

Practice Interview
Mandatory Lab Assignment

The interview assignment seeks to bring together theory and practice in the following areas: communication principles and communication model, self-concept, perception, verbal and nonverbal communication. My hope is that you reflect upon and deepen your knowledge and practice of many facets of interpersonal communication through this assignment. To separate “interpersonal communication” from “public speaking,” “group communication,” or “organizational communication” is to impose an artificial definition and limited scope upon interpersonal communication. (That is why we have public and group presentations in class; it’s a misnomer that interpersonal communication is only about communicating in a dyadic situation—a reason some people sign up for this class, to be sure, to avoid these speaking situations). We can communicate interpersonally when we address an other, a group, or a public; likewise, a class of twenty or thirty can be conducted interpersonally or not—think of how our class compares and contrasts with how other classes.

The interview assignment is set up so that you will get some practice in fielding questions that are typically asked in an interview situation. However, to begin, get out a piece of paper and jot down some ideas about the interview situation you expect to find yourself in someday as you interview for the “ideal” position. Think about the hiring organization, its philosophy, your preparation, your philosophy (remember, interviewing is a two-way street!). Imagine VIVIDLY the interview itself, the room, the table, the seating arrangement, the number of people involved, what you and others are wearing, what you might say, the thoughts in your head. Transpose these imaginings onto the transactional communication model. You will be typing this model with the specifics of your situation filled out to show to the Lab Instructor at the end of this module. Please be complete in fleshing out the communication situation that you are imagining.

Now, as for the interview questions, you will be in a room with the camera running. You should pick 5-6 questions and begin to answer them. The vast majority of applicants tend to err in the following ways:

*They do not say enough to answer the question satisfactorily,
They do not make an assertion that is supported by a concrete example,
They get off point and begin to ramble,
They do not understand the question but try to answer it anyway,
They allow nonverbal behaviors to distract from their verbal presentation.*

With 5-6 questions, you should probably be able to speak for at least 10 minutes altogether. Sometimes you may be too brief and you will hear a follow up question such as:

*I see.
Go on.
And then?
Tell me more.
Please continue.
Yes?
Tell more more about . . .
Explain further the point that . . .
Why did you . . .
I’m not sure I understood your point.
What do you mean by “a great deal of money?”
Just how large was your school?
Why do you feel that?
Why do you think that happened?
What do you mean by seems?
How did you react?*

And, of course, the dreaded:

Uh huh.

And the even more dreaded:

Hmmmmmm

These secondary questions are doing you, the applicant, a kindness. They are a coded way to let you know that you need to expand upon your response; often, interviewers will NOT ask such questions. Note that, as interviewers, you need to “help out” those applicants who seem “stuck” by using such prompts to get the reticent person to say a bit more about his or her strengths and experiences. If you are wondering whether you’ve said too much, really, looking at the nonverbal cues of your interviewers will provide you with plenty of insight as to when to “wrap up.” As I said earlier, the tendency of most everyone is to say too little or to leave an assertion unsupported.

DO NOT “make up” answers but stay true to yourself, your abilities, and your plans for personal/professional improvement. In the readings from interview websites that I’ve included on the assignment sheet, I’ve referred you to some that instill an awareness of permissible and impermissible interview questions. We won’t be exploring the difference in our class but, for yourself as an applicant and as interviewer, you should understand the difference between the two. That knowledge could avoid a law suit when all’s said and done.

Remember, the interview assignment is just for practice and—if you can, try to make it fun and challenging. It’s important to have a good attitude when going through this. I have seen candidates for college president do well, average, and badly on various interview questions. No one can say honestly that they “know it all” when it comes to interviewing and sometimes we will have an “off” day. We’re people, after all, and sometimes even with the best of preparation or practice we may not do as well as we like in a given situation. So give it a try and keep an eye on your watch so you take about 10 minutes.

After you have completed your videotape, watch it and answer the following questions, which you should type up with the communication model:

What is something you liked about one of your responses? Give a specific example and explain why it was a strong response.

What is something you want to work on in the future with regard to one or more of your responses? Give a specific example and explain what you might do next time.

What about your nonverbal communication as you fielded the questions? What is *your* impression of the impression you communicate?

Below are the interview questions. If you wish to do this at home, print out the questions, cut them into strips, put into envelope, draw a few out, and answer them before a videocamera.

- * What made you apply for this position?
 - * Describe your experiences in working with a diverse workteam.
 - * Discuss the value of diversity in the workplace.
 - * What is an example of how diversity enhanced the quality of work produced?
 - * What are challenges and opportunities of a diverse work team?
 - * How did you hear about this job opening?
 - * Briefly, would you summarize your work history & education for me?
 - * What special aspects of your work experience have prepared you for this job?
 - * Can you describe for me one or two of your most important accomplishments?
 - * How much supervision have you typically received in your previous job?
 - * Describe for me one or two of the biggest disappointments in your work history?
 - * Why are you leaving your present job? (or, Why did you leave your last job?)
 - * What is important to you in a company? What things do you look for in an organization?
 - * Everyone has strengths & weaknesses as workers. What are your strong points for this job?
 - * What would you say are areas needing improvement?
 - * How did your supervisor on your most recent job evaluate your job performance? What were some of the good points & bad points of that rating?
 - * When you have been told , or discovered for yourself , a problem in your job performance, what have you typically done? Can you give me an example?
 - * Do you prefer working alone or in groups?
 - * What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with? Why?
 - * Starting with your last job, tell me about any of your achievements that were recognized by your superiors.
 - * Can you give me an example of your ability to manage or supervise others?
 - * What are some things you would like to avoid in a job? Why?
 - * In your previous job what kind of pressures did you encounter?
 - * What would you say is the most important thing you are looking for in a job?
 - * What are some of the things on your job you feel you have done particularly well or in which you have achieved the greatest success? Why do you feel this way?
 - * What were some of the things about your last job that you found most difficult to do?
 - * What are some of the problems you encounter in doing your job? Which one frustrates you the most? What do you usually do about it?
 - * What are some things you particularly liked about your last job?
 - * Do you consider your progress on the job representative of your ability? Why?
 - * How do you feel about the way you & others in the department were managed by your supervisor?
 - * If I were to ask your present (most recent) employer about your ability as a _____, what would he/she say?
 - * What special aspects of your education or training have prepared you for this job?
 - * What courses in school have been of most help in doing your job?
 - * What is your long-term employment or career objective?
 - * What kind of job do you see yourself holding five years from now?
 - * What do you feel you need to develop in terms of skill & knowledge in order to be ready for that opportunity?
 - * Why might you be successful in such a job?
 - * How does this job fit in with your overall career goals?
 - * Who or what in your life would you say influenced you most with your career objectives?
 - * Can you pinpoint any specific things in your past experience that affected your present career objectives?
 - * What would you most like to accomplish if you had this job?
 - * What might make you leave this job?
 - * What kind of things do you feel most confident in doing?
 - * Can you describe for me a difficult obstacle you have had to overcome? How did you handle it?
- How do you feel this experience affected your personality or ability?
- * How would you describe yourself as a person?

- * What do you think are the most important characteristics & abilities a person must possess to become a successful ()? How do you rate yourself in these areas?
- * Do you consider yourself a self-starter? If so, explain why (and give examples)
- * What do you consider to be your greatest achievements to date? Why?
- * What things give you the greatest satisfaction at work?
- * What things frustrate you the most? How do you usually cope with them?
- * In your work experience, what have you done that you consider truly creative?
- * Can you think of a problem you have encountered when the old solutions didn't work & when you came up with new solutions?
- * Of your creative accomplishments big or small , at work or home, what gave you the most satisfaction?
- * What kind of problems have people recently called on you to solve? Tell me what you have devised.
- * Do you consider yourself to be thoughtful, analytical or do you usually make up your mind fast? Give an example. (Watch time taken to respond)
- * What was your most difficult decision in the last six months? What made it difficult?
- * The last time you did not know what decision to make, what did you do?
- * How do you go about making an important decision affecting your career?
- * What was the last major problem that you were confronted with? What action did you take on it?
- * What organizations do you belong to?
- * Tell me specifically what you do in the civic activities in which you participate. (Leading questions in selected areas. i.e. sports, economics, current events, finance.)
- * How do you keep up with what's going on in your company / your industry/ your profession?
- * What is your professional goal?
- * Can you give me examples of experience on the job that you felt were satisfying?
- * Do you have a long & short-term plan for your department? Is it realistic?
- * Did you achieve it last year?
- * Describe how you determine what constitutes top priorities in the performance of your job.
- * What are your standards of success in your job?
- * In your position, how would you define doing a good job? On what basis was your definition determined?
- * When judging the performance of your subordinate, what factors or characteristics are most important to you?
- * In your present job what approach do you take to get your people together to establish a common approach to a problem?
- * What approach do you take in getting your people to accept your ideas or department goals?
- * What specially do you do to set an example for your employees?
- * How frequently do you meet with your immediate subordinates as a group?
- * What sort of leader do your people feel you are? Are you satisfied?
- * How do you get people who do not want to work together to establish a common approach to a problem?
- * If you do not have much time & they hold seriously differing views, what would be your approach?
- * How would you describe your basic leadership style? Give specific examples of how you practice this?
- * Do you feel you work more effectively on a one to one basis or in a group situation?
- * Have you ever led a task force or committee or any group who doesn't report to you, but from whom you have to get work? How did you do it? What were the satisfactions & disappointments? How would you handle the job differently?
- * Have you ever done any public or group speaking? Recently? Why? How did it go?
- * Have you made any individual presentations recently? How did you prepare?
- * Would you rather write a report or give a verbal report? Why?
- * What kind of writing have you done? For a group? For an individual?
- * What is the extent of your participation in major reports that have to be written?
- * What was the most important idea or suggestion you received recently from your employees? What happened as a result?
- * What do you think about the continuous changes in company operating policies & procedures?

* How effective has your company been in adapting its policies to fit a changing environment?

* What was the most significant change made in your company in the last six months which directly affected you, & how successfully do you think you implemented this change?

* Do you feel pressure in your job? Tell me about it.

* What has been the highest pressure situation you have been under in recent years? How did you cope with it?

* Describe your most significant success & failure in the last two years.

* What do you like to do best?

* What do you like to do least?

* What in your last review did your supervisor suggest needed improvement?

* What have you done about it?

* What has been the most important person or event in your own self development?

* How much of your education did you earn?

* What kind of books & other publications do you read?

* Have you taken a management development course?

* How are you helping your subordinates develop themselves?