to address certain key points
- Warning: Do not rifle through papers during your interview; it is distracting and loud

DU’s online video interview practice system can help students and alumni perfect their interview skills. Find it on the Career Services home page: davenport.edu/career-services
DRESS TO IMPRESS

Dress Professionally
- Cleanliness and appropriate dress are a must
- Stick with solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics or simple patterns
- Men: charcoal gray or dark blue suits with tasteful shirt and conservative tie look good
- Wear a belt
- Women: a good quality suit with flattering, unrevealing blouse
- A skirt should be no shorter than the tips of your middle fingers or just above the knee for good measure
- Avoid tight or overly loose fitting clothing
- Avoid shirts with lettering or graphics
- Make sure your outfit is wrinkle-free

Hair and Make-up
- Be sure to look professional. Be industry professional
- Appear well-groomed and up-to-date style; clean, neat and flattering

Pleasant Body Odor
- Don’t forget deodorant
- Avoid perfumes and colognes

Smokers
- Don’t smoke once you’re in your interview attire
- Clean interview attire and keep it in a smoke free place

Accessories
- Avoid flashy jewelry/accessories
- Keep piercings to a minimum. If you have facial or body piercings that are noticeable, you should remove them before the interview unless there is a high degree of industry acceptance
- Never wear white socks

Better safe than sorry
Always go business professional if you are unsure.

Access to DU Resources & Affordable Clothing

The Panther Resource Closet on the Lower Level of the Academic Building on the Lettings Campus can help! It stocks non-perishable food items, personal hygiene products, and new or gently used professional clothing — clean, and in good condition.

The closet is designed to provide these resources free of charge to students from all campuses, including online. You can access on your own time, or submit a request through the Center for Campus Life: https://www.davenport.edu/student-life/panther-resource-closet

Other Options:
Consider consignment or resale shops for new and gently used clothes.
Get fitted at a professional retailer and write down your correct measurements. Then search through online sales, outlets and clearance sales.

Business Casual vs. Professional
Have an interview or professional event coming up? Learn how to decode dress code.
EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

You have gotten through your interviews and have received the offer.

Do not feel pressured to accept an offer on the spot. It is always best to ask for at least 24 hours after receiving the written offer to make a final decision, even if you fully intend to accept it. There are many components to consider before saying yes.

Salary
Can you live on this salary? Use the worksheet on the next page to make sure you account for your current cost of living and that your bills will not exceed your projected take-home pay. While your current expenses alone may not be a reason to negotiate a higher wage, having a realistic expectation of what the salary for a specific position based on industry standards should support your request. Before finalizing negotiations, ask about annual increases, what they are based on and how they have been issued in previous years. See O*NET OnLine, onetonline.org and the Career Services NACE Salary Calculator for more information. Increases, what they are based on and how they have been issued in previous years. See O*NET OnLine, onetonline.org and the Career Services NACE Salary Calculator for more information.

Benefits
It is not always about the money! Benefits can be negotiable and can include: insurance (medical, dental, vision, life, etc.), vacation, holidays, flexibility, overtime options, professional memberships, child care, retirement options. Keep in mind that benefits can make up about 40% of your total compensation.

Office Environment/Company Culture
Will you enjoy it there? What are the personalities of your team and will you be comfortable with the management? If during the interview you got the impression you may not get along with your direct supervisor, take that into account. Do your attitudes, values, and goals align? Is the office culture casual, business casual or business professional? Keep in mind what your wardrobe looks like; are you willing and able to buy new clothes, if necessary?

How is the Commute?
This may sound trivial, but focus on what your commute will look like every day. Consider high traffic times of day, gas, winter weather, construction, work from home flexibility and how far away you are from children, daycare or medical appointment locations.

If you are moving to a different city or state, the cost of living will change. Use CNN Money Calculator for different Cost of Livings: money.cnn.com/calculator/pf/cost-of-living/
The company may offer a relocation package if you are forced to move.
FIND YOUR BREAKING POINT

SALARY WORKSHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Salary Per Month</th>
<th>+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Taxes (about 28% of Salary—depending filing status/type)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Insurance (include Dental and Vision)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Reimbursed Business Expenses (Gas, Parking, etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car and Rent/House Payments</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Bills (Gas, Electric, Water, Cable/Internet, Phone, Student Loan Payments, etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Grocery Spending</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. Consistent Expenses (Credit Card Debt, Outstanding Bills, Child Support, etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you live with the amount (per month) based on your lifestyle? Do not forget about emergency funds and retirement contributions. Consider bonuses and over-time.</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEGO Ti Ti NG OFFERS

It is Always Awkward

Be confident in your worth and clear on your expectations from the beginning. Avoid asking about salary in initial interviews. If the salary range is not posted in the job description or provided during the interview process, use O*NET OnLine to understand the range the position should merit. Gather the information and decide what your realistic target number should be. Expect to be at the low end of a range unless:

- You have met all AND exceeded some requirements listed in the job description based upon experience and education
- You have achieved "preferred qualifications"
- You have worked for the company previously
- The compensation is not enough to incentivize you to leave your current role

Not all offers are negotiable due to inner-office equity, company policy or budgets, or non-profit status. Review the previous page. If a company is not able to offer you more, consider negotiating for moving costs, expense reimbursement such as mileage, schedule flexibility, additional vacation time, professional development or certifications or other benefits. Engaging in negotiations does not mean you will not accept the position if requests aren’t met, but you have been offered the role. Now it’s time to discover what they are willing to pay to secure a great candidate. Contact Career Services to gain an impartial opinion and discuss how to best leverage yourself effectively through this conversation.