

Session 3 (2/10/26):

How is the job hunt going?

Interview today, went well.

Is your resume fully revamped now?

How has preparation of behavioral based interview examples been going?

3 levels of an answer:

1 – did what was asked, answers the question, answers the competency

2 – level 1 + above and beyond what was asked (process improvement afterwards, broader impact than intended or super effort/overcame big obstacles to get it done)

3 – level 2 + became a spokesperson for this thing, shared with other teams/groups/departments/trained others/taught others/applied elsewhere.

Intros:

4-5 years of experience in the IT field. Started out as a Geek Squad at Best Buy. Then went to Casey's. Learned about project management and deploying equipment into the field. Then went to Kum and Go, handled networks systems, Tier 1 to Tier 3 support. Acquired by Maverick. Teen working on Wide Area Network, POS system support.

1 or 2 of your favorite roles/projects so far and why? My favorite project was WAN performance baseline troubleshooting. Internet issues that were having problems were going unnoticed. Tickets weren't always created. So we were proactively getting connections back online or back within a good range of connections. If not able, then escalate to the internet service provider.

Behavioral Interview:

Question 1: Leadership & Initiative (taking ownership, stepping up, driving results without being asked):

What to Look For

- Identifies problems proactively, doesn't wait to be told
- Takes ownership of outcomes, not just tasks
- Influences others without formal authority
- Shows clear "I did" vs "we did" — knows their specific contribution
- Demonstrates follow-through to measurable results
- Volunteers for stretch assignments or ambiguous situations

Red Flags

- Waits for permission or explicit instructions
- Takes credit for team efforts ("we" without clarifying their role)
- Confuses activity with leadership (busy ≠ leading)
- Can't articulate the impact of their initiative
- Blames others when initiative fails
- Leadership examples are all about authority, not influence

"Tell me about a time you took initiative on a project without being asked."

S/T: WAN baselines and proactive standards. We were having issues, wanted to get us into a position where we were being proactive about the issues.

A: Used excel to help organize the team to take ticket numbers, and escalation tickets.

R: Provided information. Many problems were resolved before anyone asked about them.

LL: Perfection isn't always the goal in WAN operations. You can chase tiny amounts of loss that won't actually impact stores, so focus effort on bigger losses.

BT: Would have adopted the good enough is good enough earlier. Spent too much time looking for perfect metric and could have prioritized other issues.

Client Feedback:

My Feedback: Jumped around through S/T, A, R a bit. Used "we" a lot in the intro. Obvious reading off a script.

Question 2: Problem Solving & Technical Judgement (analytical thinking, debugging approach, technical decision-making):

What to Look For

- Structured approach: breaks down complex problems systematically
- Considers multiple solutions before deciding
- Articulates trade-offs clearly (cost, time, quality, risk)
- Uses data/evidence to support decisions
- Knows when to ask for help vs. push through
- Learns from debugging experiences—doesn't repeat mistakes

Red Flags

- Jumps to solutions without understanding the problem
- Can't explain their reasoning or thought process
- "Trial and error" without hypothesis-driven approach
- Overcomplicates simple problems or oversimplifies complex ones
- Blames tools, time, or others for technical failures
- No mention of validation or testing decisions

"Tell me about a time you had to debug a difficult issue. What was your process?"

S/T: On the help desk, we did a ton of troubleshooting, every ticket. We were having POS issues on site controllers. Very hard to troubleshoot issues. We try to find the root cause, isolate the issue. Adjust what might be causing it. Sometimes its a registry, corrupt file, program not working properly. I handle 1000s or 10s of thousands of issues, so nothing specific.

A: Recreate issues, try to find root cause, implement a fix, escalate as needed.

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 3: Teamwork & Collaboration (working well with others, cross-functional skills, and supporting teammates):

What to Look For

- Shares credit genuinely—highlights teammates' contributions
- Adapts communication style for different audiences
- Seeks to understand before being understood (active listening)
- Puts team success above personal recognition
- Offers help proactively, not just when asked
- Handles conflict constructively—focuses on solutions, not blame

Red Flags

- "I" language only—no acknowledgment of team
- Speaks negatively about previous teammates/managers
- Avoids conflict entirely OR escalates unnecessarily
- Takes a "not my job" attitude
- Can't give specific examples of helping others
- Blames team dynamics for personal failures

"Describe a time you had to work with someone difficult. How did you handle it?"

S/T: Had a team member (9 years experience) was good at his job, but difficult to work with.

Tried to always keep a positive attitude, and tried to assume he wasn't intentionally trying to be negative. A lot of people thought he was offensive and rude. I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

S/T: Had two priority 1 issues going on at the same time. Can be common in retail fuel. All fuel dispensers were not working.

A: Assisted them with getting fuel computer back online and working. Assisted them with verifying cabling from all ends. We were able to find a connection that wasn't connected properly.

R: Nerves and tension, but they were happy in the end.

LL:

BT:

S/T: Have worked with a lot of difficult individuals. Retail stores, angry customers can create tough situations. Have to work with individual, calm them down, make them secure in what you're going to be doing. Need to give them clear communication to isolate the issue and resolve it in real time.

A:

R:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback: Fidgeting a lot.

Question 4: Communication & Influence (explaining complex ideas, persuading stakeholders, and presenting):

What to Look For

- Adjusts message complexity for the audience
- Uses concrete examples, analogies, or visuals
- Listens and addresses objections thoughtfully
- Shows preparation and structure in presentations
- Delivers difficult messages with empathy and clarity
- Persuades through logic AND relationship-building

Red Flags

- Uses jargon when explaining to non-experts
- Rambles without clear structure or point
- Gets defensive when challenged
- Avoids difficult conversations entirely
- Relies on authority/position rather than persuasion
- Can't give examples of adapting communication style

"Tell me about a time you had to explain something technical to a non-technical audience."

S/T: Very frequent occurrence. Most individuals i would be troubleshooting with would be non-technical end users. There would be times when i would be in a meeting with people who were not in IT. Have to break it down to use language that everyone understands. For example, breaking down WAN to "internet connection." Specific time, firmware issue with a network switch.

A: Helped team member find rack, locate the switch, troubleshoot a device with 40+ cables that were coming in and out of it. We had to walk through steps. Eventually get to the back, power cycle the switch. Eventually RMA the device.

R: Resolved.

LL: Some of my favorite, because they are so difficult. Wireless and wired connection goes down if those devices don't work. Looking for generic terms for items, pinpointing for color. Would give people a little introduction with what's going on. Helped me build really solid, effective communication over the years.

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 5: Adaptability & Learning (handling change, learning quickly, and dealing with ambiguity):

What to Look For

- Embraces change as opportunity, not threat
- Has a systematic approach to learning new things
- Stays calm under uncertainty—takes action anyway
- Seeks out unfamiliar challenges proactively
- Shows curiosity and asks good questions
- Quickly integrates new information into their approach

Red Flags

- Resists change or complains about shifting priorities
- "That's not what I was hired to do" attitude
- Freezes when facing ambiguity—needs all answers first
- Relies only on familiar methods, won't try new approaches
- Learning approach is passive (waiting to be taught)
- Gets frustrated easily when things don't go as planned

"Tell me about a time you struggled to adapt to something new."

S/T: Acquisition with Maverick was a struggle. Was becoming a SME with Kum & Go retail environment and projects I was supporting. During the acquisition, that all flipped. We started a new job and started supporting Maverick stores, alongside Kum & Go. We had to integrate one tech stack into the other. I was working one job as a SME and was trying to learn another job as a SME. There were times where I didn't deliver some knowledge based articles, prioritizing supporting teammates. A few times I was reminded that some work was late. Had to learn to balance, got the hang of it towards the end. Got a handle on keeping things balanced.

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Like to have feedback with my managers, whether in monthly/quarterly reviews. I always check in and see how things are going. Talked to senior manager Craig from Maverick, and got more critical feedback. Really started to improve on things.

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 6: Failure & Self-Awareness (humility, self-reflection, growth mindset, accountability):

What to Look For (Strong Answers)

- Owns the failure fully—no deflection or excuses
- Shows genuine self-reflection, not scripted humility
- Describes specific actions taken to improve
- Shares a REAL failure, not a humble-brag
- Demonstrates growth—behavior actually changed
- Comfortable discussing imperfection (emotionally mature)

Red Flags (Weak Answers)

- Blames others, circumstances, or timing
- "Failure" is actually a disguised success
- Can't name a genuine failure (lack of self-awareness)
- Gets defensive or uncomfortable with the topic
- Learning is generic: "I learned to work harder"
- No evidence the lesson was actually applied

"Tell me about a time you had to admit you didn't know something."

S/T: In IT support, we are just constantly learning, to say the least. The specific project didn't go well initially. The gist is that we had some cellular devices that were not organized. We had a lot that was being built for but not used. We performed an audit on those and I was the one who was able to do it. Was fairly new to the advanced side of Excel. When I presented, the Excel sheet was totally wrong, I presented bad information. At the end of the meeting, we told them we'd follow up. A colleague helped me, and eventually used my Excel file.

A:

R: Presented, and got all the circuits we were paying for. Saved \$6,000/month that was being overpaid and not used. Also were able to tie IEMI to each device, more trackable and much easier to maintain.

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 7: Generic Job Fit (passion for engineering, career goals, and intrinsic motivation):

✓ What to Look For

- Genuine enthusiasm—eyes light up talking about work
- Clear career direction with logical reasoning
- Pursues learning outside of job requirements
- Connects personal interests to professional goals
- Shows curiosity about the role and company specifically
- Has researched the company and asks thoughtful questions

▶ Red Flags

- Generic answers: "I like solving problems"
- Motivation is purely extrinsic (salary, title, prestige)
- No side projects, learning, or personal development
- Can't articulate why THIS role vs. any other
- Career goals seem unrealistic or disconnected
- No questions about the role, team, or company

"What got you interested in this field?"

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback: