

career
development manitoba



A PRACTITIONER'S
GUIDE TO
**OUTSTANDING
INTERVIEWS**

YOUR FUTURE YOUR WAY

Manitoba 

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Introduction

All job seekers need the ability to perform well in an interview. The client resource, **A Guide to Outstanding Interviews**, contains information and worksheets to support clients as they learn more about interviews. The detailed information found within the client resource is not repeated here. Instead the focus of this guide will be to provide facilitators with additional information, tips and strategies for conducting an interview workshop or working with individual clients.

The information in this guide covers the core concepts related to interviews. Practitioners are encouraged to adapt materials to their personal style and needs of their clients.

Guiding Frameworks

Many skills can be developed through interviewing. In the following sections, relevant skills/competencies are identified from three frameworks: Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, Essential Skills and Employability Skills 2000+.

Blueprint for Life/Work Designs

Practicing interviews develops the following Blueprint competencies:

- Competency 1 – build and maintain a positive self-image
 - Level 1 – build a positive self-image while discovering its influence on self and others
- Competency 2 – interact positively and effectively with others
 - Level 2 – develop abilities for building positive relationships in one’s life
- Competency 5 – locate and effectively use life/work information
 - Level 2 – locate, understand and use life/work information
- Competency 7 – secure/create and maintain work
 - Level 2 – develop abilities to seek and obtain/create work
- Competency 8 – make life/work enhancing decisions
 - Level 3 – engage in life/work decision making

Essential Skills

Preparing for, and participating in, interviews will enhance the following Essential Skills:

- reading text
- document use
- writing
- oral communication
- working with others
- continuous learning
- thinking skills
- computer use (if conducting online research to prepare)

Employability Skills 2000+

Preparing for, and participating in, interviews will develop:

- Fundamental Skills
 - o communicate
 - o manage information
 - o think and solve problems
- Personal Management Skills
 - o demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours
 - o be responsible
 - o be adaptable
 - o learn continuously
- Teamwork Skills
 - o working with others

Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners

Supporting individuals to develop interview skills is an important role for career development practitioners. To do this well, practitioners would need all of the core competencies outlined in the Standards and Guidelines: Professional/Ethical Behaviour, Interpersonal Competence, Career Development Knowledge, and Needs Assessment and Referral Expertise.

In addition, supporting individuals to conduct an effective job search overlaps with many of the Areas of Specialization in the Standards and Guidelines, including:

- Facilitated and Individual Group Learning
- Information and Resource Management
- Work Development
- Work Search Strategies

Preparing for Your Workshop or Individual Session

You will need to review and gather the following items as you prepare to deliver the workshop or work individually with a client. Some practitioners like to use photocopied handouts of the charts and activities in the guide; this leaves the client guide fresh and clean for individual use after the session. Others prefer to have clients write directly into the guide, ensuring that all of the topical information stays in one place. Feel free to tailor your workshop to your own personal style and client's needs. Your personal preference will impact the resources you need to gather as you prepare for your workshop or individual session.

Required:

- **A Guide to Outstanding Interviews** (one copy per participant)
- pens, pencils
- for workshops:
 - o computer, LCD projector and screen
 - o flip chart paper and markers

Optional:

- PowerPoint slides, printed three or six slides per page; one set per client
- Handouts from the client guide
 - o Commonly Asked Interview Questions (Appendix A); one per client

PowerPoint Slides

The following presentation contains 23 slides. Reviewing the slide content, engaging in discussions with participants, and completing the activities should result in a four hour workshop (times listed are estimates and may depend on factors including number of participants). Discussions and activities can be expanded or contracted depending on the time you have available to conduct the workshop. Where applicable, the facilitator notes will mention how to make adjustments for time constraints. Note: the content within the following slides may be challenging to read due to size; see the PowerPoint document to review the complete content.



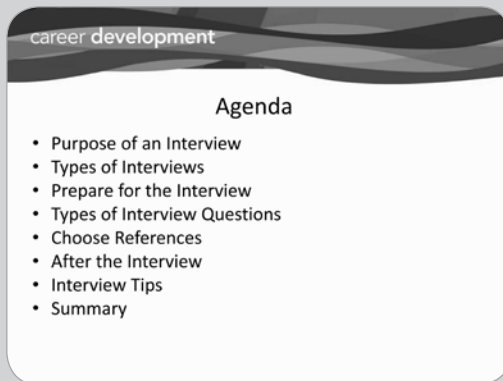
Welcome participants to workshop

Introductions

- Have participants introduce themselves.
- An icebreaker activity can be incorporated; see Icebreakers/Energizers section for more information.

Time:

- Expect introductions to take three-to-five minutes per participant. Icebreakers may take longer. Workshop time will need to be adjusted accordingly



Briefly review agenda to provide participants with an overview of the workshop.

Time:

- three-to-five minutes

**Job interviews come in all different forms
but one fundamental goal remains the same -
you need to convince an interviewer
that you are the one.**

-Davide Crisante

Remind participants that the interview is their time to really impress the employer.

Time:

- five- to-seven minutes

Purpose - Employers

- Learn more about you
- See your interpersonal/communication skills in action
- Evaluate your suitability for the job
- See your motivation/commitment

Interviewers have 3 underlying questions...
Can you do it? Will you do it? Will you fit in?

Emphasize that employers are looking beyond skills and qualifications. They are really trying to get a sense of:

- whether "will you fit in"
- overall approach to work
- strong work ethic

At the same time, while it is important to impress an employer it is also really important to avoid promising things that can't be delivered.

Time:

- five- to-seven minutes

Purpose - Applicant

- Highlight skills, qualifications, accomplishments
- Minimize potential negatives
- Demonstrate good interpersonal/communication skills
- Learn more about position/employer

*You never have a second chance
To make a first impression
~ Author unknown*

Many applicants, or interviewees, don't take the time to learn more about the employer. Remind participants that, just as they are being interviewed, this is also their chance to interview the employer.

Remind the participants to develop questions in advance that will allow them to learn more about the employer.

Time:

- five- to-seven minutes

Types of Interviews

- Screening
- One-on-One
- Panel or Committee
- Group
- Telephone
- Informal Lunch/Coffee

Talk about the different types/styles of interviewing – review this section of the client guide prior to the workshop and provide a brief description of each of these interview types; give examples of when each might be used.

Ask participants what types of interviews they've experienced.

Time:

- 10 - 15 minutes

Prepare for the Interview

- Research position/organization
- Create 30-second elevator statement
- Write down high-impact stories to share
- Prepare to answer any "difficult questions"
- Decide how to handle illegal questions
- Create list of questions to ask in the interview
- Informational interviews
- Practice! Practice! Practice!

Each of these pieces will be discussed in the following slides.

Time:

- five minutes

Research the Position/Organization

- Try to identify
 - Goals, mission, vision, customer base, core business
 - Activities, tasks, working conditions
- Information sources
 - Job posting/advertisement
 - Company website/annual reports
 - Human resources department
 - Job descriptions

Highlight the importance of researching the company and position prior to the interview. Employers will often ask, "What do you know about us?" They use this question to explore how much research the applicant did up front. Think of this as a "test" that is easy to pass with a little bit of effort. If possible, get a question in. "I noted on your website that you recently converted your computer systems to MAC. As a devoted "PC'er" can I ask what prompted the switch?"

Time:

- 10 minutes

30-Second Elevator Statement

- Provides a quick way of sharing information about yourself
- Include
 - Relevant information about you
 - Why the position interests you
 - Why you're a good fit for the position/organization

Participants may be curious about why it is called an "elevator statement." Advise them: Because if you got into an elevator with someone who asked you what you do or what you want to do, your statement would clearly answer the question before you left the elevator.

A prepared statement makes the famous "tell me about yourself question" easy to answer.

Time:

- 10 minutes

What's Your Statement?

- Use the worksheet provided
 - Develop 30-second elevator statement for interesting job
- Work in groups of 2 or 3
 - Practice elevator statements
 - Provide feedback - What worked? What didn't?
- Revise elevator statement

Have participants work individually to develop their elevator statements. Divide group into smaller groups of two or three; three is preferable as it allows one observer to really listen and provide feedback on the content and delivery of the elevator statement. Debrief with the group – what worked? What didn't?

Time:

- 20 - 25 minutes

High-Impact Stories

- Brainstorm high-impact examples
 - Think of your accomplishments and innovative solutions
- Create high-impact stories that answer
 - What was the issue?
 - What did *you* do about it?
 - What was the outcome?
- Consider ways to share stories in an interview

Refer clients to the example in the guide if they are having trouble visualizing what a high impact story might look like.

Have participants complete the Storytelling activity within the client guide.

Time:

- 15 minutes

Illegal Questions

- Illegal to discriminate if ability to do job not impacted
 - Age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, disability
- Options
 - Answer question
 - Politely refuse to respond
 - Answer underlying question

If possible, role play an illegal question scenario:

- Have a participant ask the question then role play the three different options for answering the question: (1) answer the question, (2) politely refuse, and (3) answer underlying question.
- Debrief with clients asking, "Which course of action do you think was most effective?"
- Encourage participants to answer the underlying question whenever possible.

Time:

- 15 - 20 minutes

Difficult Questions

- Uncomfortable questions could be related to
 - Employment gaps
 - Inconsistent job history
 - Job loss
 - Personal characteristics
- Identify and prepare for tough questions
 - Identify questions that might be difficult to answer
 - Practice responding effectively

Discuss ways of handling uncomfortable or difficult questions. Provide some examples of difficult question. Ask participants if they've ever been asked a difficult question in an interview. If so, what was the question? How did they handle it? Knowing what they know now, how would they handle the same question in the future?

Time:

- 15 - 20 minutes

Questions to Ask at the Interview

- What qualities are you looking for in an ideal candidate?
- What would a typical day/week look like for this job?
- Why is this position vacant?
- What kinds of projects can I expect to work on?

Be sure to highlight the types of questions that should not be asked (see the **Questions to Ask During an Interview** section in the client guide)

Time:

- 10 - 15 minutes

Types of Interview Questions

- General
 - Learn about you and assess “fit” with job/organization
- Behavioural
 - Focus on past behaviour as a predictor of future behaviour
- Situational
 - Focus on problem-solving skills
- Stress
 - Focus on how you handle stressful situations

Be prepared to provide a couple of examples of each type of question as you review the slide content; ask clients what types of interview questions they’ve encountered

If time permits, you could brainstorm interview questions as a group and note them on the flip chart. Once you have a list, as a group, discuss what types of questions they are.

Time:

- 10 - 15 minutes

Tips for Answering Interview Questions

- Listen carefully
- Ask for questions to be repeated if necessary
- Answer honestly and completely
- Remember to link answer to job/organization
- Use relevant examples
- Stay calm

Remind participants that it is okay to pause and think about the question before answering

Time:

- 10 minutes

What to Expect in the Interview

- Interviewers will
 - Shake your hand
 - Expect you to make eye contact
 - Write down your answers or make notes
 - Want you to look interested and engaged
 - Expect you to come alone to interview

If clients are new Canadians, you may want to spend a bit more time on this slide, discussing the expectations and norms of Canadian interviews; focus on the initial introductions and expectations (ex.: shaking hands, making eye contact).

Refer to The Newcomer's Guide to the Canadian Workplace for more information to support newcomers to develop interview skills that are culturally appropriate in Manitoba/Canada.

- Available through Options for Success

Distribute copies of **Appendix A: Commonly Asked Interview Questions** – depending on time available, could ask clients to choose three-to-five questions to ask of their partner.

In groups of two or three have participants practice responding to different types of interview questions.

- Give feedback to group members.
- Share findings with large group.
- What worked? What didn't?

Time:

- 30 minutes

Choose References

- Always ask permission
- Choose appropriate references
- Keep your references informed of your job search
- Avoid obviously political or religious references
- Don't choose friends/family as references
- Make sure reference can speak positively about you

If working with new Canadians or individuals with limited work experience, discuss how to find and choose relevant references.

Refer participants to the worksheet in the References section of the client guide:

- Have each participant list two-to-three relevant references.
- In groups of two or three:
 - o List any challenges you might have in finding references.
 - o List ways to address challenges.
 - o Discuss challenges and strategies within entire group.

Time:

- 15 minutes

After the Interview

- Say thank you
 - Follow-up 1 – 2 days after the interview
- Inform your network and references
 - Thank them for support
 - Keep them informed

Expand on why this is important.

Time:

- five- to-seven minutes

Job Offers

- Prepare to accept, decline, or negotiate job offer
 - Know job's worth
 - Know your worth
- 4 "P's" of successful negotiation
 - Create a **positive** environment (think win-win)
 - **Prepare**
 - **Prioritize** possibilities to consider
 - Be **patient**

Be prepared to share an experience (personal or client) about negotiation (failed and/or successful). Talk about values and how this can impact what individuals negotiate for (ex: more money, more time off, flexible work hours).

Ask participants if anyone has an experience they want to share about negotiating a job offer.

Note: For people with little or no paid work experience, you may need to encourage clients to think about other life experiences in which they've experienced negotiation (ex: negotiating child care arrangements, negotiating a large purchase such as a car or house).

If participants do not receive a job offer, suggest they request a post interview to explore why they were not the successful candidate. During the post interview the participant could ask:

- for feedback
- Why they were not successful?
- for tips to help improve their chances in the future
- If there are other job openings that might suit their skills

Remind participants to view each interview as a learning opportunity, remaining positive and optimistic is crucial.

Time:

- 15 - 20 minutes

Interview Tips

- Prepare for your interview
- Arrive 10 minutes early
- Bring your resume and targeted portfolio
- Smile and look interested
- Make eye contact
- Be aware of your body language
- Think before you answer
- Answer questions honestly
- Turn off your cell phone
- Keep answers positive

Summarize with the group. The full list of **Interview Tips** are in the client guide.

Time:

- five- to-seven minutes

Summary

- Take time to prepare for every interview
- Research position and organization
- Develop and practice 30-second elevator statement
- Be prepared to handle difficult/illegal questions
- Practice answering common interview questions
- Develop a list of questions to ask
- Choose references wisely
- Follow up after the interview

Summarize the topics discussed; try to weave in stories from the discussions that occurred.

Time:

- 10 minutes



Thank participants for their time. Advise them where they can go to get further assistance.

If desired, have participants complete a workshop evaluation form (see appendix A).

Time:

- Two-to-three minutes; more if an evaluation is being completed.

Additional Tips and Strategies

- Pay attention to interviewing trends
 - o Some industries may use specific types of interview questions more than another (ex: stress interview questions are common in the IT sector)
 - o Interview types may vary by region/industry (ex: employers in remote regions may use more telephone interviews and less face-to-face)
 - o Some employers/industries may require written assignments, presentations, or other assessments
 - retail may use employee screening for character traits
 - senior management/executive positions may assess leadership skills
 - educational settings may request a PowerPoint presentation/lesson
 - fundraising positions may request a sample letter
- Immigrants/newcomers may require extra help learning about Canadian interviews
 - o Provide instruction and opportunity to practice handling the opening introductions (ex: greeting receptionists, interviewers), answering questions and closing the interview

For More Information on Interviews

Guide to Job Interviewing Resources

www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html

Provides extensive information on interviewing including tips, resources, a quiz and articles

STAR Method

<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/guide/star.html>

Highlights how to use STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Results) stories in behavioural interviews