

INTERVIEWING

When interviewing for jobs,

internships, fellowships, etc., the most important thing you can do is prepare. You cannot always know the specific questions you may be asked, but you can reflect upon your own experiences and how they demonstrate your qualifications for the position.

Creative people often have interviews that incorporate a portfolio review (see handout on portfolio preparation) and a discussion of your work allows you to point out how the work demonstrates your qualifications. Part of your reflection in preparation therefore necessitates putting together your interview portfolio and this in turn will spur you to think about your overall qualifications for a position.

Perhaps the most pertinent preparation, in addition to putting together your portfolio, is researching the potential employer. Read about potential employers via their web sites, find articles about the employer, investigate most recent activities. Find people who either work for the organization or are familiar with it and ask questions. LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) can be a great way to find people already working for a company. By doing this research you can show that you are engaged and passionate about what the employer is doing.

After the Preparations Are Done

Arrive at least ten minutes early so you can collect yourself and check out the environment. By doing this, you will have more of a sense of the kind of place you may be working that simply cannot be conveyed through articles, the web, or your connections.

Successful interviews should feel more like a conversation and this starts as soon as you arrive. Even before the introductions, chances are good you will meet a receptionist or other people who work there. **BE COURTEOUS TO EVERYONE AND MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION.** Shake hands firmly. In some cultures hand shaking is not the norm and if you are not comfortable with this ritual then you need to practice it. Again, be nice to the front line people (receptionists, etc.) since they may also be asked to give their impression of you.

Dress for success! Erring on the side of conservative will reinforce your professionalism. Remember, if you are wearing a blazer/jacket and it appears that the environment is more laid back you can always take a blazer/jacket off. On the other hand, if you are too dressed down, a jacket will not magically appear to dress you up.

How Do I Answer the Questions?

Since you cannot know the questions you will be asked in advance, you need to figure out the information you wish to convey.

Think about the qualities you have that employers have stated they are seeking. These qualities may be quite different from creative skills and may be things like:

- Working well under pressure
- Meeting deadlines
- Leadership skills
- Ability to work independently and/or in a team
- Organizational skills
- Administrative skills
- Good written and oral communication skills

Thus, if an employer should state, "Tell me about yourself," you can focus on the things you wish to convey. On the other hand, employers may ask questions like "Tell me about a time when you failed." This type of question is most associated with something called behavioral interviewing and is predicated on the belief that past performance is a predictor of future action. If asked a question like this, which on the surface seems to be a negative, turn it into a positive by not only describing the

failure, but also what you learned from the failure and how you have, and will, implement this new knowledge.

Be yourself! If you have submitted your resume and portfolio for a position and then are asked to interview, chances are good that the employer is aware of your specific skills and believes that your skills are pertinent enough for the job and the interview becomes about goodness of fit. If you present yourself as something you are not at the interview, then the organization is not hiring who they think they are and this will be problematic in the long run since neither you, or the employer, will be happy.

Sometimes you will be asked about salary requirements in an interview. Do your best to wait on an answer to this question until you have been offered a job. Once you have been made an offer you can find information on what people are paid for certain jobs in certain regions and should visit web sites like:

Salary.com

<http://www.salary.com/>

College Grad

www.collegegrad.com/offer

Monster (salary wizard)

www.indeed.com

Please note that neither the University of Michigan or the Stamps School of Art and Design endorses any of these sites.

Your Questions

At some point in the interview you will most likely be asked if you have any questions. Sometimes the interview goes so well that any questions you may have had are now answered. Other times this is not the case.

Not everyone will have the same kinds of questions but your research into the company will come in handy here. You may have read about a specific project and could ask if you may be a part of it. The organization may have an international presence and you could ask about the opportunities to travel as part of your job. You may be interested in the opportunities for advancement. By asking questions you are demonstrating further interest in the organization and this is VERY important to employers.

At the end of the interview, you should ask how the employers will be following up with you and when you can expect to hear from them. Ask how it is appropriate for you to follow up with them.

After the Interview

Definitely follow up with a thank you. While it is certainly convenient to email your thank you, in the digital age employers may be more impressed with a hand written note since it takes the extra effort to write and send it. However you decide to send a thank you, electronically, typed, handwritten, etc., you must follow up!

Make sure to get the name and contact information of the person who interviewed you since this may not be the same person who will make hiring decisions. Think about the interview afterward and discover what you can learn about what to do differently or more effectively for the next interview.

Some tips for phone interviews and Skype interviews:

- 1)** If you have a phone interview remember that your non verbal cues cannot be seen and you cannot see the non verbal cues from the other person. Smile anyway. It will come through in your voice. Don't ramble. Keep your answers concise.
- 2)** If you have a Skype interview dress for success. Try to have a blank wall behind you. Interviewing in your PJ's with a messy dorm room behind you is NOT a good idea. Don't Skype from your bedroom. Look at the camera, not at the screen... otherwise you are not making "eye contact."

More information on successful interviewing can be found on U-M's Career Center web site: www.careercenter.umich.edu

and at these web sites:

99U

<http://99u.com/category/career-development>

Acting the Interview

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/aceinterview.htm>

For more information about interviewing, or to discuss other issues related to career development, contact John Luther, Career Development Coordinator, and make an appointment via stamps.genbook.com

PREPARING FOR **PORTFOLIO EXPO** AND **CAREER EVENTS**

Annual Events at U of M:

- The Stamps Portfolio Expo
- The Career Center Career Expo
- The Engineering Career Fair
- Start Up Career Fair

Watch your email for announcements for other career events on and off campus.

Do I need to do anything before the event?

Recruiters say research is the key to a successful job search. So... stand out from the crowd by taking their advice... research organizations before hand. Not a lot of spare time? Pick your top 5 organizations; do the research and for the Stamps Portfolio Expo submit early!!!!

What do I wear?

Organizations say first impressions count so give some thought to what you wear. While you may not want to go all out and wear a suit, don't dress like a slob either.

There's so many organizations here... where do I start?

Here are a couple of tips to make it more manageable:

- Before the Expo or Fair, develop your "two-minute commercial": a brief overview of you—your background and career interests (see example below).
- Although the Stamps Portfolio Expo is easier to navigate, at Career Center events get familiar with the layout and the app
- When you're ready, head for your first organization, introduce yourself with a smile and a handshake and begin your "commercial."
- If you're feeling nervous or need a break, stop by the info table at the Portfolio Expo, or The Career Center table at their fairs... we can help you practice and share a little encouragement.

The Portfolio Expo differs from other events because:

You are there primarily to present your work and get expert feedback on what you are creating, how you are presenting, etc. Jobs and internships are a bonus!

Start your two-minute commercial with:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am happy you are here since I am interested in _____.

I only have 30 minutes between classes... should I still come?

Yes! but maximize your time. At the Stamps Portfolio Expo this will mean having your portfolio reviewed by only one organization/person so submit your resume early!

For other events, head straight to your top choice organization (at Career Center events you must register first). If there's a long line move on to the next one on your list. Thirty minutes is plenty of time to connect with 2-3 organizations at a Career Center event.

You should never skip a class for a career event but! many professors are sympathetic to the fact you need a job or internship and may be able to work with you to make up what you miss IF you choose to get permission to miss a class.

It's all business at Career Center events... isn't there anything else?

You're right... job fairs tend to be pretty corporate. While you'll see some not-for-profit and government organizations at fairs they tend to use different recruiting resources. On the other hand... corporate organizations can offer a variety of opportunities--some that may fit your interests! So take a tip from recruiters: "Explore options you may not have considered... you never know what you might find."

Alternatively, the Stamps Portfolio Expo has a variety of creative possibilities from nonprofit art organizations to international design firms so plan ahead! Also, don't forget the Start Up Career Fair and the Engineering Career Fair.

What do I bring to the Fair?

Bring copies of your resume, your portfolio (in appropriate format), a leave behind, reference sheet, pen/pencil and notebook. You'll want your resume and portfolio as you're chatting with organizations and the other items may come in handy. If you're asked for them, you'll present yourself as a prepared job seeker!

A note on leave behinds:

These come in many different forms. They can be a business card, a small book, a pamphlet, etc.

Got more questions?

For the Stamps Portfolio Expo, please contact John Luther jonel@umich.edu or to make an appointment use stamps.genbook.com

For Career Center events, contact them at 734-764-7460.
www.careercenter.umich.edu

This document is based in part on the University of Michigan Career Center's web site Frequently Asked Questions on preparing for Job Fairs.

INTERVIEWING/PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

The following checklist is a useful tool whether you are preparing for a formal interview or have a chance meeting in which you can network. Some categories (i.e., resume, portfolio, etc.) may be more applicable to formal interviewing. Always have business cards or leave behinds with you, be able to discuss your interest in your chosen field, and follow up with contacts.

_____ Resume

_____ Portfolio

- Relevance to organization
- Examples of process
- Ability to speak about each piece
- Leave behind

_____ Business Card or other means of contact

_____ 30 second self-promotion

- Background
- Interests/Activities
- Leadership/Campus Involvement
- Major/Academic Interests
- Volunteer Work
- Special Abilities/Skills
- Interesting Life Experiences

_____ Ability to explain interest in your field

_____ Ability to explain interest in employer's organization (do your research!)

_____ Interview "outfit"

_____ STAR (able to describe Situation, Task, Action/Activity, Result)

_____ Ask for contact information

_____ Follow up as agreed and/or appropriate

_____ Send thank you letters/notes promptly