

INTERVIEWING

NEELEY DEVELOPMENT SERIES – TOOLS FOR BUSINESS



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of Business

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PROFESSIONALISM AND THE NEELEY PROMISE

ACCOUNTABILITY

Neeley students demonstrate and display a willingness to accept responsibility and to acknowledge outcomes resulting from personal actions, behaviors, and choices. This means meeting deadlines in spite of external barriers, being on-time and prepared for classes and appointments, and acting in a manner that promotes positive interactions with peers.

COMMITMENT

Neeley students invest time and effort to maximize the value of the Neeley experience for themselves while enhancing it for others. This means making intentional decisions about which activities and experiences to engage in that will lead to growth and advancement towards personal and professional goals. By doing this, the “Do I have to?” mindset is subdued.

OWNERSHIP

Neeley students exhibit ownership by understanding that they alone are in control of their experience. This means taking initiative to improve knowledge and skills by leveraging resources and relationships and accepting that the results of personal efforts are an indicator of personal performance.

The Neeley School of Business unleashes human potential with leadership at the core and innovation in our spirit.

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ENTRY LEVEL INTERVIEWING

Neeley students are known for being exceptional interviewers which is an outcome resulting from the design of the Neeley Student Experience. By taking time to not just skim, but review and read the contents of this booklet and by participating in mock interviews through the Professional Development Center students learn how to manage themselves before, during, and after an interview and how to answer questions fully and concisely.

THE SCREENING INTERVIEW

The screening interview is a brief interaction 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.

On-demand interviewing platforms are being used much more frequently to conduct the screening interview (see page 5), though they are also conducted over the phone, in-person, or through a virtual meeting. No matter what method is used, make sure to always maintain a high level of professionalism.

HOW TO MANAGE THE SCREENING INTERVIEW

There can be 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 quiet and distraction free 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 Professional Development Center for phone or video interviews
- *Bluetooth, handset, or speaker* - test the clarity of each by calling a friend
- *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* – employers may want to interview you quickly when they call, and if you feel ready go ahead. If not, it is appropriate to schedule a time for later that day or the following day so you can prepare. Once a time is scheduled, stick to it and be ready.

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*.

These types of 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.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW MODELS

It is important to answer questions in a clear and concise manner while showcasing a conversational style indicative of your personality. Target 90 seconds for a response. There are two well-known models that you can and should use to organize your responses.

STAR MODEL

This method works well with *positive evidence* questions which look for a positive outcome, e.g., *“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.

Positive Evidence Questions	
SITUATION	Provide an overview and the basics for the example you are using.
TASK	Describe the project, the goal and your specific role.
ACTION	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.
RESULTS	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 act 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 asking co-workers and searching for companies of similar size and location. 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 service gaps. The services we were not providing that were common among the competitors were marketing strategy and planning consultations.

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. Those areas 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.

SHARE MODEL

This method works well with *contrary evidence questions* which seek out situations where a candidate may not have been successful, e.g., “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.

Contrary Evidence Questions	
SITUATION	Provide an example of a situation that will answer the question.
HINDRANCE	What challenges or obstacles did you face?
ACTION	Discuss the action you took to overcome the challenge or obstacle.
RESULTS	What was the outcome?
EVALUATE	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.

THE MANY FACES OF VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING

VIDEO AND ON-DEMAND INTERVIEWING

Zoom is a common software employers use to facilitate video interviews. (You can also expect to experience zoom over the course of your time in Neeley!)

On-Demand Interview - HireVue and BigInterview are examples.

What is it?

On-demand interviewing is different than a video interview because it is not live i.e., 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. It increases efficiency by automating part of the hiring process.

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

BigInterview is the platform that will be used during the Neeley Admissions process to allow students to gain experience and set expectations when conducting virtual interviews.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Check surroundings for distractions on the video -
 - Evaluate lighting
 - Position yourself to fit within the frame
 - Look at the camera, not the picture
- Practice and prepare - find a quiet room where you will not be disturbed by people or pets and silence your phone along with any other electronics that may be disruptive
- Ask yourself - is there anything in the frame that you should relocate because it would prompt the reviewer of your interview to make a judgment or opinion unnecessarily?
- Have your resume in reach for easy reference
- Be comfortable with the tech
- Smile, if it is natural for you
- Dress in full business professional attire - it is easy to accidentally show your full body
- Allow yourself to gesture even if it is not fully captured on the video - gesturing is a natural part of communication and limiting this can impact your natural style
- Eye contact is achieved by looking at the camera, though you don't need to stare at it the whole time - it is natural to break eye contact every 5-10 seconds during conversation
- Practice before the interview in order to identify any technical difficulties and gain confidence - close other programs on your computer

TRULY VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

Yes, they are here. Depending on the company you interview with, you may end up going through a truly virtual experience wearing a headset. These types of interviews are used to see skills in action and have you interact with information, data, or customers in real-time.

COMMON MISTAKES WITH THE VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

Completing your first virtual interview using a new platform can be difficult. Review the tips below to be aware of these common mistakes:

*Common Mistakes **Before** the Interview:*

- Completing a practice interview and thinking it is the correct interview to complete the requirement - check the title of your interview
- Waiting until the last minute to complete the interview before a deadline
- Not logging in early to allow for time to correct any technical difficulties - many students experience technical difficulties while learning new platforms
- Not checking the surroundings - background should be neat, neutral, tidy
- Not adjusting lighting based off of what is seen on the screen - lighting should be bright and natural
- Camera angle should be straight on, not too low or too high

*Common Mistakes **During** the Interview:*

- Not dressing in business professional clothing - this is expected and required for any interview you will attend
- Not knowing where to look - look directly at the camera - if this is difficult, tape a mirror or a photo of a friend next to the camera
- Expecting the opportunity to redo the response - many companies only allow 1 time to respond

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 STRESS INTERVIEW

This is an unusual style of interviewing, but it is good to know it can happen. Some employers want to be sure that a candidate can maintain composure regardless of what they face.

There can be multiple tactics used by an interviewer to induce stress. Some of these include:

- Requiring you to give a presentation with little or no preparation
- Asking oddball questions such as, “Why are manholes round?”
- Appearing disappointed with your response by sighing or suggesting you change your answer

THE CASE INTERVIEW

Case Interviews involve the candidate solving a business problem and making a recommendation in real time. The business problem can be in any area or function of business – marketing, finance, strategy, etc. and there are no calculators allowed. Case Interviews are common among Consulting Firms and are gaining popularity in other industries.

It is critical to research the methods and practice the skills of Case Interviewing on your own and with staff at the Professional Development center. This interview style requires a considerable investment of time. Contact the PDC to schedule a case interview coaching session if you are interested in Consulting or if you learn your prospective employer plans for you to have one.

WHAT TO WEAR

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 resumé and your past work experience, and that you carry yourself well.

Neeley students have numerous opportunities to demonstrate their emerging professionalism through class presentations, networking events, career fairs, and interviews for internships and jobs. Wearing professional business attire allows students to “look the part”.

Black, Charcoal or Navy is ideal for an initial suit. These colors are dominant in the professional realm due to their style versatility.

White is the best color for shirts and blouses. While other colors and patterns may work well with business suits, consider building a white shirt collection first.

MEN’S SUIT

Fabric: Wool is the go-to fabric because it breathes easily, dyes easily, is durable, highly water-resistant and resists wrinkling. The fineness of wool is described using a super number, such as Super 180. Don't get sold on super numbers as the standards vary across suits and the way a suit is threaded will make a significant difference in the feel and quality.

Fit: There are two categories of fit for a suit, classic or slim. You will know fairly quickly which one works best for you after trying on a couple suits. The important factor here is to get a suit that fits your body type, if you do that you will look sharp.

Wear a suit jacket without a tie for a more casual look – avoid wearing just a shirt and tie. Never button the bottom button on your jacket and unbutton your suit when you sit down.

THE SHIRT AND SHOES

Fit: Neck size and sleeve length measurements are needed to select a well-fitting dress shirt. Do not guess, it is not as easy as you think. The sleeve length should allow for ~1/4" to be seen past the cuff of the suit jacket.

Fabric: Cotton is the best fabric for durability. Wrinkle-free shirts are a great low maintenance option.

Shirts must be clean and fully pressed. It is a much sharper look.

A nice belt and a pair of oxfords or a Monk Strap will complete your look. Dress socks should match your pants; dress shoes should match your belt.

THE TIE

Color: Blue, Red, Yellow, Green and everything in between. Consider the season and rate it on how much it says, "notice-me". If that rating is too high, choose a different color.

Pattern: The same "notice me" caution applies to patterns. Look for subtle designs. The point of your tie should be no lower than the middle of your belt buckle.

WOMAN'S BLAZER AND BLOUSE

Ensure your blouse complements the blazer. Avoid blouses that are too sheer or revealing. They should be modest enough to remove your blazer if that becomes necessary.

Fabric: Blended fabrics (e.g., a combination of polyester, rayon, etc.) are most common and recommended for the suit. Blended fabrics (e.g., polyester, silk, rayon) are common for blouses. Avoid lace, mesh and other design details that may be too distracting.

Fit: Ensure the blazer is tailored. Blouses may be button-up or V-neck, simply ensure it is modest.

SKIRT, DRESS, AND SHOES

Fabric: The fabric of the dress and skirt should ideally match or compliment that of the blazer.

Fit: The skirt and dress should be knee length. Your dress and skirt should not be too form fitting or tight. Pants should be ankle length.

Always wear close-toed basic solid black shoes with heels no higher than 3 inches.

EXPECTATIONS FOR ANY INTERVIEW

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.

Have Your Examples Ready

Keep a log of activities and interesting situations each semester, review it and identify examples you want to use during the interview.

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 while waiting.

Dress the Part

Be business professional unless you know for certain 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 different workplaces, so you will want to be specific.

Unspoken Language

Make sure you sit up straight, make consistent eye contact, speak clearly, use inflection and incorporate gestures that are comfortable for you. Aim to slow your pace of speaking down. It is highly common to rush your words when you have nerves. 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 gain confidence. Interviews may or may not kick off with a handshake these days – use your judgement.

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. Avoid asking about salary and benefits during the interview. Let the employer be the first to discuss those topics.

Thank You Note

Send a handwritten thank you note or a thoughtful email to your interviewer(s) within 24 hours and mention something specific from the interview so they know it was written after the interview.

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

This can happen more easily than you think, because during an interview if you find yourself without a response to a question, you may feel a little stressed and may decide to start sharing whatever thought is in your head at the moment. Take time and think before you begin speaking, especially when you do not have an immediate example or answer.

Appearing unexcited

Gestures and voice fluctuation go a long way in communicating excitement. Everyone has a different level of expressivity – don't be someone you are not. Observe your interviewer and use that as a way to guide some of your behaviors during the interview. The goal is not to match but balance your behavior relative to that of the interviewer.

Electronic devices

Be sure all devices are on "silent" not "vibrate". A good option is to simply not bring personal electronic devices into 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. 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.

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 adjust before your actual interview.

- Tell me something interesting about yourself I can't get from your resumé.
- 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 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?

QUESTIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER

It is important to have questions prepared for the end of the interview. This shows your interviewer that you researched ahead of time which demonstrates your interest in the company and the position.

- 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?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Use Handshake 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.

ABOUT THE 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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