

Effective Applications and Interviews

Getting your foot in the door
without breaking any toes

The Big Picture

- Employers are trying to PREDICT which applicant will perform well in the job
- Job applications use experience and education to make these predictions
- Job interviews also look at ‘soft skills’ such as communication and adaptability
- Selecting employees is a science! (but not all employers are scientists)

Job Applications

- Online or paper
- Purpose from applicant perspective: to obtain an interview
- Purpose from employer perspective: to assess the applicant's experience and education in comparison to the experience and education predicted to lead to good job performance

Job Application Tips

1. Treat online and paper the same
2. Grammar and spelling should be PERFECT
3. Refer to the job ad to see what experience and education is preferred
4. Make it crystal clear how you have the desired experience and education
5. Provide ALL requested information

More Job Application Tips

6. Online question-based applications:
 - Your answers to the questions are more important than your resume
 - Do not say 'see resume'
 - Answer all the questions
 - Answer precisely what is asked
 - Take care with details (e.g., months vs. years)
 - Honesty but not humble

Job Interviews

- Purpose from applicant perspective: to get the job or the second interview
- Purpose from employer perspective: to assess the applicant's 'competencies' in comparison to the competencies needed to perform well in the job
- RANT INTERLUDE: Assessing "FIT"

Job Interview Tips

- Research:
 - Job ad – ‘the ideal candidate will have’
 - Library website
 - Competency model(s)?
 - Big projects?
 - Priorities?
 - Proud accomplishments?
 - Annual report, reports to the community, etc.
 - Planning documents
 - Colleagues, alumni, etc.
- It’s ok to take a minute or two to think about each question

More Job Interview Tips

- Anticipate questions based on research
- Behavioral questions: “Tell me about a time when you...”
 - ❑ Have stories ready (bring notes)
 - ❑ ‘I haven’t done that’ vs. ‘I did that in a different setting’
 - ❑ Try not to give bad examples – you are rated on what you did, not what you learned

Yet More Job Interview Tips

- Situational questions: “What would you do if...”
 - ❑ Usually used for entry level positions
 - ❑ If you’ve done it well, use that in your answer
 - ❑ Provide the reasons as well as your actions
 - ❑ OK to say things like ‘depending on the policy of the organization, I’d...’

Bad Interview Questions (what to do?)

- Obviously illegal – red flag!
 - Are you planning to have children?
- Possibly illegal – proceed with caution!
 - How long have you lived here?
- Not useful in predicting your future job performance – do your best, your interviewer is not well trained
 - What is your greatest weakness?