Alumni Career Webinar: Interviewing Success

Kris Stehler, Assistant Director for Alumni Relations
Office of Career Services & Cooperative Education
www.rit.edu/careerservices
Interview Goals

• Yours:
  – Successfully communicate your fit for the position
  – Determine if this is the best job and company for you
  – Get the job!

• Theirs:
  – Determine if you’re the best candidate for the job in terms of overall skills and fit for the company
  – Sell the company to candidates
Preparation, Part I

• Know the company
  – Research: website, online news, business articles, GlassDoor, Hoovers, RIT Library, industry specific sites, LinkedIn and Twitter company pages
  – Who do you know? LinkedIn contacts or RIT alumni at company, professional association contacts
  – What to know: mission, products/services, trends (industry & company), organizational structure, competition, recent news, what key skills are they looking for
  – Research decision maker and interviewer
Preparation, Part II

• Know yourself – *back to your brand*
  – Determine skills (relevant & transferable), strengths, qualifications, experience
  – Know your resume in depth
  – Have examples that demonstrate success & accomplishments
  – Be able to explain employment gaps
  – Show you’ve kept up with technology for your field
Selling Yourself

• What is your value proposition / brand – what differentiates you from the competition?
  – From self-assessment – strengths, weaknesses, interests, attributes, skills, qualifications
  – Career objectives and goals

• Make the match between your qualifications and the company’s needs
  – Technical requirements of the job
  – Other skills: communication, teamwork, leadership, analytical, problem solving, creativity
Practice

• Increase your confidence
• With Career Services Coordinator, industry contact (alumnus/a, LinkedIn, Professional Assn, Handshake mentor network)
Types of Interviews

• Screening
• On-site – expenses, arrangements
• Telephone
• Virtual (Skype, Facetime)
• Group/panel
• Video recorded interviews
New Trends

• Soft skills assessments
• Casual environments
• Job auditions
• Virtual reality assessments
Group Interviews

• Prepare – all possible questions, relevant stories, quantifiable answers
• Ask for input – engage the panel, start a dialog
• Articulate what you hear
• Apply what you hear
Behavioral Interviews

• Past behavior predicts future behavior
• Company is seeking key qualities
• Examples:
  – “Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult client and your strategy for success.”
  – “Give an example that shows how you take initiative.”
  – “Describe the most creative presentation or project you’ve done.”
Behavioral Interviews - Preparation

• Research on industry, company & position should tell you what qualities are important

• Prepare accomplishment stories/examples that demonstrate success in these areas

• Use CAR format for complete answer:
  – C = Challenge – what was the problem or situation?
  – A = Actions – what specific actions did you take to resolve the situation?
  – R = Results – what were the outcomes
Technical Interviews

• Prepare: review job description, study specific technologies, skills, practice answering process, search online for question examples

• During interview: clarify problem, collect necessary information, talk through or write your thinking process, not just answer

• Goal: company is determining your analytical and problem solving abilities, ability to articulate thoughts, and self-confidence
Resources for Technical Interview Prep

- www.leetcode.com
- www.hackerrank.com
- http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/top-50-it-interview-questions.htm
- http://www.hackreactor.com/blog/technical+interview+questions
- Others – Google search
Case Interviews

• Common for management & consulting positions

• Assess analytical, problem solving and communication / presentation skills

• Format: Summarize question, verify client’s objectives, ask clarifying questions, lay out structure, identify case

• www.casequestions.com
Tips for the 2nd Interview

• Review the first interview – what went well, what else do you want to say now?
• Rehearse your answers – focused preparation
• Be assertive – make yourself an even better match, based on what you now know
• Different interviewers
• Ask your own questions – more of a discussion
Interview Etiquette

- Be early- plan for traffic, etc
- Professional appearance
- Cell phone off
- Bring extra resume copies, references
- Treat everyone with respect
- Be aware of non-verbal communication
- Be energetic, enthusiastic, positive, confident
Interview Format

• Opening – make positive first impression, hand shake, “small talk”
• Candidate sell – questions for you, your opportunity to sell yourself, make a match
• Employer sell – your questions for recruiter, their opportunity to sell company to you
• Closing – restate qualifications (why you’re best candidate) and interest in job, clarify next steps, get business card
Tough Questions

• Tell me about yourself
• Why are you no longer with company X?
• What are your strengths?
• What are your weaknesses / what are you working to improve about yourself?
• What are your short term and long term career goals?
• Why should I hire you?
• What have you learned from your mistakes?
• What qualities would your supervisor and co-workers use to describe you?
• Who’s the most challenging client you’ve worked with?
• What can you offer us that someone else can’t?
Tell Me About Yourself

• Describe your best attributes - skills and experience – relevant to the job

• 3 part marketing statement
  – Brief summary of your career history
  – Your career development – recent accomplishment, focus on what makes you exceptional
  – Brief summary of what you want to do next or why you’re interested in this job

• No personal info

• Keep answer brief
The Salary Issue

• Research salaries in advance – industry, field, positions – know your worth
• Try to defer question, get them to make offer
• Focus on specifics of job & your qualifications
• Ask what their range is for position
• If pressed, give a ~$5,000 range, based on research
• Indicate willingness to take lower salary
• May be some flexibility on benefits
• Total compensation is more than salary
Your Questions

• Based on research of company & industry
• Demonstrate your interest in company, their goals, values & priorities
• Also determine your level of interest in company and job
• Common:
  – Company’s vision for future
  – Company’s culture
  – Prospects for your growth within organization
  – Potential challenges faced in next year
  – What does success look like for this role after 6 months, 1 year
Follow Up

• Follow up letter:
  – Thank you
  – Customized, tailored, to each person
  – Reinforce your qualifications, match for position, interest
  – Email, hand-written, computer generated
  – Within 48 hours

• Follow up phone call – when, why

• Connect on LinkedIn

• Review interview – what went right, wrong

• Contact your references
Manage Your References

• Current list
• Can speak to various aspects of your qualifications – have ~10 you can choose from
• Willing, able to provide positive reference
• Update them on your status, new skills
• Let them know when they might be contacted
• Know what they will say – guide them to what you want them to say
Overqualified/Ageism Issues

• Understand why companies have concerns
  – You will be bored and unchallenged, and quit
  – You won’t be able to keep up with the team and will be too set in your ways
  – You won’t take direction from younger managers and will have a “know-it-all” attitude
  – Your salary requirements will be too high
Overqualified/Ageism Issues cont’d

• Demonstrate a positive, forward-thinking, enthusiastic attitude
• Show you’re keeping current with technology for your field, new education or training – agile & lifelong learner
• Be clear and upfront with hiring manager
• Emphasize transferable skills and core competencies all employers look for
• Emphasize your experiences – work and life
• Focus on benefits of age and experience
  – Loyalty, dedication
  – Commitment to doing quality work
  – Someone to count on in a crisis; don’t just react, but bring perspectives & can think through complex issues and problem solve
  – Solid performance record; in job and industry
  – Team player; work across generations
  – Great mentor, understand importance of building relationships
  – Confidence from experience
Layoff/Termination

• Layoff – be honest, no negativity towards employer, show how you’re focusing on future and how you’re using your time productively

• Termination – if your fault, address any problems, accept blame where it’s due then let go of the rest

• You will need to explain – prepare, bury negative with positive, focus on future
Success Tips

• Google your interviewer (and check LinkedIn profile)
• Send your interviewer your LinkedIn profile prior to interview
• Interview as if you already have the job – i.e. here’s what I can do for you
• Be the best of who you are – be yourself, at your best
• Don’t be negative about a previous boss, company, co-worker, etc
• Demonstrate your resilience and adaptability
• Be prepared to address presumption of over qualification, perceived ageism questions
More Success Tips

• Listen to the question, think for a few seconds before responding, answer with a quality response
• Don’t interrupt the interviewer
• Prepare marketing piece to leave with interviewer, as a supplement to your resume
• Don’t ramble – keep your answers focused and concise
• Bring a professional portfolio to the interview
Questions?

www.rit.edu/careerservices
Kris Stehler
kwsoce@rit.edu
585-475-5468