

The Employment Interview

The job interview is one of the most important parts of your job search. It is your opportunity to present your knowledge, skills and career goals to a potential employer. With preparation and practice, you can learn the skills necessary to interview effectively. This handout discusses interview preparation, how to enhance your presentation skills, different interview formats, and post-interview follow up.

In today's job market, it is important to make a positive impression and a stellar interview is one way to stand out amongst your peers. You already have the knowledge and the strong credentials. Now you must learn to communicate your unique strengths in a compelling manner. If you do so, your interviews can become an interesting challenge rather than a cause for anxiety. With adequate practice and preparation, you can develop effective interviewing skills.

Interview Preparation

Much of your success in the interview results from how much time you spend preparing. Employers want to know very few things from you:

What transferrable knowledge, skills and experience do you bring to this position?

Why do you want to work for our organization?

Why are you interested in a career in this industry?

By preparing for every interview, you will be able to address what the employer is looking for more effectively. Remember, every question you are asked in an interview is helping the employer answer "Why Should I Hire You?"

Know your marketability

Be confident in the skills and experiences you want to promote to employers. What are your key features: strengths, skill set, accomplishments, and goals? Beyond the features you possess, what are the benefits you uniquely bring to an employer?

Some introspection here can be useful. You may benefit from taking one or more of our assessment inventories. Find out how by making an appointment with a career counselor to talk about your skills and interests. Ask friends and family for feedback too.

One of the challenges when interviewing is talking about your unique skill set. Employers will want to hear how you tackle problems and how you deliver results. One of the most impressive ways to do this is to back up your statements with results (see SAR method below). It makes your presentation more believable and memorable.

Know your audience

Do your homework. You should be able to demonstrate to the interviewer that you have researched the organization thoroughly. Learn everything you can about the organization. It is a good idea to review an organization's history, mission and vision statement, projections for the future, role within an industry, etc. It is also helpful to be familiar with the organizational culture, structure, and competitors. Do an intensive investigation into the industry as well. Recruiters tell us that the students who impress them the most are those that "know more about the organization than we do."

Alumni are an excellent source of information in your job search. They are usually happy to share their experience and insights about their organization and industry. You can access Hopkins graduates in InCircle, which is linked from your J Connect account. If you are not sure what to say, talk to a career counselor or pick up a Networking handout.

Focus on the organization's need

Review the job description to identify how your skills meet the requirements of the position for which you are a candidate. It is rare that you will interview for a position where you adequately meet all of the qualifications the employer is looking for. Instead of worrying about meeting all of the qualifications exactly, try to focus on how your unique experiences parallel the job description. There is a simple exercise that can assist you with this (see "Relating Skills to Work" below).

Practice, and then practice more

Identify the interview style typically used by the industry you will interview with. The interview styles are:

- **Traditional:** In traditional interviews you are asked open ended questions such as, "Tell me about yourself" or "Why should I hire you?" You can easily practice open ended questions prior to the interview. After practicing these types of questions, you will be prepared to give a structured and cohesive response in an interview.

- **Behavioral:** In behavior-based interviewing, you are asked questions about your background, about your experience, about what you have done, and what you have learned. From the employers point of view, past behavior is indicative of your future performance. Employers use this technique to target specific skills and experiences you have. “Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make and how you made that decision,” is an example of a behavioral interview question.
- **Case:** In a case interview, the interviewer poses a business question to you and asks you to go through the thought process you would use to solve the problem. These interviews are typically used in the consulting industry. See the “Case Interview” Section (Page 9) for resources to help you learn about these unique interviews.

You can practice for interviews by reviewing the list of common questions asked or attending an interviewing workshop or mock interview in the Career Center. Practice your Personal Statement and Accomplishment Stories (see page 3) multiple times so you feel comfortable talking about your skills and experience with anyone. Try to role play with friends, family, and alumni to assist in your preparation.

Common Interview Mistakes:

- Not Showing up on time.
- Not selling your strengths or relating them to the organization’s needs.
- Not doing industry research.
- Not knowing your future career goals.
- Not sending thank-you letters.

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| Relating Skills to Work |
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The key to marketing your skills and strengths in an interview is to link them to the employer’s needs. Here are three easy steps and an example to get you started.

Step 1: Review the job description. Make a list of the desired qualifications.

Step 2: Next to each qualification on your list, write out how your knowledge, skills and experience match.

Step 3: Develop examples or “stories” to support your unique skill set. Example: Job posting for a writer/editor.

Step 1: List out job qualifications.

- Bachelors degree
- Excellent writing and research skills

- Effective communication skills to relay technical information to the general public
- Organization
- Ability to work under tight deadlines
- Responsibilities include responding to inquiries from the National Cancer Institute from patients, families, health professionals, and the public

Step 2: List your skills and qualifications that match the job requirements.

- I have a B.S. in Natural Science/Public Health.
- My senior project consisted of researching community health clinics around Baltimore and writing reviews of the services provided.
- I answered questions by students, families, and the public as an Admissions tour guide and assistant at Levering Desk.
- I strengthened my organizational skills while interning at Bayview Medical Center.
- I was exposed to the healthcare environment.

Step 3: Elaborate on your experience with detailed stories.

Use accomplishment stories describing the situation, action, and results. (“SARs”)

Three Communication Strategies: The Personal Statement, The Accomplishment Story (SAR), and The Turn Around Question

The Personal Statement

The personal statement can also be thought of as your practiced response to the question, “Tell me about yourself.” You will find yourself reciting this statement when soliciting advice from alumni, interviewing with prospective employers and networking at Career Center events. Try to practice your response until you have a two minute statement that reveals, who you are, your strengths, and your objective. Here is a sample format for your statement.

Who you are (30 seconds)

- University attending
- Major

- Professional interests
- Extracurricular Activities
- Professional Strengths/Accomplishments (30–45 seconds)
- Related work experience, coursework, projects
- Leadership abilities
- Community involvement
- Overview of strong soft skills (interpersonal communication, team player, etc.)

Your Objective (30–45 seconds)

- Explain why you are speaking to the person
- Why you are interested in the job/organization
- What skills you can bring to the job/organization
- Link the opportunity to your career objective

Example 1 (45 seconds):

To an alumnus/a, on the phone seeking advice about entering the field:

“Hi, Ms. Smith, this is Suzanne Student. I am a senior at Hopkins and I got your name from In Circle. Thanks for taking a few minutes to talk with me.” “I have a background in promotional writing and editing – I have interned as a reporter for a regional newspaper, I spent a summer doing promotion work for a non-profit arts group, I have been writing for the Hopkins News-Letter for three years, and this year I am Editor-in-Chief. My interest is in advertising, public relations, or other positions where I could do promotion work and writing. My purpose in calling you is to get your advice about career opportunities and how to break into the field. May I ask you some questions about what you do and how you got your start in the _____ field?”

Example 2 (90 seconds):

In an interview, when the employer opens with “So, why don’t you tell me about yourself?”

“I came to Hopkins as an English major four years ago – my passion in high school was writing, and I have pursued as many opportunities to write in college as I possibly could. I have had three outstanding internships and they were all very different from one another – one as a news reporter for a regional paper, one as a journalist for a non-profit arts group, and one with a public relations firm. I have also written for the school paper for three years, and this year I am Editor-in-Chief.

If I had to sum up what I am all about, I had say two things: first, that my greatest passion is writing; and second, that I am a results-oriented person – you can see from my resume that when I take something on, I like to work hard and excel. I am proud of the awards I have received in college, and I am anxious to get out there and start working and contributing.

What attracted me to this position was, of course, the fact that the job in public relations and promotion, and I hope I can not only use my writing talents, but also learn a lot more about the public relations field. I am also attracted by the growth of your company over the last few years, and the entrepreneurial style you project. From what I have read, your organization seems like a place for people who like to achieve in a fast paced work environment and I really like that.”

The Accomplishment Story (“SAR”)

Practicing this technique is appropriate for all interviews. It is a very effective method to answer behavioral interview questions.

Behavioral interviewing suggests that past performance predicts future performance. Interviewers are looking for specific examples from your experience that will indicate how you will demonstrate similar skills in the future. In behavioral interviews, the interviewer probes skill sets and traits the organization believes contribute to success.

For example, if teamwork is important in the job for which you are interviewing, an employer might ask, “Tell me about a group project or activity you were involved in. Describe your role in the group.” Then the employer will probe how you functioned as a team member using the situation you described.

To respond effectively to a question like this, you use an accomplishment story, known as a SAR. SARs have three simple parts: Situation (or task), Action, and Result. Your total story should last no longer than about 1–1/2 to 3 minutes. If it does, you may lose the attention of the interviewer.

S– Situation: What was your charge? What was the context? What was the situation at hand? This should take up about 15–20% of your total response.

A– Action: What did you do? Be specific. Phrase your actions using skill language. Be selective about the angle you give your story, and do not try to cover everything. Do you want to stress the technical competence you demonstrated? Do you want your story to focus on your leadership or your problem solving ability? Be deliberate about your message and aim the message

toward what the employer is seeking. This should comprise about 70% of the time you are speaking.

R– Result: What happened? What were the outcomes of your specific actions? What difference did you make? What did you learn? This should be about 5–10% of your total comment.

The Kicker: Many employers tell us students have a hard time linking their experiences to the job for which they are interviewing. To give your response an extra edge, take the SAR one step further and relate it to the job as specifically as you can.

Keep in mind that you can develop several different accomplishment stories around one activity, job, or event. This gives you several ways to talk about your experience, each very targeted, and each very concise.

Sample SAR response:

Q: Describe a time when you had to address a problem in the workplace.

Situation: *In my recent position as Senior Class President, there was some tension between the student government executive board and the student support staff that was deeply affecting relationships around campus and our productivity.*

Action: *I determined the source of the tension by talking individually with the people involved. I found out that the frustrations on both sides emanated from work–flow issues; the executive board members felt that the turn around time was not fast enough and the student support staff felt that the board members' expectations were unrealistic. With input from all, I initiated the development and implementation of a work log to track all projects.*

Result: *The board members could see where their project was in the work flow and the support staff was included in weekly meetings with the board members to encourage realistic goal setting and deadlines for each project.*

See below for an example and a worksheet to help you prepare your own SARs.

The Turn Around Question

What do you do when you get stuck in an interview? Or the employer asks you about something you think is a liability? You turn it around.

First, acknowledge the weakness or situation. Second, reframe it. What have you done about it? How have you worked on it? What did you learn? Third, turn it around. What

was the outcome? End on a high note. Even if there was not a positive outcome, how have you changed? How do you do things differently now?

See below for an example and a worksheet to help you prepare your turn around responses.

The Interview

First Impressions

Dress for success. Do not give the interviewer a chance to rule you out because you did not feel like ironing your shirt or polishing your shoes. Here are some suggestions for selecting your interviewing wardrobe:

Suit—try to stick with traditionally conservative colors like, black, grey or navy blue

Oxford shirt or Blouse—make sure the shirt is ironed

Tie—should be medium width and tied to hang at the tip of your belt buckle

Shoes—make sure they are polished and free of any scuff marks, high heels should be between 1–2 inches, your socks should match your shoes, hosiery is appropriate with heels and should be solid, dark colored (bring an extra set just in case)

In most situations, you will be appropriately dressed if you wear a suit. Limit your jewelry and avoid cologne. You should pay attention to details like polished shoes, straight ties, and stockings without runs. Make sure you are well groomed for the interview (clean fingernails, fresh hair cut, etc.). If you have visible piercings or tattoos, conceal them if possible.

Timeliness

Always arrive early — at least 15 minutes before your appointed time. If you are interviewing off campus and you have never been to the site before, give yourself even more time. Practicing by traveling the route during a similar time of day can alleviate stress.

Some on-campus recruiting organizations have a “greeter” who meets students in the Career Center. These representatives can answer general questions about the company or explain the interview process to you. Sometimes these individuals are recent graduates. Do not assume you can sit back and talk about old times -- as casual as it may seem, they are assessing you. Be prepared; it is another opportunity to make a good impression

What to Expect

On-campus interviews are usually 30 or 45 minutes long. At off-campus or site interviews, you might meet with one individual or several, with each discussion taking up to 1 to 1 1/2 hours. For full-time positions, it is not unusual to go through a half- or full-day of meetings. Find out in advance what your schedule will be like and with whom you will meet. Remember, the interview is also your tool to assess the organization, so take some initiative to ask questions about who you are going to be meeting with. Bring extra copies of your resume.

During this short time, employers want to find out not only what you bring to the table, but also who you are. Will you fit the team? Are you a good match for the culture of the organization? Show the interviewer that you are someone they would want to have lunch with everyday. Your goal is to help them get to know you. Be able to make “small talk” with people you meet throughout the day.

Many students find it awkward to “brag” about themselves. Remember, however, that describing your accomplishments in a factual way is not bragging. If you do not share your unique strengths with the interviewer, they will never find out about who you are as an individual. This is a theme consistently mentioned by employers as an area Hopkins’ students need to improve upon.

As the interview concludes, summarize your strengths for the interviewer and reiterate your interest in the position. If given the chance, always be prepared to ask intelligent questions. The employer should tell you how the process will continue from this point. If not, ask about next steps, thank the interviewer, and ask for a business card.

After the Interview

Immediately After

Find a quiet place to sit down and reflect on your meeting. Take notes. What did you discuss? What were the high points? What were the low points? What impressed you about the organization and its representatives? How does this organization compare to others with whom you have spoken? Make sure you record what happens next, when you should follow up, and with whom.

Within 24 Hours

Send a typed thank you letter to each person that you met with. A simple thank you note could help you stand out from the competition. It will keep your name alive in the interviewer’s mind. Refer to your notes and use your letter to highlight points of

discussion or to tie up loose ends. Reinforce your interest. Remember, at this stage, your goal is to receive an offer. Even if the job is not your ideal one now, it could be an excellent choice in the long run. Keep an open mind. Your priorities will probably shift as you progress in your job search.

Follow-up

Most companies will tell you when and how you can expect to hear from them. If they do not offer this information in your interview, be sure to ask. Do not contact the representative prior to the time indicated. Once the time has passed, it is appropriate to follow up with a telephone call to the person who committed to get back to you. Reinforce your interest; ask about your status, and find out when the employer expects to make a decision about second interviews.

Second Interviews

Second interviews vary from a follow-up interview the next day to a site visit several weeks or months later. Second interviews can be additional screening meetings, or they can be the decision interview. For full-time positions, decisions are rarely made before you have had a site visit.

A series of individual interviews is the most common format for the second interview but also be prepared for one or more group interviews. Overall, you may meet with as many as 10 people, including partners, managers, and other staff members. They often include a meal and tour of the facility.

When you receive a call back you need to follow the direction of the organization. Generally, the organizations will explain when and where the meeting will occur, and how you are to arrange your visit. When organizations invite you to their out-of-town offices, generally they pay travel expenses. Organizations such as non-profits, without the same financial resources, might not pay your travel. Do not be embarrassed to ask.

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| Telephone Interviews |
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You may encounter telephone interviews during your job search process. These interviews may be screening interviews or final interviews. For internships, a telephone interview may be the only interview you have before an internship offer.

For full time positions, a telephone interview may be the first screening tool an employer uses to narrow the number of candidates for the job. It is important to consider telephone interviews as serious opportunities to present yourself to the employer.

If the interview is scheduled in advance:

- Be sure you know the details about the interview: What time zone and date will the employer call you, or do you need to initiate the call?
- Give a telephone number where you will have some privacy for the call. Preferably a land line.
- Collect your materials in advance of the telephone appointment. Be sure to have access to your resume, transcript, job description, any research notes about the job or employer, and a list of questions you would like to have answered about the job.
- If your interviewers are introduced to you, write down their names so that you can address specific questions to each person if necessary.
- Speak in a confident, positive tone. On the telephone, your tone and enthusiasm are important because the interviewer does not have any visual cues to follow.
- Ask what the next step in the search process will be if the employer does not mention it.
- Get contact information so that you are able to send a thank you note.

Some telephone interviews are not scheduled in advance:

- This may be because the employer wants to know how you will react without advance notice to prepare.
- If you are in the job search and have applied to specific openings, keep your job search research notes and job descriptions together so that you can access them easily in case of an unscheduled call.
- Be sure to answer the telephone in a professional manner. Make sure your voice message is appropriate and professional.
- If you are caught off-guard and need some time to think; for example, if you are home with an illness, ask the employer if you can call them back in a few minutes or, if you are too ill, ask to reschedule on another day.

Keep a positive approach and attitude:

- If you find yourself getting nervous or talking too softly, stand up while you are talking.
- Smile while you are speaking, so that you sound positive and upbeat.

If you have questions about dealing with telephone interviews, consider making an appointment with a career counselor or attending an interview workshop.

Case Study Interviews

Consulting and investment banking firms use case study interviews to determine your ability to logically analyze a business problem and to work through it methodically and professionally. The employer is not looking for a specific answer. They are observing your approach to the problem and the skills you use in reaching a conclusion. Schedule a mock interview with a career counselor to work on your case interviewing skills.

Skills Employers Assess in a Case Interview:

- Analytical Ability
- Organization
- Presentation (Communication ability)/ Energy
- Leadership/Confidence
- Intelligence
- Quantitative
- Flexibility

Structuring your Response:

The interviewer describes a business dilemma facing a particular company and gives you some basic facts. You analyze the situation, identify key business issues and discuss how you would address the problems. You ask open-ended, specific questions to uncover key information and move toward resolution. The interview proceeds as an open dialogue between you and the interviewer, with the interviewer guiding the discussion.

Analyze:

Listen closely to the case interview

Develop your hypothesis (identify issues and key factors to consider)

Ask questions to test your hypothesis

Identify:

Refine your hypotheses (use numbers, defend path chosen)

Develop options

Discuss:

Summarize options and make recommendations (brief summaries, pros & cons, best option supported by data, implementation)

Tips for successful case interviews:

- Listen carefully to the interviewer as they describe the problem
- Try not to get bogged down by exact figures
- Think aloud so the interviewer understands your approach to problem-solving
- Ask questions and clarify facts before proceeding
- Be organized in your approach
- Take notes while working through the interview

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| Recommended Reading |
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Take a look at the following books, which are located in the Career Center Library:

- *Knock 'Em Dead: The Ultimate Job Seeker's Handbook*, by Martin Yate, 2003, Adams Media Corporation. This book is one of the best we have seen on the finer points of interviewing. Besides providing great information on interview strategy and tactics, it includes a chapter on "Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions."
- *Wall Street Journal's National Business Employment Weekly: Interviewing*
- *Vault.com Guides*: Excellent guide on case interviewing. Access Vault through your J

Connect account.

- *WetFeet Press Guides*: One of the premiere career exploration and job searching online tools available, WetFeet provides profiles of selected industries and information about hundreds of employers.
- *Job Choices* Magazines available in the library.

COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Use these questions to develop a logical story that leads the interviewer through your résumé to the position they seek to fill. Although you might not be asked these particular questions, they do represent many of the topics and underlying issues that will come up in an interview.

General questions:

- Tell me about yourself
- What are you most proud of?
- What three words would you choose to best describe yourself?
- How would someone else describe you?
- What have you read lately?
- What do you do in your free time?

Knowledge about the function, company, or industry; Ability to link experience and personal traits to the job:

- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Why are you interested in this position? In our organization?
- Why do you want to work in this field?
- Who is our competition and what do you see as our competitive advantage? Disadvantage?

- What do you like about our product(s)/service(s)? What suggestions would you make to improve it/them?
- Where do you see the greatest opportunities in our industry?

Leadership skills:

- To what activity outside of work (school) have you made the greatest contribution? Please describe.
- How do you motivate people?
- Give me an example of your leadership skills. Give me another example.
- Are you a leader or a manager?
- Tell me about when you have championed an idea/a cause/a project, and describe what you accomplished and how.

Accomplishments:

- What is your greatest accomplishment?
- How long will it take you to make a contribution to our company?
- Give me an example of a tough decision you faced. How did you tackle it?
- Probing a project the interviewee has worked on: What was the specific improvement you achieved?

Team skills/interpersonal skills:

- Tell me about a team you worked on.
- Do you prefer to work individually or on a team?
- Give me an example of when you didn't get along with a co-worker and how you resolved it.

Work environment/corporate culture:

- What did you like/dislike about your last job?
- Describe your ideal boss/colleague.
- In what type of environment do you flourish?
- You're a brand manager, and you have three doors you can open: Behind the first is a great, established product and you have a chance to push that product. Behind the second is a product with great potential, but it's not working. Behind the third is a new

idea, but no product. Which door do you choose?

Analytical/problem-solving skills:

- Give me an example of your problem-solving abilities/ analytical skills. Give me another example.
- Tell me about a tough decision you've made, and how you went about making it.
- How would you determine the number of basketball courts in the U.S.?
- Describe as many uses for ping-pong balls as you can.
- What's your favorite commercial? Why?
- If you had a choice between companies "x" and "z," how would you choose?

Career goals:

- Why did you choose Johns Hopkins?
- Why did you choose this major?
 - If you had to make this decision again (i.e., go to Hopkins, choose this major...), would you make the same choice? Why or why not?
- Where do you want to be in five years?
- What other organizations are you pursuing?
- If you had a choice between two job offers, what would you base your decision upon?
- What's the difference between a job and a career?
- Explain the transitions between the items on your résumé.

Challenging Questions:

- For someone with little work experience: How does your previous experience prepare you for this position?
- What do you know about our firm?
- We only recruit at Harvard and MIT. Why should I hire you?
- I've interviewed over 10,000 people in 20+ years. What's so special about you?

- I'm going to start talking and you interrupt me when you have something to say. By the time you leave I want you to convince me you're special.
- I'm interested in brainpower/horsepower. Convince me you have it.
- Analyze the five interviewers you had prior to me. Pick two, and compare and contrast them.
- Which would you rather have, more creativity or more intelligence, and why?
- If you could ask one question of the CEO of this company, what would it be?
- Why should we hire you?
- What is your life purpose?
- Based on your résumé, why are you here, in this interview?

Wrap up:

- What questions do you have?
- Is there anything you'd like to add that we didn't cover in the interview?

COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

It is essential for you to ask questions during and after the interview! Intelligent, well thought out questions demonstrate knowledge, preparation, and interest. Asking questions also gives you an opportunity to learn more about the position and your potential fit within the organization. Below are some examples. Add others to the list based on your career field and personal interest.

- What would be my primary responsibilities?
- What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months of the job?
- What are some of the department's ongoing and anticipated special projects?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- How and how often are performance reviews given?
- What do you like best about your job/company?

- What qualities are you looking for in a candidate?
- What skills are especially important for someone in this position? Qualities needed to succeed on the job?
- How much travel, if any, is involved?
- What type of orientation or training do new employees receive?
- Who determines raises and promotions and how?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?

WORKSHEET: RELATING YOUR SKILLS TO WORK

COMMON QUALITIES RECRUITERS SEEK

Communication Achievement/Results Analytical Skills Teamwork Problem-solving Leadership

- Describe your experiences to illustrate these qualities and others in your field
- Highlight accomplishments, not tasks
- Quantify or qualify where possible

Step 1: What are the pertinent functions, qualifications, and duties of the job you are seeking?

Step 2: List those experiences where you have developed and strengthened skills related to those job functions. List any transferable skills you possess that relate to the job.

Example: *Writing Skills* 擘 *Wrote articles for the Newsletter*

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| WORKSHEET: ACCOMPLISHMENT STORIES ('SARS') |
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| S | A | R |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| SITUATION: | ACTION: | RESULT: |
| Context/Condition | What you did/ How you | Outcome/ |
| Task | did it/Skills you used | What happened |
| 15 – 20% | 70% | 5 – 10% |

BENEFITS: Transferable skills, convincing proof, evidence, memory works with images

Example: Accomplishment Story (the “SAR”)

When I was a senior in high school I had a chance, through a family friend, to take a summer job with a local stockbroker to help scout out new clients by making cold calls.

I was terrified at first, because I did not like talking on the phone. Making each call was like trying to pick up a 50 lb. phone. I had a script that I followed. I was fairly nervous initially. But I knew I had to get over it. I kept plugging away, and I tried to alter my phone pitch a little bit each time, changing what did not go well, and sticking with what seemed to work. I gradually became more comfortable with it. As I learned more about the business and the products I was selling, my phone calls also became less scripted until, by the end of the summer, I was just having conversations with potential clients. Once I became knowledgeable about the product and confident with my role, I brought in six prospective clients for my boss, which he thought was a great yield.

In fact, he was so happy with my results, when he switched to a new firm later that year, he called me in December to ask if I could come work for him over January break. So I went from being a frightened kid on the phone to being a successful cold caller.

Developing your own SARs

Situation/Task:

Action:

Results:

TURNING AROUND DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

1. Acknowledge
2. Reframe
3. Turnaround

APPLICATIONS:

Personal development challenges Technical/job related challenges Interpersonal challenges

Example:

Q: What did you think of our firm's presentation last month?

A: Actually, I was not able to attend. My economics midterm was the next morning. Since I knew I wouldn't be able to make it, a few weeks ago I called Joe Smith and Karen Rogers, the two Hopkins grads you hired two years ago. They were great. They really gave me a lot of information about the company and the training program. After talking with them, I am even more interested in the company, so I'm really glad to have a chance to talk to you today.

Example:

Q: I notice your GPA is not on your resume. Could you tell me what it is?

A. I have a 2.8 overall GPA. Like many first year students, I had a challenging first semester adjusting to college life. I realized very quickly that my study skills needed honing. So I got a study consultant and a tutor, and really applied myself to pull my grades up. During my sophomore year, I was able to take a difficult load of engineering courses, without any tutoring, and I've had GPAs of 3.2 to 3.5 every semester since. So now that I am a junior, even though my overall GPA is not where I'd like it to be yet, I'm proud of my academic achievements after freshman year.