Soft Skills #5 – Interview Prep (Session 1)

01/30/23

4:30 PM – 6:30 PM

**Lead By:**

Shauna Strickler

***Remember your WHY?***

One of the most common interview questions is ‘Why do you want this job?”. If you don’t know this, then it is going to be hard to tell a convincing story to the interviewer about why you want to work at that particular job.

**EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION** = EXTERNAL MOTIVATION

* You perform a task because you are going to get something you want (a paycheck/remote schedule/etc.) or avoid something you don’t want (getting in trouble by your boss).
* While extrinsic motivation is often considered less desirable than intrinsic motivation, it still plays an important role in workplaces. *(how many people would work without getting paid??)*

**Examples of extrinsic motivation**

* Increasing your productivity to win an incentive is an example of extrinsic motivation. You’re working beyond expectations because you’re interested in receiving a prize from your supervisors.
* Completing a project by the deadline is a type of extrinsic motivation. You do not want your manager to chastise you for missing the deadline, so you complete the assignment on time.
* Attending a mandatory professional development session is an example of extrinsic motivation. You want to earn the necessary credits to perform your work.

Human beings are programmed to seek extrinsic motivation (we need income to survive), a sense of healthy competition within a team(s) can increase overall production and performance. The sense of completing a challenge or project can be an extrinsic motivator, but also reflect an intrinsic value because it is something you are passionate about.

**INTRINSIC** = INTERNAL MOTIVATION

* You perform a task because it gives you a personal sense of reward or satisfaction. Bottom line, you like it and it makes you happy!

**Examples of intrinsic motivation**

* Assisting a colleague on a project because you sincerely want to help them is intrinsic motivation. You’re helping them because you feel good about supporting a peer, not for any recognition.
* Learning additional technical skills beyond the expectation of your job/company is intrinsically motivated. You’re doing it just because you enjoy learning it, not for a tangible reward.

**Why Recruiters Like Intrinsic Motivation:**

* Intrinsic motives have three times the impact on employee engagement levels compared to extrinsic motives.
* Employees perform better when they’re intrinsically motivated.
* Intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to stay.
  + Research by management consulting firm McKinsey revealed that when employees are intrinsically motivated, they show 46% higher levels of job satisfaction and 32% greater levels of commitment to their jobs. At the same time, they’re a lot less likely to experience job-related burnout
* Completing extra assignments beyond the expectations of your managers is intrinsically motivated. You’re doing it because you enjoy it, not for a reward.
  + That being said - DON’T let a future employer use this to their advantage. Having intrinsic motivation certainly can make a career more fulfilling, but that doesn’t mean you don’t deserve to be appropriately compensated and valued for your time and what you produce.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

Human beings form opinions about your personality and intelligence in the first 30 seconds of an interview. This can be informed by body language, communication style, preparedness / research, and enthusiasm. A challenge with this currently can be Zoom setup as good lighting, eye contact, and other keys are important to sell yourself as best as possible.

**Unconscious Bias**

* Unconscious or Implicit Bias is the mental processes that cause us to act in ways that reinforce stereotypes.
* Affinity bias is when people tend to gravitate towards others who look, act, and think as they do.
* Humans are hardwired to make quick decisions. This can lead to unconscious bias, overgeneralization, and discrimination. Unfortunately, the job search process is not immune to this. This can be expressed as ‘culture fit’ and reflect non-objective factors.

**Ways to combat Unconscious Bias**

* Research – the company, role, interviewer, etc.
* Keep it Positive – people want to hire people they want to be around
* Lead with Curiosity – an innovative / inquisitive mind is a productive one
* Accentuate your Strengths – put your best and most distinct foot forward
* Don’t answer illegal questions – redirect (perhaps saying that you are confident in your ability to balance your work and personal responsibilities), let them know you aren’t comfortable discussing, ask them to clarify, ask if this is a place you want to work depending on how they respond, etc.

**FINDING THE RIGHT WORKPLACE**

* Clarify your values – determine your personal extrinsic and intrinsic values and keep those in mind when job searching, during the interview process, etc.
* Ask very intentional questions and share info strategically to gauge responses:
  + What programs do they have in place (or plan to put in place) to promote inclusion and diversity?
  + Opportunities for employees to have flexible schedules, work from home / office, etc.?
  + Can they share examples or how employees / leadership supports team members.
* Explore any feelings of uneasiness or concern
  + Do some research online (preferably do this in advance) to see if there are red flags that may discourage you from working there.
  + Questions about whether you are replacing an employee who is leaving, they are adding a position, what the employee turnover rate is like in the area you are looking to work.
* Do research before accepting an offer
  + You can almost never fully know what it will be like to work somewhere without actually working there, but do your research before and during the interview process, especially if you have an opportunity to visit the actual office where you would be working (if applicable) to get a sense of the vibe.

**ELEVATOR PITCHES**

What is it?

* Answer to the interview question “Tell me about yourself”
* 45-90 seconds
* Extended version of your resume summary
* Professional and Personable
* Your opportunity to stand out

What goes into an elevator pitch?

* Information about your professional background
* Something unique about you
* Your skill set
* What you want to do with those skills
* A bridge to connect with your audience
* Closing line(s)

What isn’t in an elevator pitch?

* Excessive personal details
* Salary expectations
* Excessive use of jargon / buzzwords
  + Important to adjust this to your interviewer’s background
* Undermining / Filler vocabulary (e.g., just, kinda, actually)
* Negativity of any kind
* Rambling

Elevator Pitch Formula:

* **Sentence 1** – An introduction, your full name, development path/bootcamp.
* **Sentence 2** – High-level overview of what you did before Grand Circus.
* **Sentence 3** – What drew you to coding? Why do you want to be a developer?
* **Sentence 4** – What have you accomplished as a developer? What would be something interesting and professional for this audience?
* **Sentence 5**
  + Statement about why you’re interested in the role or company; or
  + Direct Ask/Closer (use this approach while networking)

Elevator Pitch Example:

Hi! My name is FIRST NAME LAST NAME and I’m a developer completing the JavaScript bootcamp at Grand Circus.

Before taking the bootcamp, I was a SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER working at Detroit Public Schools. During my time there I was able to learn a bit about web development through classes for students which sparked my interest in coding.

Then with Covid forcing educators to teach virtually, I realized the technology wasn’t very accommodating for my students. Having dabbled with web development, I started to think that maybe I could create a better technology solution for special needs students. So I enrolled in a coding bootcamp and have committed to becoming a front end developer with a focus on web accessibility.

Although bootcamp started a month ago, I’ve already learned about CSS, HTML, JavaScript, and flexbox. I’ve even built a point of sale system that is mobile responsive. The last two weeks of the bootcamp myself and a small group [will build/built] a live web application from scratch. [add more info about your project here]

I’m excited to begin my career as a developer and look forward to creating user centric applications.

Tailoring your Elevator Pitch to a specific Role you are interviewing for:

* Be succinct, honest and engaging.

Resist the urge to give a detailed account of the last two decades of your career. The interviewer is looking for an answer that shows them you're qualified and can respond to an unstructured question.

* Use the job description to prepare.

Re-read what they want and highlight the most required skills that you have. Are they looking for someone who can solve problems or deal with tough customers? Pick a few and brainstorm how you can describe yourself while showcasing your strengths for what they’re seeking.

* Tie your story to their needs.

People love a good tale, so weave in some personality. For example, maybe you fell in love with the hospitality industry because your grandparents ran a bed and breakfast. Connect your story back to the job, keep it short, and be truthful.

**PRACTICING TAILORING**

Below is an example of a job posting by 4Mile Analytics for a Junior Software Engineer role. Review the segment of the job posting and focus on what they’re looking for. What stands out? How would you tailor your elevator pitch to this role?

Text

Description automatically generated

Text, letter

Description automatically generated