achiever, but it certainly wasn't one of the better known private girls schools. She was starting to feel even more nervous. This wasn't going as planned.

She was totally unprepared for the next question: 'Tell me, what do you know about opera?' How to answer this, she thought. She was interested in contemporary music, had a large CD collection, loved seeing bands and even played a little guitar … but opera? Not really her style and what did that have to do with teaching English? She battled her way through this question and the next couple with brief non-committal answers. Finally the headmaster put her out of her misery.

'Yes, well, very good,' he said, 'but you couldn't teach football.' Football, she thought, as she despondently left the school. That certainly hadn't been listed as a pre-requisite for the job. What had gone wrong?

Introduction

The introductory scenario is not an uncommon experience among novice job seekers, or even experienced ones. Interviews of all sorts can be difficult. The main challenge in this chapter is to combine communication principles and skills in language, non-verbal communication, intercultural sensitivity, listening and assertiveness with effective oral presentation as discussed in Chapter 10, and then apply this to two specific communication contexts: interviews and negotiations. Here we provide guidelines for conducting and participating in different types of interviews and preparing and carrying out strategies for negotiation. We aim to assist you to use communication skills to represent yourself well, to enhance your relationships with other people and to achieve mutually satisfying outcomes.

The interview as a communication event

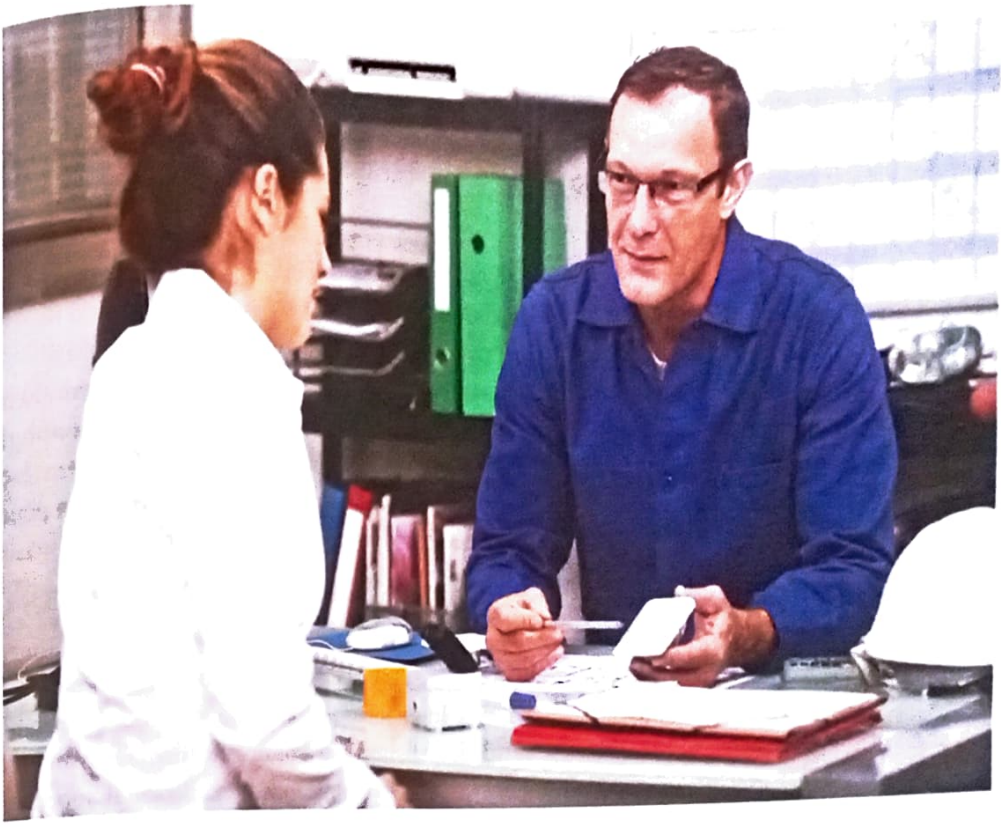
For most professions, interviewing is a necessary function. During your course at college or university you may also find that you will need to conduct interviews as part of assignments. For example, you may need to interview current practitioners about aspects of the job or current issues and challenges in order to write a report for assessment in a subject. Doctors, journalists, lawyers, market-research analysts, nurses and teachers engage in interviewing as a matter of course. The job applicant uses the interview to get an appointment; the researcher uses it to gather data for a report; the doctor uses it to help make decisions about the patient's next medication or surgery; the marketer uses it to test the quality of a product; and the salesperson uses it to persuade clients to buy.

The interview is a good study in the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication, and all professionals require some interviewing skills. Accountants interview their clients about tax minimisation; scientists interview laboratory assistants about experiments; and industrial designers interview engineers about industrial product designs.

The interview can be defined as 'structured conversation'. (See Exhibit 9.1.) We speak of the *interviewer*, the person who initiates the meeting, and the *interviewee* (the respondent), the person who is interviewed. There may be more than two people involved: it is possible to imagine an interview involving as many as 10 people, but this will usually be thought of as a *meeting* or an *interview panel.*

An interview may take place by telephone, weblink, Skype or email. But again, many interviews are meetings between two or more people face to face, in each other's presence.

EXHIBIT 9.1 The interview as a structured conversation



In an interview, people get to know each other, exchange information, opinions, attitudes and judgements. Decisions are often sought, and may even be reached.

Both the interviewer and the interviewee seek information. In an employment interview, the applicant seeks information about the job he or she is applying for and about the people for whom he or she will work. The interviewer, of course, seeks information about the applicant and his or her suitability for the job.

In an information-collection interview, the interviewer tries to elicit information and opinions from the interviewee, perhaps for a commercial product he or she is trying to market. This interview is held primarily for the benefit of the interviewer (and the interviewer's organisation) rather than for the benefit of the person or people interviewed. There are thus different purposes for interviews and different outcomes for interviewers and interviewees.

THE PURPOSES OF INTERVIEWING

So each interview has a specific purpose for both interviewer and interviewee. The objective of any interview is to obtain or contribute information. Even though the respective roles and objectives of interviewer and interviewee may differ from time to time, each party usually has a specific set of aims and objectives. For the interviewer it may be:

- to find out about an interviewee's ideas and feelings
- to gather information about the interviewee's experiences
- to convey an appraisal of the other person's work or behaviour
- to persuade another person to adopt an idea or course of action.

The interviewee will have specific aims and objectives that may complement those of the interviewer or may be different from them. The objectives of an interviewee may be:

- to gather information from the interviewer about a job
- to gather and interpret information about the interviewer's ideas and feelings
- to provide an explanation or justification for a particular action or behaviour
- to persuade the interviewer about some matter.

The basic reason for conducting an interview from both the interviewer's and the interviewee's points of view is to make a decision or to take an action. The success of any interview depends on the achievement of this objective.

Types of interviews

Some types of interviews follow a similar pattern and therefore require similar skills to achieve their objectives. For most of us, the most significant interview is usually the employment interview, but interviews with accountants, consultants, doctors, nurses, salespeople and teachers or lecturers are frequently important events in personal, student or business life. In addition, as you progress in your chosen field as an employee, the performance-appraisal interview presents an opportunity to discuss goals and objectives with your employer.

Information-collection interviews

Many interviews are designed to elicit information from interviewees, who may be experts or members of the public. Interviews can be formal or informal, structured or unstructured. The student asks the lecturer for more information about an essay to be written; the marketer asks the shopper for opinions about brands of detergent; the journalist asks the company director about the organisation's latest share launch; the engineering student asks a practising engineer about solving engineering problems in the workplace.

The guidelines for information-gathering are very similar to those of any interview. Questions need to be carefully prepared and clearly worded, otherwise valuable time can be wasted repeating terms and discussing the meaning of questions and statements. Interviewers need to choose their time and place well to get cooperation. They need to establish credibility and trust. If a commercial motive is apparent in the questioning, the interviewee needs to be motivated to participate.

So when you design an interview questionnaire, think about the ethical implications of the survey. Do you need approval for the interview from an ethics committee? How can you guarantee confidentiality for the interviewee? What type of personal information do you need to collect? These ethical issues should be carefully considered by all interviewers, whether you are a student or an employee. Sometimes you may not be able to conduct the interview until ethical or organisational approval has been given. There is more detail on research ethics in Chapter 6.

Interviewees need to know from the beginning what is expected of them. They may need time to prepare answers, they may need questions to be illustrated and made simple, and they may need to be sure that their time is not being wasted, or that they are not merely pawns in the interviewer's ego game.

Information-collection interviews might include:

- investigative interviews carried out by journalists, either for print-media stories or for live radio or television broadcasts
- public opinion surveys by pollsters for election purposes
- interviews carried out by researchers (including student researchers) in such areas as retail, medicine, education and science.

Interviewing styles vary but they are usually marked by evidence of specialised skills and a sound knowledge of communication principles.

Persuasive interviews

In persuasive interviews the interviewer aims to convince the interviewee that an idea or course of action is preferred and is of benefit to the interviewee. Such an interview can occur in situations such as the following:

- in organisations where managers or employees are attempting changes or a continuation of a particular policy
- in education, politics or religion where attempts are made to alter opinion
- in business where products or services are to be sold.

With commercial television dominated by advertising, persuasive messages are so predominant in our society that people can be sceptical, if not cynical, about them. It is not easy to change attitudes or opinions. Rewards for the interviewee must be clear and real. The best persuaders are those who sincerely believe in the message being presented, have the personality to convey it and have the communication skills to make their case clear to a range of receivers, regardless of their varying levels of comprehension.

Performance-appraisal interviews

Appraisal interviews are common in education and employment. In education, students may be interviewed by teachers or lecturers about their performance. Their progress in courses and subjects is discussed and assessed. Decisions are made about their subjects and areas of future study. In employment, performance appraisals are carried out regularly and discussed with employees in interviews, usually annually. In organisations with effective human resource-management policies, appraisals are valuable aspects of training and development, and appraisal interviews are vital to the success of this process. Staff are presented with management's view of their performance and have an opportunity to discuss options for their future development such as the widening of experience, further training, possible promotions and so on.

Of course, such interviews may produce anxiety, especially in the interviewee, and may even generate a feeling of defensiveness. But if well handled, appraisal interviews can restore frustrated enthusiasm, inspire corporate unity and stimulate morale.

The interviewer needs to arrive at an assessment of the interviewee, whether favourable or unfavourable. The psychological climate of such an interview should be open and supportive. Both employer and employee should aim to explore one another's needs and problems in relation to the job. Both can set goals to achieve common objectives. If a written assessment is required, it should be read and reviewed by both parties.

Employment interviews

The usual method of securing a job interview is by writing a letter of application in response to an advertisement. In Chapter 12 we discuss techniques for writing effective letters of application and designing résumés. The objective of a letter of application is usually to gain the chance to present yourself at an interview. However, you may also be fortunate enough to arrange an interview through a telephone conversation, email or through a business or personal contact.

Some employment interviews are extremely formal. An applicant may face an interview panel of four to six members, each with standard, predetermined questions. The panel will note carefully the answers to each question so that applicants can be compared fairly. Other interviews are informal – the panel encourages the interviewee to talk freely and creates a relaxed atmosphere.

In almost all employment interviews, applicants feel nervous. They are conscious of constant evaluation and criticism in the air. They fear a slip of the tongue will earn them 'low marks' and that they may have made a bad 'first impression'.

The interviewers know that a choice to appoint someone to a position needs to be made on the information that they are able to draw from the applicants at the interview.

PHASES OF THE INTERVIEW

There are four phases of any interview. They amount to a natural development in informal communication between the parties.

1 *Creating rapport:* The French word *rapport* is translated as 'connection, relationship or link'. We use it more to mean putting the interviewee at ease, decreasing any nervousness and establishing a friendly, frank relationship. The interviewee also contributes to establishing an 'easy' relationship.
2 *The contract:* A *contract*, as it were, between the two parties is offered and accepted. The interviewer explains to the interviewee what he or she wants to know and the interviewee is equally frank about how much he or she is willing or able to reveal.
3 *Interaction:* This is the core of the interview: asking the right questions, considering the answers, asking follow-up questions if appropriate, varying open with closed questions, summarising with mirror questions and asking speculative or hypothetical questions. The interviewee will have queries to raise and goals to achieve.
4 *Agreement:* It is the interviewer's prerogative to close the interview. The interviewer may have previously specified the expected length of the interview. Whether a decision has been reached or not, both parties aim to part cordially. Some interviews close with joint statements about agreements reached or even a written record.

THE EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW

In this chapter we give weight to the employment interview because most of our readers will face a few of these in their careers, first probably as applicants, and later as interviewers. We shall first discuss the role of the interviewer(s) in preparing for the interview, conducting the interview, asking questions and forming judgements. Then we shall consider the role of the applicant or interviewee: his or her preparation, participation in the interview, and success in handling questions and leaving the best impression.

You should read both sections, regardless of your immediate interests in job selection or attainment, because you may get insights into the behaviour of the other party in what some people call the *interview game*.

The interviewer's role

Preparation

The interviewer (who may be the employer or an agent of the employer) will usually arrange the interview by email, fax, letter or telephone.

The interviewer will set the objectives for the interview and have a list of questions to ask, allocated if necessary to members of an interview panel. Information likely to be sought by interviewees will be available.

PREPARING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

Many interviewers fail to put enough thought into framing effective questions for applicants/interviewees. Sloppy, vague questions fail to bring out the experience and qualities of applicants and to discriminate between applicants, and they fail to express the real concerns of the panel. Some such questions are:

- Have you had enough experience to handle this position?
- Are you able to get people who work for you to extend themselves when needed?
- Do you think that your experience in textile management will be appropriate to this work in insurance management?
- Have you had research experience?

In each case the applicant/interviewee may answer 'yes' and say little more. The question has not been designed to elicit specific information about the applicant.

By contrast, notice the specific and concrete challenge in experience-related questions like the following:

- In what ways did you find university different from school?
- What has been your single best piece of work or achievement in the past six months?
- How do you determine or evaluate the success of others around you?
- What qualities do you look for in a manager or supervisor?

SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW

Interviews for employment or other purposes can be held in offices, in formal interview rooms, in committee and conference rooms, or in 'neutral' territory such as restaurants. The venue should be suitable for the nature of the interview. A 'must' is some degree of uninterrupted privacy.

The interviewer will also attend to those aspects of the meeting designed to put interviewees (who may be job applicants) at their ease: the furnishings, light, seating arrangement, greetings, informality of atmosphere and evidence of a genuine interest in the interviewee's comfort.

For an interview to be successful, the goals of both the interviewer and the interviewee need to be met to some degree.

Conducting the interview

Most interviews for professional positions are conducted by panels, although preliminary interviews may well be one-to-one.

Interviewers might contribute to the interview in the following ways:

1 Carefully consider the number of interviews and interviewers to be used. There is value in having a range of experience in an interview panel, but too many can intimidate the applicant or waste time.
2 Avoid interruptions and distractions. The time and place for an interview should be made as free from distractions as possible.
3 Assess the furniture arrangement and personal space. Are the distances between interviewers and interviewee too great or too small? Are there any physical barriers, such as a large desk, which can separate people and create too much formality?
4 Ask questions as concisely and clearly as possible. Open-ended questions place no restrictions on an applicant's/interviewee's responses, whereas closed questions require specific and restricted answers. Open-ended questions, for example, beginning with 'How …' 'What …' or 'Why …' tend to elicit original remarks from applicants about their approaches to the issue: 'How did you deal with customer complaints?' Closed questions, while providing useful information, might restrict the applicant from elaborating: 'Have you any experience of dealing with customer complaints?' 'Yes I have.'

5 Listen actively. In Chapter 7 we discuss listening as one of the most important communication skills. Some points to remember here are:
   - Listen closely so that you can make an accurate summary of the interviewee's replies.
   - 'Listen' with all the senses, including the eyes, to perceive nervousness, agitation or negativity on the part of the interviewee.
   - Acknowledge that you are following what the applicant/interviewee is saying, picking up figures given, asking for further details, or even giving a nod to show that what has been said is noted.
   - Show active listening by not talking too much. A proportion of 20 per cent interviewer to 80 per cent applicant/interviewee contribution is probably about right.

6 Conclude the interview effectively. Both parties should feel satisfied with the information exchanged. It is useful to gain feedback so that any issues that have been omitted can be discussed and uncertainties cleared up. A summary and review of the information discussed can be very useful for further reference. At this point, if more discussion is required, another interview can be arranged.

Questioning

The following is a list of guidelines for questioning in interviews.

1 As already suggested, interview panels or committees should plan their questions before the interview, allocating questions to each member according to function and avoiding repetition. Questions should directly relate to the criteria for the job.
2 Questions should be straightforward and direct; they should not have a number of parts.
3 Each applicant should be asked exactly the same questions, otherwise equity is at risk.
4 Each question should be asked, answered and possibly followed up with a supplementary question.
5 The chairperson's role is to introduce each new questioner, ensure the applicant understands the question and ensure it is asked clearly and answered adequately.
6 The chairperson keeps the interview moving, avoids excessive time being spent on one topic and opens new topics for discussion. The chairperson may also, during the interview, summarise and check understanding of what the applicant has said.

Here is an explanation of some types of questions used in interviews.

THE OPEN QUESTION

The open question encourages the interviewee to speak freely:

How do you view prospects for development in the suburb?

What have been your impressions of our products over the last few years?

This kind of question allows the applicant/interviewee to do the talking and frees the interviewer to listen, observe and make notes. It communicates trust by giving the interviewee the freedom to determine the amount and nature of information and opinion he or she can offer.

Also it may open up areas that the interviewer may wish to pursue later.

THE CLOSED QUESTION

The closed question is a more limiting question that can be answered 'yes' or 'no' in one word or sentence. For example:

How many staff did you supervise?

Were you in charge of the department?

The closed question is useful as a follow-up to fill gaps in the answers to open-ended questions. On the other hand, it may produce too little information by discouraging explanations.

THE MIRROR QUESTION

A mirror question holds up to the applicant/interviewee a sort of mirror so that he or she can see how various answers have been interpreted. For example:

As I see it, then, you were employed for four years in textiles and then moved to product management in order to get experience with computers, but now you would like to combine both aspects of your experience in this new job. Am I correct?

This kind of question enables the applicant/interviewee to agree with or deny the validity of the statement it contains, and if necessary correct wrong impressions before the interview proceeds.

THE LEADING QUESTION

A leading question presupposes a certain answer or determines limitation to the answer. It may be useful and proper if you wish to confirm your understanding of something said by the applicant/interviewee. For example:

So you left the company of your own accord?

And you feel quite confident about operating the new workstation?

In general, however, leading questions should be avoided. They may carry a threatening tone or encourage a misleading response.

Just to make clear what we mean by *leading*, in the following, the first question is a leading question and the second is not:

1 You like individual, detailed work, don't you?
2 How do you feel about doing individual, detailed work?

And again:

1 Are you opposed to the union like most workers I have talked to here?
2 What is your attitude to the union?

THE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION

Also known as the reflective question, this one tests the applicant's/interviewee's imagination or ability to think 'laterally'. It is not meant to be stressful or upsetting, but practical:

Suppose a member of staff asked you to form a private company to sell cleaning products in your spare time. What would you say?

If they made you general manager for a week, what changes would you make in management structures here?

The applicant's role

Preparation

As an applicant for a position, you have already submitted documents about your qualifications and experience. Now you might prepare to do two things:

1 Find out as much as you can about the company. For example, check the company's website.
2 Prepare a *skills inventory* about yourself to use in the interview either to answer questions or to ask them and use the criteria stated in the position description for the job to help you to identify relevant skills and experience.
   - List your skills as relevant to the job; for example, computer skills, organisational experience, marketing and communication training courses completed.
   - Rank your skills. Make out a good case for yourself in the skills closely related to this job. Have examples of your work handy to show if needed.
   - Recall and make a note of concrete examples of your work and skills. Keep them brief but make them count. When did you last show good leadership, customer service skills, conflict-resolution ability, team motivation or problem-solving strategies?

- *Anticipate objections and criticisms.* Are you too inexperienced for this job? Are you under- or overqualified? Is your experience directly relevant to this job?
- *Be ready to discuss salary,* if the subject comes up. Be prepared to relate your particular accomplishments to what you might be worth to the company if you are asked about a possible starting salary. If the employer does not raise the salary issue, it is probably better to leave it until the next stage, when you have received an offer.
- *Keep in mind* that you are 'on show' from the moment you enter the building for the interview until you leave. It is not impossible that the interviewer or interview panel will be influenced by comments from other staff who might meet you during this time.

Displaying qualities in an interview

Most applicants for professional or management-level positions are required to offer three main segments of information about themselves: qualifications, references and qualities.

1 Most professional positions require the applicant to have specific *qualifications.* This may include an academic degree or diploma, relevant and continuous training in, say, management or computing, and, in most cases, appropriate experience. This information will have been covered in your letter of application and résumé.

2 As a rule employers seek reports or *references* from referees nominated by the applicant. These are likely to be about character, expertise and potential. In some fields references are very important and employers may telephone the referees. The most valuable references offer concrete examples of the quality of the applicant, so choose your referees carefully and inform them about the job description.

3 *Qualities* are personal characteristics or attributes that the selection committee or interviewer is looking for. Generally speaking, interviewers look for personal qualities such as sincerity, sociability, creativity and maturity.

- *Sincerity* comes first. Discuss your achievements modestly but factually. Let the facts speak for themselves.
- *Sociability* means getting on with colleagues. So behave naturally, openly and amiably, with courtesy and yet with confidence.
- *Creativity* means thinking originally, keeping your mind alert and looking at problems in new ways.
- *Maturity* doesn't require great age. It's a matter of demonstrating good judgement, clear thinking and balanced reasoning.

Strategies for dealing with questions

As employment interviews are important communication events, applicants will be wise to treat the interview situation with great care. Here is some advice garnered from various experts on winning jobs:

1 Don't be defensive if you are asked a difficult question. Answer as positively and honestly as you can. For example, if you are asked a question about not having enough experience, you might reply:

My experience was limited by doing my degree but the team I worked with was the most productive in the company.

2 Never speak disparagingly of any previous employers or organisations.

Don't be too frank or overly cautious. Disclose aspects of your work experience and yourself appropriately and emphasise the positive rather than the negative aspects of each job.

Anti-discrimination laws invalidate selection-committee questions that discriminate about personal circumstances such as marital status, carer responsibilities and forms of disability. As the applicant/interviewee, focus on asserting your demonstrated abilities.

Don't talk too little or too much. How much to say? Most questioners expect more than 'yes' or 'no' answers, or even answers that merely address the specific question. They look for conciseness in addressing main points, brief but relevant examples and anecdotes, and a confident but modest statement of your feelings and opinions on what you did.

6 It is important during your replies to address all members of an interview panel, not just the questioner. Your tone should be a mixture of confidence, thoughtfulness and modesty.

7 At the end of the interview the applicant/interviewee is usually asked if he or she has questions for the panel. The choice of these questions is very important. They should not be administrative questions on such matters as pay or conditions – these matters can be dealt with if and when an offer is made. Suitable questions might be policy-oriented, revealing that the applicant has been researching the company and taking an interest in its future direction. Examples of such questions include:
   - What are the company's plans for diversifying their product?
   - Will the public relations department be responsible for all publicity in the future?
   - Will the company be expanding globally as I read in this week's *Financial Review*? If so, what effect will this have on this branch?

Evaluating interviewers and interviewees

Exhibits 9.2 and 9.3 may be used to evaluate your skills as either interviewer or interviewee in classroom exercises or in a real employment interview.

EXHIBIT 9.2 Evaluation of interviewer or interview panel

Opening					
Establishes rapport	1	2	3	4	5
Encourages openness	1	2	3	4	5
Previews interview structure	1	2	3	4	5
During the interview					
Asks clear questions	1	2	3	4	5
Organises interview well	1	2	3	4	5
Motivates applicant	1	2	3	4	5
Covers essential material	1	2	3	4	5
Gives applicant adequate information	1	2	3	4	5
Non-verbal communication is congruent with verbal	1	2	3	4	5
Closing					
Handles ending skilfully	1	2	3	4	5
Reviews interview	1	2	3	4	5
Leaves favourable impression	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Circle most appropriate number:

1 = poor

2 = fair

3 = average

4 = above average

5 = excellent

EXHIBIT 9.3 Evaluation of interviewee

Opening					
Responds to interviewer's attempts to establish rapport	1	2	3	4	5
Projects confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Appears sincere	1	2	3	4	5
During the interview					
Answers questions adequately	1	2	3	4	5
Has good communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
Non-verbal communication is congruent with verbal	1	2	3	4	5
Reveals strong motivation	1	2	3	4	5
Reveals flexibility and creativity in answers to questions	1	2	3	4	5
Closing					
Asks relevant and thoughtful questions	1	2	3	4	5
Manages time well	1	2	3	4	5
Leaves favourable impression	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Circle most appropriate number:

1 = poor

2 = fair

3 = average

4 = above average

5 = excellent

udy 9.1 Weird job interview questions and how to handle them

) you say when you're asked 'What was your cGyver moment?' …

all prepare studiously for job interviews, doing nework about our potential employers and ng short but detailed stories to illustrate our olishments, but how in the world do we prep off-the-wall interview question? …

azy as it sounds, an interviewer at Schlumberger, it Houston oilfield services provider, asked some pplicant 'What was your best MacGyver moment?', g to a 1980s action-adventure TV show.

Nestlé USA, the question was 'If you were a in a wall, which brick would you be and why?' At Microsoft: 'How would you move Mt Fuji?' And at Boston Consulting: 'How many hair salons are there in Japan?'.

No matter where you apply for work, you always might get a question from left field. According to Rusty Rueff … most job applicants are woefully unprepared for off-the-wall questions. 'Ninety per cent of people don't know how to deal with them,' he says. Like me, they freeze and their minds go blank.

To deal with that, Rueff advises, first you have to realise that the interviewer isn't trying to make you look stupid, as stupid as the question may seem. For instance, the MacGyver question is meant just

as an invitation to talk about how you got out of a tough jam. 'They're not looking for you to tell about the time you took out your ballpoint and did a tracheotomy,', Rueff notes. Rather, you can probably extract an answer from one of the achievement stories you prepared in advance.

Connie Thansoulis-Cerrachio, a career services consultant … agrees with Rueff. 'These are called case interview questions,' she says. Another example, which may seem equally impossible to answer: why are manhole covers round?

Source: Adams, S., 'Weird job interview questions and how to handle them', *The Age*, 23 June 2010. Reprinted by Permission of Forbes Media LLC © 2012.

Discussion

In groups of three or four, discuss this case study in conjunction with the scenario at the beginning of the chapter on Melissa's difficult job interview. Consider the following questions.

1 How would you answer some of the questions listed above?
2 Why do you think some interviewers ask questions like this and the one in Melissa's interview about opera? What are they trying to garner from your answer?
3 Consider these questions. How would you answer them?
   a If you were some kind of animal, what kind would you be and why?
   b What kind of car would you be?
   c What would I find in your refrigerator right now?
   d How would you explain a database in three sentences to your eight-year-old nephew?
   e If you could be a superhero, what sort of powers would you have and why?
4 Consider Melissa's interview. What had gone wrong in her preparation for this interview? What did she do right? How could she have been better prepared?
5 How did the setting of the interview act to unsettle her?
6 Why didn't she get the job? What should she learn from the experience?

After you have discussed this case study, turn to page 260 for our comments and some suggested answers to these tricky questions.

The research interview

You may need to interview managers, customers, council officers, public servants, bankers, more experienced professionals and many others to get useful and relevant information if you are conducting research for a tertiary assignment or for your workplace. However, not all interviewed respondents are frank or well informed about the subject of the research interview. Taking notes from research interviews is important and so is knowing what questions to ask and how much value to place on the answers.

Surveys can be used to collect information and opinions from a number of respondents in order to conduct research eliciting social, economic or political trends. Questionnaires can be administered as part of a research interview and can help you to develop a structure for the interview.

Guidelines on conducting research in your professional area of knowledge and practice are discussed in Chapter 6.

Design the research interview so that, as the researcher or interviewer, you obtain responses that will enable you to achieve the purpose of the research. A schedule of questions to be asked at the interview should be prepared. These can be shown in advance to the interviewee for preparation or prior thought. You might consider asking the interviewee for permission to make an audio recording of the interview. You will then need to arrange to transcribe the recording to provide a written record of the interview for analysis.

It is ethical to inform the interviewee that he or she can terminate the interview at any time without giving a reason. The number and type of questions (e.g. open-ended or closed) depends on the nature of the research and the time available for the interview. An interviewee's time should not be wasted, so the time allocated for the interview should be the minimum needed. There are many specialist publications advising researchers on how to conduct a variety of research interviews for specific purposes. For example, see Gillham (2005) for advice on focusing research interview questions, using prompts and probes, piloting and running a research interview, and writing up and analysing interview data. Research interviews can be conducted face to face, by email, or on the telephone.