Acing the Interview

Design Document

4 hours, 41 slides

Version 1.0

Submitted by

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Acing the Interview: Design Document

The ACS Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Scholars and the Department of Career Management and Development are jointly sponsoring a project to update and possibly upgrade the series of modules now titled "Preparing for Life After Graduate School" (PfLAGS). The working title for this revised program is "ACS Career Pathways."

An initial Learning System Architecture (LSA) for the new learning system has been developed and is in process of final revision. The purpose of this document is to describe the instructional design for one of the "tracks" programs in the learning system, tentatively titled "Acing the Interview."

Assumptions

The workshop described in this document was shaped by the following assumptions:

- The workshop will involve about four hours of learner contact time.

- The workshop will be led by a trained facilitator, in most cases an ACS career consultant who has completed the required leader training program. One of the more experienced career consultants will be delivering the pilot version of the program.

- The optimal size of each group will be 12 to 15 participants, but the workshop will be designed to be successful with as many as 25.

- The workshop will need to be able to be delivered either as a standalone module, as a follow-up to the "core" workshop in the learning system ("An Introduction to Career Pathway").

- This workshop will focus on what's common in interviewing across the several career pathways (industry and government especially, but also academe to a somewhat lesser extent). The key differences from one pathway to another will be described in the track on each pathway, in the section on the selection process for that pathway.

- There will be some utility to people who are pursuing the entrepreneurial career pathway, in that they may be interviewed by bankers and other kinds of funding sources, and they might also need to be interviewing others as their business grows and they find they need to hire.

Audience

- The audience for this workshop includes people with formal training in chemistry from the B.S. level all the way to the Ph.D. with postdoctoral experience.

- The main audience for this workshop is the job seeker considering the industry career pathway, but we also need to make sure that it's appropriate for people considering the pathways of government and of academe.

Instructional Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- List the three main steps of the interview process

- Define critical performance factors and describe the role they play in the interview process

- Describe how to do due diligence before an interview

- Define the Behavioral Interview format and contrast it with other less structured interview formats

- List some difficult interview questions and demonstrate how to answer one or two

- Describe some guidelines for making a decision after receiving a job offer.

High-Level Overview

This module will be structured in terms of an Introduction and four main sections:

- Workshop Introduction begins with the "grabber" activity. The session leader then provides an overview of the interview component of the larger hiring process and an overview of the workshop as a whole.

- Preparing for the Interview describes the kinds of "due diligence" a candidate should do in advance of the in-person interview.
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- Outshining the Competition describes the Behavioral Interview format that many or most hiring organizations use to structure their interviewing process. It also provides guidelines on what a candidate might expect during the visit to the company facility or the campus.

- *Responding to* Getting the Job Offer describes what steps a candidate should take upon receiving a job offer from a potential employer.

- Practicing the Interview provides participants with the opportunity to sharpen their interview skills in a mock-interview format and receive feedback from an ACS career counselor.

Acing the Interview: Detailed Design

The rest of this document describes the details of the proposed workshop, learning activity by learning activity.

Workshop Introduction

- "Tell Me About Yourself. . ." (opening pairs activity, 7 minutes). Participants will find a number of "tough" interview questions on the first page in their Participant Guide, three under Column A and three under Column B. The facilitator will put participants into pairs and tell Partner A to select one question from Column A and put that question to Partner B. Partner B will then have one minute to answer the question, with Partner A taking notes on what Partner B says. After one minute, the facilitator calls time and the partners switch roles, with Partner B selecting and asking the "tough" question. This activity gets debriefed into several points: the need to prepare

for an interview; the fact that you should be able to answer a question within one minute.

- Workshop Overview (presentation, 3 minutes). The facilitator provides a quick overview of this session. The purpose of the interview for the company and for the applicant. The main steps in the interview process (screening interviews to on-site interviews).

- The Interview Process (presentation, 5 minutes). The facilitator provides a high-level overview of the interviewing process in three parts: The screening interview, the preliminary interview, and the on-site interview.

Preparing for the Interview

- Preparing for an Interview (presentation, 10 minutes). The facilitator describes the process for preparing for an interview. There are three main steps to the process of preparing for an interview:

  - The first step is to define the critical performance factors for the job you're applying for. How to do this task.

  - The second step is to do "due diligence" research on the hiring company. How to do this kind of research.

  - The third step is to prepare your own set of questions for when the interviewer invites you to take charge of the conversation.

- Identifying Critical Performance Factors (presentation 15 minutes). Most job descriptions make the technical requirements of a position fairly explicit. What is generally implicit is the set of non-technical skills that a candidate will need to be successful in that position. The session leader reviews a typical list of competencies and defines each.

- Reading between the Lines (small group activity, 15 minutes). Each small group is assigned one job description. The group then develops a list of the top three to five critical performance factors for that position and reports those out to the other groups.

- Doing the Due Diligence Part (small group activity, 10 minutes). Participants read a real Letter to Shareholders from the annual report of a pharmaceutical company (or other firm that would tend to hire chemists). The group processes the Letter in terms of a set of focusing questions (What does the Letter indicate about the job market for chemists in this company? What questions would you ask during the interview that would indicate that you'd read this Letter?)

Outshining the Competition

- The On-Site Interview (presentation, 10 minutes). A high-level overview of what the typical on-site interview day looks like. Similarities and differences among the three main pathways.

- The Behavioral Interview Format (presentation, 10 minutes). The behavioral interview is the standard format most organizations use for a hiring interview. What a behavioral interview is and how it differs from a nonstructured interview. The structure