

INTERVIEWING

NEELEY DEVELOPMENT SERIES—TOOLS FOR BUSINESS



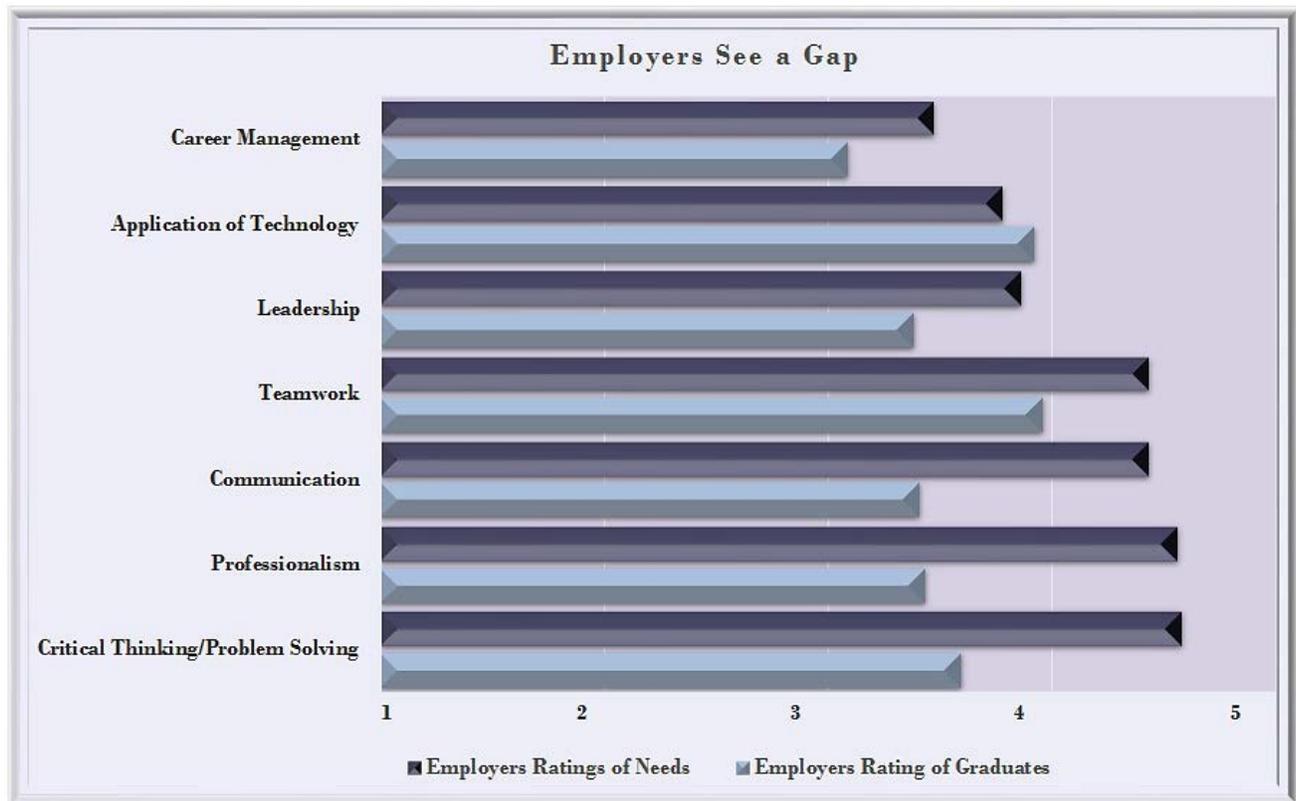
PUTTING YOUR BEST SELF FORWARD

Looking For More Than You Think

An interview is simply a conversation an employer has with a potential candidate to evaluate their qualifications and skills as they relate to a particular job. Interviewers are trained to ask specific questions to identify the best candidate and determine if the candidate is a good fit with the company culture. Your chances of having a positive interview experience and a successful result increase significantly with proper preparation. Knowing what an interviewer is looking for is not enough, you need to know how to provide answers that show the interviewer you have what it takes to do the job.

In a survey of 260 employers by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, members identified key skills and attributes they like to see in new hires. The table below reveals the results of this survey:

Source: Job Outlook 2017, National Association of Colleges and Employers



1=not at all important 2=not very important 3=somewhat important
4=very important 5=extremely important

Looking at this information, you may be tempted to start making general statements such as, "I am a people-person who knows how to solve problems."

This type of response is weak because there are no examples to validate the statement. An experienced interviewer will not be fooled by this type of response. To be successful interviewing, you must talk about your experiences in a way that shows employers you possess the skills and attributes they are seeking.

The best way to improve your interviewing skills is by scheduling a mock interview with the Neeley Professional Development Center (PDC) or the Alcon Career Center.

The Screening Interview

The screening interview is usually a brief interaction that is used to reduce the candidate pool to those that best fit the requirements of the position. It is also a way for employers to get an initial sense of a candidate's potential fit with the company culture.

Screening interviews can happen over the phone, in-person, through live video, or on-demand through a website. No matter what method is used, make sure to always maintain a high level of professionalism.



How to Manage the Phone Screen Interview

There are challenges when having a phone or video interview including conveying adequate interest, listening effectively, and dealing with external distractions. Here are some tips to help you be successful:

- **Make information accessible** - Have an outline of key talking points, the position description, and your resume so you can easily refer to them for important information.
- **Choose a secure location** - It is critical that you have a room that is free from noise and distractions. We recommend that you reserve a room in the Alcon Career Center or the PDC for phone or video interviews.
- **Handset or speaker?** - You want the interviewer to hear you without any difficulty, so it is best to use the handset. A headset or ear piece is not out of the question, just make sure you test it out beforehand.
- **Sit or stand?** - If you like to stand and move around, make sure the room you use has open space.
- **Not ready when they call?** - If an employer calls and wants to do a phone interview right then and it was unscheduled, it is okay for you to request a later time that day or the following day so you can prepare.

Video and On-Demand Interviewing

Skype is a common software employers use to facilitate video interviews which you should expect to experience over the course of your time in Neeley.

On-Demand Interview - HireVue

What is it?

An on-demand interview is different than a video interview, because there is not a person on the other end. Candidates are directed to a website where an employer has uploaded a set of interview questions. Each question is assigned a time limit for a response and just like a live interview, do-overs are not always allowed. Employers can request video and/or written responses which will be stored on the website for the employer to access and review.

Why is it used?

HireVue, one of the major vendors, has the capability to analyze the words a candidate uses when responding to questions as well as analyzing the candidate's tone of voice and facial expressions using predictive analytics and machine learning technology. This means that a candidate will already have a rating before a recruiter sees or reads the candidate's responses.

How to Prepare

- Check surroundings for distractions on the video
- Evaluate lighting
- Practice and prepare
- Close other programs on your computer
- Know your tech
- Position yourself to fit within the frame
- Exaggerate facial expressions
- Look at the camera, not the picture

<https://www.hirevue.com/blog/how-to-prepare-for-your-hirevue-digital-interview/>

The Case Interview

The use of this method is increasing. It is strongly recommended that you complete a case interview by the end of your sophomore year. Your success in a case interview will not depend on identifying the “correct” answer, but rather on how clearly you define the problem, how logically you structure your analysis, and how well you communicate your thoughts to the interviewer while solving the problem.

1. Brainteasers

- How many golf balls can fit in a football stadium?
- How many miles of road are there in the United States?

2. Consulting Math

- About 225 of Smith’s Investments employees (approximately 20,000 total) have the title of partner. What percentage of all Smith’s Investments employees are partners?
- The market for lead pencils has been declining at 4%/year for the last 3 years. The original market was \$24M/year. What is the market in year 3 (now)?

3. Market Sizing

- How many hamburgers are consumed in the U.S. in one year?
- What is the size of the U.K. market (\$) for helium balloons?

4. Profitability

- What should Company X do about revenues (prices x volumes)?
- What should Company Y do about costs (fixed costs + variable costs)?
- What should Company Z do about overall profits (including both sides of the profit equation using metrics such as profit/unit or profit/channel)?

5. Market Study

- Market Entry
- Revenue Growth
- Market Share

6. Merger & Acquisition Cases

- Should Company A merge with Company B?
- Company Y is thinking about purchasing Company Z. Should they move forward?

The Stress Interview

The purpose of these interviews is to evaluate a candidate’s response to stressful situations. The best way to manage these types of interviews is to depersonalize the event.

There can be multiple tactics to induce stress. Some of these include:

- Having you do a presentation with little or no preparation
- Asking oddball questions such as, “Why are manholes round?”
- Appearing disappointed with your response by sighing or making you repeat your answer several times

The Situational Interview

Situational questions may be included in a screening or behavioral interview. Use your experiences as a guide when answering these questions. If you have no experience related to the situation, think through how you would handle the situation and clearly state your process to the interviewer.

Some situational questions may include:

- What would you do if you got assigned to be the team leader of a project and one of the team members was upset he or she did not get assigned to be the team leader?
- How would you handle an irate customer who was using profanity while yelling at you because he or she was unhappy with the service received?
- If someone asked you for assistance with a matter that is outside the parameters of your job description, what would you do?

The Behavioral Interview

This is the most common type of interview and focuses on a candidate's experiences. The belief is that a candidate's *past experiences are a good indicator of future performance*.

Behavioral-based questions are easy to identify because they typically start with phrases such as, "Tell me about a time when..." or "Describe a situation when..." When you hear this phrase you know you are being asked a behaviorally based question.



There are two types of Behavioral Interviewing Questions - *Positive Evidence* and *Contrary Evidence*

Positive evidence questions look for a positive outcome, i.e., "Tell me about a time when you were successful in leading a team." However, it may not be so obvious. The interviewer may simply say, "Tell me about a recent team experience." If the question appears neutral, answer with a positive example. **(STAR, see p. 5)**

Contrary evidence questions seek out situations where a candidate may not have been successful, i.e., "Tell me about a time when you planned to reach a goal and were unsuccessful. How did you manage that situation?" Interviewers ask these types of questions to get a more balanced view of a candidate's experiences. No one is perfect and interviewers want to identify challenges to be sure you are not skewing your answers too positively. **(SHARE, see p. 6)**

Behavioral Interview Models

It is important to answer questions in a clear and concise manner. Most answers to behavioral questions should be around 90 seconds. To help with clarity and brevity, there are two models that you can use to organize your responses.

STAR works well with *positive evidence* questions.

SHARE works well with *contrary evidence* questions.

Positive Evidence Questions	
S <u>I</u> TUATION	Provide an overview and the basics for the example you are using.
T <u>A</u> SK	Describe the project, the goal and what your role was specifically.
A <u>C</u> TION	Discuss the action you took to accomplish the tasks. What conversations did you have? What decisions did you make? Keep the focus on YOU! Even when discussing group projects, describe your role.
R <u>E</u> SULTS	What happened? What was the outcome? What did your boss/professor think about the outcome?

EXAMPLE: "Tell me about a time when it was important to take initiative to get the job done."

Situation: Last summer I was an intern at a company called *brandnu* in Dallas.

Task: One of the projects I was assigned was gathering research regarding competitor services, because the management team was looking at growing the company. I was not provided a deadline and I was the only person assigned to this project. With no deadline and working alone, I had to take action or nothing would get done, but I had no idea where to start.

Action: One of the first steps I took was getting to know people in the company. I knew that input from others would be important at some point in my project and I wanted to network and learn about different positions in the company. This also made me more comfortable because I did not want to be known as "the intern." I spent the first several days learning about the company services which included graphic design, digital marketing, branding, social media and the like. I then identified key competitors by searching for companies of similar size and location and asking co-workers. I researched the competitors by reviewing social media and establishing Google Alerts. I did this because I wanted to identify the reputation of the competitors. I even called a few to ask about services. I identified five main competitors and created a table to show how our services compared to the competitors.

Before sending the table to my manager for review, I created a brief summary of how I identified competitors and the identifiable service gaps. One of the services we were not providing that was common among the competitors was providing consultation regarding marketing strategy and planning.

Result: My manager appreciated my concise overview and I asked her why consulting services were not being offered. She indicated that the company did not have the right employees for that service as the main revenue driver for the company was digital marketing and graphic design and those are areas that require employees with a specific skill set. She agreed consulting services would be a nice addition, but the company was probably another year away from being positioned to provide that service.

Contrary Evidence Questions	
<u>S</u>ITUATION	Provide an example of a situation that will answer the question.
<u>H</u>INDRANCE	What challenges or obstacles did you face?
<u>A</u>CTION	Discuss the action you took to overcome the challenge or obstacle.
<u>R</u>ESULTS	What was the outcome?
<u>E</u>VALUATE	What did you learn or take away from the experience? Be specific.

EXAMPLE: "Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline."

Situation: At my job this past summer, I was assigned a project to create a database to store client information. My boss wanted it done by the end of July so when they launched the new company website clients could complete information online.

Hindrance: One of the challenges during this project was my schedule. I was taking two summer classes and the homework load was more than I expected.

Action: I stayed late in the office when I could and I even worked on weekends to stay on top of the database project. The long hours were having a negative impact on my overall productivity.

Result: I missed the database project deadline by two days. This did not affect the launch of the website, but the online client forms were delayed in getting posted. I apologized to my boss and explained my scheduling difficulty. She indicated that if I had informed her sooner she would have assigned additional support to get the project done on time. She understood that school was the first priority, but she was disappointed I did not inform her earlier.

Evaluate: Looking back at this, I realized that I was afraid to say I was not going to meet the deadline. It was an experience that showed me that being realistic about my workload is critical and more importantly that keeping my boss informed is necessary and expected even if it is not positive news.



Expectations for the Interview

- 1) **Know the Company** - At a minimum you should know what they do, how many offices they have, whether they are global, what the recent news stories are, their growth rate, etc.
- 2) **Have Your Examples Ready** - Keep an activity log each semester, review it and identify examples you want to use during the interview.
- 3) **Arrive Early** - Arrive 15-20 minutes before your scheduled interview. Take time to visit with the front desk if they seem open to talking. If not, read a professional magazine and sit patiently. DO NOT use your phone or sit and text while waiting.
- 4) **Dress the Part** - Be business professional unless you absolutely know the expectation is different. If you are not sure what business professional is, stop by the PDC or the Alcon Career Center. If you are told the dress is casual, ask for specific examples. There are many variations on the concept of “casual” in the workplace right now, so you will want to be specific.
- 5) **Unspoken Language** - It all starts with a good, solid handshake. After that, you have the usual items to consider - sit up straight, make consistent eye contact, speak clearly, use inflection and incorporate gestures that are comfortable for you. The best advice is simply to be yourself; they are interviewing you and want to get to know you. You may have some nervousness and that is okay. Do your best to keep the nerves in check – no fidgeting or tapping pens or feet. Completing a mock interview at the PDC or Alcon Career Center is a good way to reduce nervousness.
- 6) **Have questions for the employer** - Be selective and avoid asking questions you should already know through your research on the company website or through other literature. Never ask about salary and benefits during the interview. Let the employer be the first to discuss those topics.
- 7) **Thank You Note** - Send a handwritten thank you note to your interviewer(s) within 24 hours and mention something specific from the interview so they know it was written after the interview.

Questions for the Employer

- What skills and attributes do successful employees at this company usually have?
- What do you like best about working here?
- What is your philosophy regarding on-the-job growth and development?
- What are your goals for the department?
- What is the main objective for the organization over the next year?
- How would you describe the culture of the company?
- How did this position come to be open?
- What type of work can I expect to be doing during my first year?
- What is the performance appraisal process like here?

Interview Preparation Exercise

Prior to each interview, you should think through responses to all of the questions below. Practice out loud – in the mirror, in the car, etc. Some people benefit from recording themselves. Hearing your voice and seeing your mannerisms can help you make adjustments before your actual interview.

- Tell me something interesting about yourself I can't get from your resume.
- How would your peers describe you?
- What is one thing you do that tends to frustrate others?
- What is your super-power, that is, what can you uniquely do that sets you apart from others?
- What do you know about our company and why do you want to work here?
- What is one area you need to consistently work on to be more effective day-to-day?
- What was the last project you worked on with a team? What was your role and what was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty at work to get the job done.
- Describe a time when your work was criticized.
- Describe a time when a team member was not pulling his or her own weight. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to be assertive and how did you handle it?
- What is your greatest failure and what did you learn from it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone that you did not get along well with and how do you deal with it?
- Tell me about a situation when you had to analyze a significant amount of data to reach a conclusion or provide a recommendation?
- Give me an example of a time you made a mistake and what happened?
- Tell me about a time when it was more important for you to listen than speak your mind.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Tell me about a time when you influenced someone to your way of thinking.
- Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- Is there anything else we should know that you did not have the chance to communicate during the interview?

The Fashion

When your potential employer requests an interview, you should make sure to extend your professional image in your potentially new work environment. Make sure you are well dressed, you are prepared to answer questions about your resume, and your past work experience, and that you carry yourself well. You must also leave a lasting impression - a professional image that will follow you outside of the interview.

Men

- Dark suit (navy or charcoal and conservative, yet cool tie that complements your suit)
- Wear a suit that is well-fitted and a pressed or ironed shirt (go ahead and pay for the dry cleaning)
- Match your socks with your suit pants and match your belt with your shoes
- Polish your shoes and look at your shoelaces for any frayed ends
- Look at your nails—they should look well-maintained (no unsightly hangnails)
- Avoid wearing cologne
- Never button the bottom button on a suit. On a two button jacket, you can button the top button and on a three button jacket, you can button the top two or just the middle button, but be sure to unbutton your jacket when you sit down



Women

- Wear a dark suit (navy, charcoal, or black)
- If the environment of the company is conservative, wear hosiery with your knee-length skirt suit
- Wear close-toed shoes with heels that are no higher than three inches
- Wear a modest shirt or blouse
- Manicure your nails (clear polish or buffed is fine)
- Wear no more than five pieces of conservative jewelry (earrings count as two pieces); jewelry should not make noise as you move
- Avoid wearing perfume
- Hair and makeup should be conservative. If you are a hair twirler or hair flipper, consider an up-do or pull your hair back from your face
- Avoid carrying too much - a conservative purse and a pad folio should suffice. You will need to keep your right hand free for a handshake. It's a good idea to clean out your purse so that you only have what you will need for the interview. If you have to dig around in your purse at length to find a pen, that will also be noted by your interviewer.



Common Interviewing Mishaps

Not investing the necessary effort

The amount of effort you put into preparing for your interview is a direct indication of how much you think you are worth. It takes time to prepare.

Forgetting memorable experiences

Keep an activity log to remember key projects and activities that highlight your abilities in different areas – teamwork, organizing, managing conflict, prioritizing, etc.

Uh, um, you know, like

Vocal fillers make you appear immature, less prepared and more nervous - pause instead. This is another area in which practice will help. If you know what you will say, you are less likely to use fillers. Work on the preparation exercise on page 8 and you will have fewer vocal fillers.

Sharing too much information

You may have made some poor choices in life, but now is not the time to talk about the time you “borrowed” your friend’s car and ended up at the police station.

Appearing unexcited

Gestures and voice fluctuation can go a long way in communicating excitement. Make sure to smile and make eye contact.

Electronic devices

Silence or do not bring personal electronic devices in the interview.

Arriving late

Arrive 10- 15 minutes early. This gives you an opportunity to get relaxed and gather your thoughts. While you are waiting, you are being observed, so read a professional magazine or sit patiently—remember no cell phone or other electronic devices.

Lacking confidence

You should be confident: you scored this interview on your merits. Be sure to have a solid handshake, good posture and maintain consistent eye contact.

After the interview

Use TCU-RAP to record your internships, job offers and interview questions you have been asked by employers. This extra step helps other students in their job search and helps the Alcon Career Center keep an accurate record of your successes. Find TCU-RAP at tcu.12twenty.com

TCU TCU-RAP
TCU Recruiting Analytics Platform

Profile
Research Tools

Super Frog
Spring 2018
super.frog@tcu.edu

Outcomes Interviews Background

Post Graduation **Other Intentions** ⓘ ⋮
Last Edited: 08/02/2016

Internship **Alcon - Summer 2016** Unpaid ⓘ ⋮
Administrative Intern **Sophomore-Junior**
08/31/2016 - Continuing into school year **Internship - Offer Accepted**
Last Edited: 08/01/2016

Have more experience to add? Let us know here...
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

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About the Neeley Professional Development Center

The Professional Development Center (PDC) provides the strategy, support, and resources for student talent development. Succeeding in today's dynamic workplace requires an ability to effectively manage interpersonal and team relationships on a global scale. With an emphasis on self-awareness, the PDC equips students with the skills necessary to establish themselves as business professionals capable of communicating their thoughts, ideas, and opinions to influence others and achieve goals. M.J. Neeley established the center, originally called the Center for Productive Communication, in 1987. He owned many businesses and had the foresight to understand the critical role communication has in business.

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Other titles in this series include:

- *Résumés and Cover Letters*
- *Neeley Teaming*
- *Business Writing*
- *Productive Group Meetings*