

Interview Workshop with Denise Johnson, USC Career Center
5/20/20

- Purpose of interviewing
 - Applicant:
 - Clarify job expectations
 - Quantify accomplishments - you are fabulous!
 - Assess organization and potential supervisor
 - Dialogue
 - Employer:
 - Screening you for:
 - Competency
 - Fit
 - Communication style
 - Professionalism and motivation
- Preparation before your interview
 - Research the company beforehand:
 - Look at website
 - Background
 - Social media
 - Trends
 - Reputation of CEO/C-suite
 - Employees
 - Practice your elevator pitch:
 - 5-7 key talking points from resume/experience/transferable skills
 - Brief statement of background (30s - 1min)
 - Memorize, but make it sound not rehearsed
 - Highlight skills that you are the right candidate for the job
 - 3 parts:
 - Where you're from
 - Where are you now/what have you done
 - Where are you going
 - Verbals:
 - Name
 - Major/area of interest
 - Internship/job/research/fieldwork
 - Field of interest/organization
 - Non-verbals:
 - Positive body language
 - Sit with your back touching the chair
 - Don't hunch
 - Pull shoulders back
 - Smile
 - Voice not monotone/vary inflections in voice
 - Let your personality show through
 - Pointers:

- Make comfortable transitions during the conversation
 - Use “When/Why” to answer the "tell me about yourself" question, informational interviews, networking events, career fairs, elevators
 - Know strengths and weakness, play up strengths
 - Identify your accomplishments
 - Practice the interview:
 - connectSC’s resources tab: “Big Interview” mock interview module to practice interviewing (records so you can see what you look and sound like)
 - Interview logistics:
 - Make multiple copies of resume and references to bring to the interview
 - Optional: portfolio of work (website, projects/proposals, media reel)
 - Practice the drive and learn what building looks like, do this around the same time of the interview on a workday a few days prior
 - Interview potential co-workers for more insight if possible
 - Prepare your interview attire prior to interview day (try on & iron clothes)
 - Dress to impress
 - Wear a suit or professional dress
 - Unless business casual (suit without jacket)
 - Close-toed shoes
 - Prepare question to ask at the end of the interview (*absolutely essential*)
 - EAT before the interview
 - Don't want stomach to growl, this includes lunch/dinner interviews (no eating really anyways)
 - Never get a to-go box
 - Bring:
 - Resume/references copies
 - Padfolio or messenger bag and a pen/pencil
 - Water bottle
 - If they ask you if you want water say yes (they are probably buying time)
 - Attitude:
 - Positive
 - Confident
 - Genuine smile
 - Energy (sleep well!)
 - Check in 10-15 min early (not 30 min, you don't want to rush them)
- During the interview
 - Handling Virtual Interviews (relevant!)
 - Test out connection beforehand
 - Make sure background is professional (virtual background option)

- Close all other computer programs (no notifications)
- Dress appropriately
- Once you are answer the question, **be OK with the silence**
- Set the stage
- Lighting is important
- Look at the camera as much as possible
 - Can put notes/resume/job ad behind your computer that you look at during interview
- Don't fidget
- It's OK to say it's your first time zoom interviewing
- General interview tips
 - Don't make comments about things on the interviewer's desk
 - Use. industry. terms.
 - No filler words
 - Make eye-contact
- Addressing different types of questions
 - Why should I hire you question - make sure attitude matches what is being said
 - Tell me about yourself
 - What do you know about the company
 - Weakness question:
 - Don't mention activities you don't like as weakness that are inherent to the position
 - Don't say perfectionist
 - Weakness options:
 - Fake answer: Chocolate/ice cream
 - Issues you've improved:
 - An issue with other people's incompetence during group projects (How did you deal with that person? Can't just get rid of them)
 - Always said yes to anyone who asks for help, then learned to put up boundaries
 - These answers show growth
 - Why should we hire you?
 - What do you know about the position you're applying for?
 - What are your salary expectations?
 - Go to connectSC website about negotiating salaries
 - Pay scale
 - Salary.com
 - Informational interview with someone at that company; ask them first year salary for entry-level
 - Person who talks about salary first loses
 - Interviewer can ask former employer about salary history
 - Academic institutions pay less
 - Interviewer is entitled to know about salary history

- Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?
 - don't say you are gonna go start your own company
- Why did you leave your current job?
 - don't bad mouth former employer
 - need to move on in order to move upward in career trajectory
- Illegal questions
 - Race
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
 - Religion
 - Ancestry
 - Disabilities
 - Marital status
 - Children
 - Military records
 - If asked one of these things, can respond:
 - This has no bearing on whether or not I can do this job
 - If employer continues to press with illegal questions, **big red flag**
- Employer can, however, ask:
 - Do you have responsibilities or commitments that will prevent you from meeting specific work schedules?
 - Are you currently using illegal drugs? Have you used illegal drugs in the recent past?
 - Do you have any relatives that work for us or a competitor? Name a contact person in case of emergency.
- Behavior Questions
 - Goal of these types of questions is to assess 12 core competencies:
 - Teamwork
 - Communication
 - Adaptability
 - Reliability
 - Motivation
 - Integrity
 - Decision making
 - Initiative
 - Work standards
 - Problem solving
 - Stress tolerance
 - Organizing
 - STAR theory:

- S: Situation - introduce situation
 - T: Task - describe the task you had to complete
 - A: action - what you did
 - R: Result - end with the results of efforts, including accomplishment rewards and impact
 - Topics to avoid
 - Salary
 - Benefits/flex time
 - Vacation/sick time
 - Professional development
 - Employee perks
 - Promotional opportunities
 - If you want to know about these things, do informal interview
 - Questions for the interviewer
 - Interviewer will tell you how interview will be formatted
 - Ask questions during process if they come up
 - Ask about hiring managers background, what do they look forward to
 - What is the next step? Ask how to move forward with hiring/what the hiring time frame is
 - Get interviewer's business card or contact info
- After the interview
 - In next 2-3 hours post interview, reflect
 - What went well
 - What went bad
 - Impressions: is this somewhere I want to work?
 - Send thank you notes to all recruiters and others within 24 hours
 - Either handwritten or email
 - If you send both, content should be different
 - Keep it 3-5 sentences
 - Thank the interviewer first
 - Express enthusiasm
 - Personalize it
 - State how the interview increased your interest
 - State how interviewers assured you of your ability to provide an immediate contribution to company
- Second round of interviews
 - Will talk about same thing as first time around but with different people
 - Be prepared to answer the salary question
 - Can avoid it by saying you want to make sure you are a good fit for this position
 - Demonstrate confidence
- Summary
 - Practice interviewing
 - Practice out loud

- Tell story of your accomplishments
- Stay positive and energetic
- Know the company, the position and your “why”
- Send thank you notes
- Make use of USC network
 - On LinkedIn:
 - Type "University of Southern California" in search box
 - Scroll down page and click alumni
 - Search for alumni who have positions/work in jobs you'd be interested in
 - Connect with alumni
 - Can write a note and ask about meeting for 20min in the next few weeks? Fight on - send note

Resources

careers@usc.edu

<https://careers.usc.edu>

Career Center Chronicles

connectSC job portal - Mock interview Module

Trojan Network - LinkedIn for USC alumni