

Interviewing

The basics:
a boot camp
for the medical physicist

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Disclosures:

- Neither speaker has any conflicts to disclose
- Both speakers have been both interviewees and interviewers
- Both speakers serve on the AAPM Placement Services Subcommittee

Learning Objectives:

1. How to highlight your skill set for potential employers.
2. How to respond to behavior based (vs. technical based) interview questions.
3. How to evaluate potential employers as a good fit for you

“There are two terrible places to be during an interview, sitting in front of the desk wondering what one earth is going to happen next, and sitting behind the desk asking the questions. The average interviewer dreads the meeting almost as much as the interviewee...”

- Martin Yate, Knock 'Em Dead



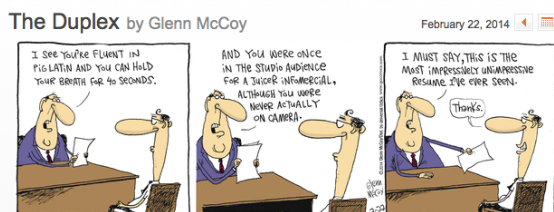
**There is not necessarily a
RIGHT
answer to a question,
but there often can
be a
WRONG
one!**

Handy techniques:

- Be prepared
- Be yourself
- Repeat the re-phrased question back to the interviewer
 - having practiced beforehand is preferable
 - ask for clarification
- Be *positive*
- Be courteous
- Deflect
 - can I get back to you on that?
 - yes, and
- Don't forget to BREATHE
- Don't lie. Ever. Really.

What's the point of an interview?

- Their goals
- Your goals



The Potential Employer's Goals:

- Finding the right person to contribute to the organization.
 - Can you do the job?
 - Will you do the job?
 - How well will you fit in?
- Regardless of your job title, you are being hired as a problem solver with a very specific expertise.
 - Technical skills
 - Transferable skills (sometimes called *soft skills*)

Your Goals:

Demonstrate that you are the right candidate

- qualifications and skills
 - what you know and what you can do for the prospective organization
- experience and work background
 - where you have been and what you have done
- your personality and character
 - who you are and how you behave

Your Goals:

- You must convince the employer that you have a lot to offer
- You must convince the employer that you are the right person for the job
- You must convince the employer that you are the **BEST** person for the job

Preparation:

- Analyze the job description
- Research the organization/department
 - Type of organization: academic, private practice, consulting, vendor.
 - Types of equipment and modalities of treatment.
 - Size of the organization and reporting structure.
 - Organizational mission or value statement.
- Where to start?
 - Job advertisement
 - The internet

Preparation:

- Practice *selling* yourself.
- Be able to discuss weaknesses.
 - Compose a positive, compelling explanation.
- Be able to discuss gaps or inconsistencies in your CV.
- Maximize strengths.

HOW?

- With examples (tell “a story”)
- Turn negative aspects into positives by stressing what you learned or how your character developed.

An example of being prepared

“Why have you had so many jobs in the last few years?”

What does the employer think?

- you are not loyal or committed
- you don’t get along with your co-workers
- you will leave for just a just a little more money

Being Prepared: How to explain?

Always be positive about previous jobs and prior managers!

Emphasize

- what you learned from a prior job that applies to this one (experience)
- why you left
 - use **LAMPS**
 - **LOCATION**: the commute was too long
 - **ADVANCEMENT**: no opportunity for growth
 - **MONEY**: you were underpaid (be *very careful* with this one)
 - **PRIDE** (or prestige): you wanted to be with a better company
 - **SECURITY**: the organization was unstable

from: Knock ‘em Dead Job Interview, Martin Yate

Behavioral Questions

- Based on the theory that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior
- How to answer these sorts of questions?
- Consider using STAR
 - situation/task
 - action
 - result

from Competency-Based Interviews by Robin Kessler

Illegal questions

- Why are illegal questions asked?
 - interviewer does not understand EEO rules, diversity or basic interview skills
- subtle wording can change if a question is “legal” or not
- it is not always easy to evade answering, but you can use *deflection*
- avoid getting angry and be respectful
 - try to determine the reason or need behind the question

Illegal questions

- An interviewer may not ask about your religion, church, synagogue, parish or what holidays you observe.
- illegal: "Does your religion allow you to work on Saturdays?"
- legal: "This job requires work on Saturdays. Is that a problem?"

Illegal questions

- Sometimes it is in your best interest to answer even if the question is not entirely legal
 - "I attend my mosque/church/synagogue regularly but I do not involve my personal beliefs in my work"
 - "I feel that my personal beliefs enhance my work ethic. I have not had any conflicts in my prior work experience in this regard."

from: Knock 'em Dead Job Interview, Martin Yate

Illegal questions

- An interviewer may not ask about your ancestry, national origin or parentage or the naturalization status of your parents, spouse or children.
- illegal: "Where were you born?"
- legal: "Are you a US citizen or a resident alien with a valid visa? Do you need visa support?"

from: Knock 'em Dead Job Interview, Martin Yate

Illegal questions

- Are you married?
It is often better to answer the question and remove doubts...
 - "Yes, I am married. Of course, I separate my work life from my family life so I can focus on my work obligations. If you check my references you will see that late hours or occasional travel has not been an issue"

from: Knock 'em Dead Job Interview, Martin Yate

Interview Structure

- The introduction
- The body (actual interview)
- The conclusion

Types of interviews

- Phone
- Internet (i.e. skype)
- One on One
- Panel
- Giving a Presentation

Phone Interview

- The goal is to get an on-site interview.
- Can be used as a screening tool.
- Make certain you are in a good place to receive the call
- Minimize background noises and distractions.
- If you are on a mobile phone, ensure you have good reception and your battery is charged.
- Be clear and concise in your responses.
- Inquire about meeting face to face.
 - If told there are other candidates for consideration, ask when you are likely to hear back.

from How To Answer Hard Interview Questions by Charles Gibbs

Internet Interview

- Take as seriously as an in person interview.
- Dress professionally.
- Look and act the part.
- Look at the camera.
- Check your background - test your setting prior to the actual event.
- There may be a time lag.
- Be mindful of (and eliminate) background noise.

from Competency-Based Interviews by Robin Kessler

One on One Interview

- Don't be too early, don't be late.
- Bring extra copies of your CV.
- Try to calm your nerves.
 - Don't talk *too* much.
- Do not bring up benefits and perks early on.
- Ask for a business card so you can keep track of those you have interviewed with and get their names spelled correctly.

Panel Interviewing

- Many of the same items as a one to one interview apply.
- Greet everyone and ask for business cards to keep track of names and titles - each person should receive a thank you note.
- Be certain to make appropriate eye contact, especially with the person asking the question.
- Never interrupt.

Panel Interviewing

- This is your best opportunity to assess job fit
 - Watch for non-verbal cues from your panel.
 - Are their arms crossed? Are they looking at their phones?
 - People have horrible poker faces. Use this to your advantage
 - How do the panelists interact with each other?
 - Are they friendly? Is there tension in the room?
 - Are they engaged in the process?

Panel Interviewing

- You can learn:
 - Workload distribution
 - Resources and support from administration
 - Insight into personalities of future colleagues

Presentation

- Understand the type of presentation expected.
 - About your latest research or implementation of a new technology?
- Understand who is going to be in the audience.
- Understand the length of time allotted.
- Have more than one copy of your presentation available in case of technology failure (USB sticks, cloud back-up).

The Interview:

- rules of etiquette
 - don't sit down unless invited to
 - if not asked, inquire if you can sit down
 - be mindful of everyone you meet
 - do not keep checking your watch
- the handshake
 - firm
- coffee?
 - it is never improper to decline
 - are you nervous? are you going to spill it? knock it over?
- smoking?
- your mobile phone
 - keep it on vibrate
 - constantly checking your phone
- talking about yourself (being comfortable)
- let someone else bring up money first

Body Language and Nonverbal Communication

- Maintain good eye contact
- Stay focused
- Minimize dysfluences: the *uhs*, *uhm's*, *you knows*
- Posture
- Fidgeting
- Use the correct gestures and smile appropriately
- Speak clearly
- Be enthusiastic

Your turn to ask questions

- What does the job entail?
- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What about professional development?
- What are the future goals for the organization?
- What are the roles of different team members?
- What is the culture like in the organization?
- Who has succeeded in this position? failed?
- What do I need to do to get this job?

Are you a good fit?

Investigate:

- The corporate culture
- Work atmosphere
- Mission of the organization
- Competitors

Clues to look for:

- Do people smile
- Do people make eye contact and look up while walking in the hallway
- Do people appear generally friendly toward each other

Common mistakes

- Being unprepared.
- Sloppy appearance or too relaxed attitude.
- Not showing enthusiasm.
- Being arrogant.
- Not understanding the job requirements.
- Not answering questions completely.
- Being vague or waffling with answers.
- Being more concerned about job perks.
- Using technical language to impress.

Oddball questions:

- You are a new addition to the crayon box; what color would you be and why? (urban outfitters)
- Why is a tennis ball fuzzy? (Xerox)
- How many square feet of pizza is eaten in the US each year? (Goldman Sachs)
- If you were a box of cereal, what would you be and why? (Bed, Bath and Beyond)
- If you were a pizza delivery man, how would you benefit from scissors? (Apple)
- If you were on an island and could only bring 3 things, what would you bring? (Yahoo)

from Top 25 Oddball Interview Questions, Glassdoor.com

Wrapping it up:

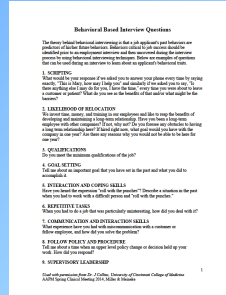
- Be confident
- Be courteous
- Be positive
- Be prepared
- You learn from each interview

Resources

- Your alumni career center
- Your friends and colleagues
- The internet
- The library
- The AAPM (and other professional societies)



Resources



- These questions are available in our slides handout online.
- They will also be made available on the AAPM Career Services Website under the resources tab.
- <http://careers.aapm.org>

Challenging Question 1:

- Tell me a little about yourself.

Challenging Question 2:

- What is your greatest weakness?

Challenging Question 3:

- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a previous supervisor or coworker? How did you resolve the situation?

Challenging Question 4:

- How much are you currently earning?