

# Making the Cut

**T**alent Plus is an international management consulting firm headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, United States. One of Mr. Thomas Wai's responsibilities is assisting senior leaders to analyse and select top performers through defined success criteria which scientifically measures an individual's talent against industry and corporate benchmarks, and predicts an individual's potential to perform a specific job with excellence.

## How does social media networking affect the career search of students?

Many recruiters across industries use the internet and social media to find the right candidates, whether they are looking for a job or not.

For example, LinkedIn is a favorite social media outlet for recruiters. If you desire to be found in a certain professional arena you need to have a professional LinkedIn profile. Rather than calling yourself "Handsome Twenty-One" or "Sexy Eighteen," you may want to create a profile that captures your skills, education, work experience, awards, career aspirations and type of work you are interested in.

To secure an interview, create a professional image on your LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media profiles.

## Once students are invited for a face-to-face interview, how should one prepare oneself?

There are a few things students should do before their interviews, these include:

- Find out all you can about the prospective employer
- Formulate a list of questions to ask during your interview
- Have a true understanding of what you really want to do while being open to opportunities

Many students attend a job interview without adequate preparation. I would like to see more students use the internet to research about the company, understand the company's market, products and goals, memorise some key facts about the

company and really be prepared to cite them during the interview.

Moreover, students can leverage their alumni networks to ask graduates about the outlook of a specific industry, how to be successful in that particular role and understand what the company is seeking.

## Some international firms conduct interviews via the telephone. What are the key elements students should do to prepare for phone interviews?

First, students need to ensure that they are located in a quiet place where they will not be disturbed for the duration of the interview. I remember when I conducted a telephone interview for a candidate in New York City and she was in a shopping mall. I could hardly hear what she was saying!

Next, students in Singapore should remember they have to speak differently to people from America or Europe. For example, if they know they are going to be interviewed by an American, they should speak slowly and articulate their thoughts clearly. Eliminate their usage of "Singlish" because American employers will not understand it.

It can be helpful if students structure their answers logically during the telephone interview so that the interviewer can follow the patterns of thoughts easily.

## How should students prepare for interview?

Being an expert in the subject is important, but it is not enough. Today, employers like to evaluate how a candidate thinks and feels under different circumstances. As a result, students should develop their personalities and social skills during their time in the University. For example, they could get involved in extra-curriculum activities to sharpen their leadership, communication and listening skills.

I would also encourage students to attend the seminars and programs organised by the Career Center so that they can learn how to speak and present well during an interview. At the same time, they should approach their alumni and speak to the presenters at the seminars so that they can develop their confidence to ask senior leaders questions and present themselves professionally.



**Mr. Thomas Wai,**  
the Director of  
Asia Pacific Office,  
Singapore.

## There are more employers using behavioral-based interviews for their recruitment. How should students prepare for this type of interview?

Be prepared to use real experiences to illustrate your strengths. Students should have a clear idea of what their strengths are and be able to articulate them clearly. As well, they should be able to talk about particular achievements, what they did (instead of what others did), and the outcome they obtained at the end.

Great candidates are able to cite examples to highlight their leadership abilities, communication skills, presentation capacities and their potential to be successful in a job. Poor candidates utilise poor examples to illustrate their viewpoints and are unable to relate their personal experience during the interview.

## Finally, how can students make their talent stand out in this economy?

Getting good grades in college is important. However, good grades alone will not help you secure a position. Employers today are looking for aptitude, character, attitude, international experiences, etc. of the candidate. If there are opportunities to involve yourself in an international project, study and work in another country, learn a new language or participate in social welfare activities, participate actively. These 'extra' activities can often provide you the extra mileage in your application for a distinct competitive advantage – putting you ahead of the other candidates a company is reviewing.

*Thomas Wai (MBA, M.A.), was named as the Who's Who in EEE by the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, and the story of his success was detailed in their article "Thomas Wai – The Talent Specialist." He currently works for the international HR consulting firm, Talent Plus ([www.talentplus.com](http://www.talentplus.com)) and has been published in the Harvard Business Review.*