How To Handle Tough Job Interviews: A Seminar

By: James Reinnoldt
UWB
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The Moment of Truth:

Are you prepared for an interview?
Can you convince the interviewer that you are the best of all of the candidates?
This Presentation

The Interview Challenge:
2. Preparing for the Interview: The Three Ps
3. Those Crucial Mini Stories
4. The Moment of Truth
5. Body Language Says it All
6. Those Tough Questions They Ask!
7. Asking Good Questions
8. Getting the Bucks: Salary Discussions
9. Closing and Following up
10. The Opportunity of Rejection
Some Guidelines

Will talk a bit about “unconventional” interview tactics

Some of these tactics will work for some, but not for others: they need to “fit” the personality

Keep casual: ask questions at any time

Slides will be posted
The Story of Mary:

UWB Graduate Business Admin
The Moment of Truth

Meet Mary

$$ on Education
Countless hours
Has identified “The Dream Job” at ACE Coffee

Meet Mr. Smith

VP HR ACE Coffee
Had 30 interviews over last two days
Decides who gets the “dream job”
Your Next Interview

Differentiation in a meaningful way
(1) **Differentiation**
Get the interviewer to like and remember you more than he/she likes & remembers the other interviewees!

(2) **Establish “meaningful” importance**

In short: Get out of the “grey”!
Remember Mr. Smith

VP HR ACE Coffee
Had 30 interviews over last two days
Decides who gets the “dream job”
Mary Smith
• Bright!
• Competent!
• Pleasant!
• Eager!
How to Get Out of The Grey

- The Mindset of the Interviewer
- Preparing for The Interview
- The Interview
- The Post Interview
Interviewer Mindsets

Assumptions about the interviewer:

The interviewer has probably already spoken to many candidates

The interviewer is probably tired

The interviewer is weary of “having to pull teeth” all day long

Sometimes he is she isn’t even prepared!
Two Types of Interviews

1. **Unorganized.** Interviewer has not even looked at your resume yet.

2. **Controlled.** The Interviewer takes done his homework. Will take control of the process. He or she asks a question and you answer.

*The Challenge:*
You don’t know which kind it will be, but you need to be prepared!
Three Types of Controlled Interviews

1. 1 on 1
2. Panel
3. String

The Challenge Again:
You don’t know which kind it will be, but you need to be prepared!
Failing to prepare prepares one to fail
Preparing for The Interview: A Sales Plan
Preparing for The Interview:

Assess the needs of the customer

Respond with a “value proposition” or solution
Preparing for the Interview

The “needs” of every interviewer/firm in new hires:

1. That there the **ability** to do the job

2. That there the **willingness** to do the job

3. That the employee is **manageable**
Preparing for the Interview

Your Three Key Steps

Step 1:
Assess the company’s needs:

• Growth?
• Marketing?
• Finance?
• IT?
• Washington?
• International?
Preparing for the Interview

Step 2:
Assess your own abilities and skills i.e. “your offer”

- Education
- Skills
- Experiences
- Personal traits
Preparing for the Interview

Step 3:
Prepare and *practice-practice-practice* your selling proposition based on

Their needs &
Your “offer”:
The All-Important Mini-Stories
What is a mini-story?
A mini-story is a brief and prepared “story” that is built around some key points of your “pitch” and should last about three minutes.

It is used to either answer questions that will come up, or sell your interviewer on your accomplishments and strengths. Six Topics:

1. Personal History
2. Strengths
3. Experiences
4. Abilities
5. Challenges (that you overcame)
6. Contributions (that you made to your job)
Organizing the Mini Story

Each Mini Story is made up of four parts:

1. The point (e.g. a strength)
2. An illustration or example
3. What you learned

And a bit later:

4. How it applies to the job or company
This approach helps you prepare for the two types of Interviews:

1. Controlled
2. Unorganized
Mini Stories and The Controlled Interview
"So, tell me about yourself as a student at UWB"

-The point
-An example
-Show an example of your work!
-What you learned
Option 1

“I am a senior and am concentrating in Marketing. I graduate next spring”

Option 2

“I am a senior and am concentrating in Marketing.
I have enjoyed my time….”
“I started there two years ago and have really enjoyed it. In addition to being in UWB’s student government, I also worked on a number of charitable events. I expect my GPA to be 3.7 when I graduate.

My favorite subject was International Marketing. In fact, we did a project on the coffee industry in Canada. Here’s a copy.
Questions and Mini Stories

“Are you working now?”

-The point
-An example
-What you learned
Option 1

“Well, I have been working at Target…”

Option 2

“Yes. I am supporting my own education by working at Target in the evenings for the last three years. It’s a great job!”
Questions and Mini Stories

“What is your greatest strength?”

-The point
-An example
-What you learned
Option 1

“I guess I am well organized”
“First, most people who know me would say that I am very organized. In my last job at Nordstroms, for example, I was put in charge of the annual inventory-restocking process”

“I learned quite a bit about inventory management using a database program”...
Questions and Mini Stories

“What is your greatest strength?”

-The point
-An example
-What you learned
Some good strengths:

- CPA accreditation
- Computer programming
- Foreign language skills
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Good planning skills
- Well organized
Questions and Mini Stories

“What is your greatest weakness?”

- The point
- An example
- What you learned
“**What is your greatest weakness?**”

“I become impatient at times when my teammates don’t pull their weight. I am very organized and a good planner, so I am quick to identify a project’s priorities. So when a colleague falls behind on his or her work, I become impatient and then need to deal with the shortcoming.

I’d like to give you an example of what happened recently” (what happened and what you did to deal with it)
Questions and Mini Stories

Some “good” weaknesses

• Too ambitious
• Impatience with the poor work of others
• Too efficient for other people’s tastes
Other Possible Questions

• How did you get to where you are today? (a brief family/personal history)

• What are you best at? (three things) with examples

• What are some examples of where you faced and overcame adversity (with examples)
This approach helps you prepare for the two types of Interviews:

1. Controlled
2. Unorganized
Mini Stories and
The
Unorganized Interview
Taking Control of the Unorganized Interview

1. **Unorganized.** Interviewer has not even looked at your resume yet. This can be awkward...and an opportunity.

Your approach:

“Mr. Smith, I am sure you are really busy, and I appreciate your valuable time. Would you like me to talk a bit about my background?”
Questions and Mini Stories

Remember: The interviewer wants to know essentially what makes you tick:

- Ability
- Willingness
- Manageability
Taking Control of the Unorganized Interview

1. Where born
2. High school
3. Job at QFC: what you learned
4. Coming to UWB: Marketing Interest
5. What you studied. What you liked
6. Samples of work
7. Keen interest in ACE Coffee; great marketers. Became a dream job
8. Applied and here we are!
The **Tough** Questions They Ask!
Those Tough Questions They Ask

What can you tell me about some of the challenges that ACE Coffee faces?

How can you help us overcome those challenges?

*These questions require research on your part, especially news articles*
The Case Study Question

Interviewer:
“A tin utensil manufacturer in Malaysia went out of business. Why?”

Don’t guess at the answer

Show how you would solve it; what kind of information is needed (AM)
The Most Important Question they ask!

ACE
Remember Your Positioning:
You are:
• Bright!
• Competent!
• Pleasant!
• Eager!
The Tough Questions

Interviewer:

So, what can **you** do for ACE Coffee?”
The Tough Questions

Or:

I have interviewed 20 candidates today. Why should I hire you?
The Tough Questions

“Why should I hire you?”

1. Recap what you have heard in the interview: The company’s growth, their market expansion, their need for good marketing and sales staff.

2. Then match their situation with your offer:
   - Solid educational background
   - Professional experience
   - Fast learner
   - Drive to succeed

ACE
“So Mr. Smith, as I see it, ACE Coffee is under pressure to expand, and that will require more employees who can handle the pressure and multi-tasking.

As I have mentioned, my key strengths include:
1. Strong organization skills (ability!)
2. Strong ambition and energy (willingness!)
   --and--
3. Ability to work on diverse and fast-moving teams. (manageability!)
The Tough Questions

“Why should I hire you?”

3. Quick summary: “I have what it takes to help you become successful”

4. Then hand him the……Killer Brief!
The Killer Brief!
“In summary, Mr. Smith, I am confident I can make a great contribution to ACE Coffee.”

“In fact, I gave some thought to the job, and have prepared a brief on how I might spend my first three months at Ace.”
The Killer Brief

Ace Coffee and the Global Market

Goal: Expand Ace’s global coffee sales through franchising and licensing

Job Priorities (first six months)
1. Conduct market screening exercise
2. Identify top six markets for ACE coffee
3. Investigate tariffs and other trade barriers
4. Conduct online internet survey: assess competitors (using UW alum network as respondents)
Mary, What Questions Do You Have?
Your Questions

Why is the job open?
What happened to my predecessor? (note use of “my”)
Is there a job description that I can see?
How would my work be evaluated?
What are the prospects for promotion?
What would be my first assignment?
Who would I report to?

Don’t ask questions about salary or benefits!
A Question to Make The Interviewer Feel Good About You (if good rapport)

“Mr. Johnson, how did you get to where you are today at Boeing?”
The final (and big!) question you can ask
A Great Question (if good rapport)

“Mr. Johnson, based on what you have hear today, how do you think I would fit in at Boeing?”

(be prepared to reinforce or offer a rebuttal)

“Ms. Smith, based on what I have heard, I think I have what it takes to meet the challenges and do an excellent job at Boeing. What do you think?”

(be prepared to explain why you are so confident!)
Closing the Interview
Closing the Interview

Thank the interviewer

Ask “what will happen next”

Restate interest!
“So Mr. Smith, as I see it, ACE Coffee is under pressure to expand, and that will require more employees who can handle the pressure and multi-tasking.

As I have mentioned, my key strengths include:
1. Strong organization skills *(ability!)*
2. Strong ambition and energy *(willingness!)*
   --and--
3. Ability to work on diverse and fast-moving teams. *(manageability!)*

In summary, I am confident I can make a great contribution to ACE Coffee.

*In fact, I gave some thought to the job, and prepared a brief on how I might spend my first three months at Ace.*
Closing the Interview

One last thing Mr. Jones,
After listening to you and after meeting you, I am even more interested in working at Starbucks.

Your company has some interesting challenges ahead, and I feel that I can make a valuable contribution.

I look forward to hearing from you--and hopefully working with you!
Post Interview
Post-Interview Follow-Though

Get out of the “grey”!

Send a 1 page brief on:

• How you would spend your first three months
• How the company should improve its web site
• How their products are priced versus the competition
• How you would help tackle a marketing problem

Mary Chan and The Case of The Ginger Cookies
Dear Mr./Mrs. X,

It was a pleasure to meet you today. I enjoyed our discussion about this exciting position. I would like to thank you for taking the time to get to know a little about me and what skills I can offer your firm. As we discussed, my area of expertise lies in Finance and Investments.

As we discussed I can be instrumental in helping your company achieve its goals through:

- Prepare financial strategies.
- Prepare various financial documents, procedures and presentations.
- Effectively manage special projects.
- Analyze problems and develop appropriate solutions.
- Ability to multi-task.
- Provide exceptional interpersonal skills.

The position is an exciting one for which I feel very qualified. It would be an honor to join your team. The range of skills that I can bring to your organization would allow you to focus on your goals and ultimately increase your bottom line profits.

I will call on [enter day/time if applicable] as you suggested to see if a decision has been made or to arrange a second interview. Thank you again for your time. I look forward to seeing you again very soon.
Handling Rejection

Send a thank-you note

Ask them to keep you in mind

Ask for feedback on how you might better prepare yourself for a similar job in the industry?
A Recap
Recap

Prepare your mini-stories:
• The point (e.g. weakness)
• Illustration
• What you learned

Practice-practice-practice
Prepare “The Killer Brief”

Apply and use your story: Sell yourself on the basis of your USP, remembering:
• Ability • Willingness • Manageability
Video Interviews
Video Interviews

1. Prepare as you would for any interview
2. Dress appropriately
3. Get rid of cats, kids and other distractions
4. Put lighting in front of you; not back
5. Have a good back-drop: neutral or book case
6. Set camera so you have a full profile; don’t lean into camera
7. Do a dry run with a friend; get used to web camera and Skype
Phone Interviews
Phone Interviews

1. Prepare as you would for any interview
2. Get rid of cats, kids and other distractions
3. Use regular phone: Not Skype or speaker mode
4. Smile when you speak; get some energy going
5. Speak in sound bites; let them interject questions
6. Do a dry run with a friend
Other Preparations
The Interview

What is the best time slot?
• First interview in the morning
• Second interview in the morning
• First interview after lunch

Worst slot?
• Last one at the end of the day
• Last one before lunch
The Introduction

“You only get one chance at a first impression”
--Mark Twain
The Interview

What to Bring: (leather briefcase best)

• Four copies of your resume
• Paper/nice pen for notes
• A few examples of your work
• Some reference letters
• Company dossier
• List of questions to ask
• Your “killer brief”
• Generic “thank you” letter (will explain)
Last Minute Checks

Straight tie?
Cold hands?
The Introduction

Walk slowly and deliberately

Handshake (no cold hands!).

Greet by surname

Wait to be invited to sit down

Establish rapport if you can
Salary Issues
Discussing Salary Issues

Salary is seldom brought up in the first interview. Don’t bring it up.

However, do research on what similar positions in your area pay.

Salary.com is a good source. Have a realistic salary range in mind (with your minimum base)
Discussing Salary Issues

Interesting Statistics:

Four out of five (80%) of companies are willing to pay more money than their first offer...

Yet only one out of five (20%) of the applicants ask for more money!

Your objective: negotiate for a better offer!
Discussing Salary Issues

Your strategy is to get them to name a number or a salary range. Why?

• If your own number is too high, you can be immediately rejected

• If you are too low, you could end up with less than they had in mind!

• On application just say “competitive”
Discussing Salary Issues

Their question: “Mary, what are your salary expectations?”

Your answer: “As this is my first interview with ACE Coffee, I am not entirely familiar with your employment conditions. What is Ace’s salary range for this type of position?”

Their answer: “The range for a new college grad at ACE Coffee is between $45 and $55 K. What do you think?”
Discussing Salary Issues

Ace’s Range

$55 K

Your Range

$ 60 K Ideal

$ 55 K Target

$ 50 K minimum

$45 K

Now you have a basis for negotiation
Discussing Salary Issues

Their offer: We’d like to offer you $50K per year.

Your answer:

“Thank you. That is very kind. I’d like some time to review it. Can I come to see you on June 10th?”

Your objective on June 15th:

Try to get more money without seeing the door close in your face (unless their salary offer really is below your expectations)
Discussing Salary Issues

Your Opening:

“First, thank you for your interest in me as a candidate. I am quite excited about the prospect of working for Ace Coffee.

While salary is only one part of the compensation package, I would like to discuss it to get your feedback. I have done some research (show examples) and found that candidates with my background are currently attracting an average starting salary range of $55-$60 K, and I’d appreciate your opinion on the matter…”
Closing any Salary Gap

What else can you ask for?

• Signing bonus
• Salary review after 6 months with a 10% boost if you perform to expectations
• More vacation
• Better insurance policy
• Higher 401K contribution
• Education (MBA)
A Summary
Summary

Getting Out of the Grey: Your USP
Prepare! Practice! Have a Good Story!
Positive Body Language!
Practice for those Tough Questions They Ask!
Prepare questions about the company
Beware of salary questions!
Close and follow up
Overcome and learn from Rejection!
Questions?