

Council conducts a Career Forum annually which stimulates the student early in their career to think about the specifics of career selection. Alumni, industry representatives, and faculty have been very helpful in making this program successful.

### Job Interview Follow-Up

The key point here is to make sure the student doesn't stop the process with the interview. A phone call or follow-up letter is essential to indicate to the employer that you are interested and will carry the process to completion. Thanking the people (i.e., secretaries, clerks, etc.) along the way who were involved in the process is always a good idea. Sometimes a word they say to the employer will help the student get the job. The student must be persistent but always polite. They should be counseled never to attempt to buy their way into a job with gifts.

### Expectations for the First Job

I believe we have an obligation to help the student think realistically about their expectations once they have accepted the job. They should understand that success often means tuning into office politics and understanding company culture as much as doing a good job of what they were hired to do. They need to understand that rank has its privileges and they shouldn't be too proud to handle some menial chores in the beginning. Helping the student to understand that a good sense of humor and flexibility may be the two most important attributes they take to the first job is essential. An old Hoosier colloquialism states that "You need to remember to ride the hay wagon with your knees bent." This is good advice for all of us.

### Summary

In summary, let me leave you with my ABC's of helping the student find the job: **ABILITY; BREAK; CONFIDENCE.**

- **Ability** to identify work-related skills and responsibilities they want to assume. Decent grades need to be coupled with experience, enthusiasm, flexibility, problem-solving ability, etc.

- Recognizing the **break** and capitalizing on it is essential. A network of contacts help create an atmosphere for a break to occur.

- **Self confidence** is the key to standing above the crowd. The student never should lose sight of the fine line between self confidence and cockiness.

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## Job Interviews

Michael E. Bledsoe

### Synopsis

As our professional ranks continue to swell with new candidates, it becomes increasingly more important to train our students in the preparation and execution of a job interview.

Many colleges have begun the task of preparing their students for what should be considered their

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Bledsoe is with Chevron Chemical Company, Tucker, GA and discussed job interviews at the 31st Annual NACTA Conference on the North Carolina State University Campus, June 16-19, 1985.

"final" Final but, even more have not. Although all colleges offer some help with "Job Placement," i.e., establishing interviews, resume, curriculum vita, etc., most fall short on one of the most important steps ... the interview.

Concepts such as interview preparation (homework), the "first impression," how interviews differ between Industry and Academia, what to say as well as what to avoid saying, and finally, how to avoid the anxiety trap of waiting for the interviewer to call back.

As teachers of Agriculture, we have a responsibility to our students to assure quality education. As educators, our directives must be to make every effort to assure our students the opportunity to exercise their skills in today's job market.

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## Taking a Job Interview

Joyce Edwards

The interview can be exciting and challenging. It is not something to be taken lightly. It calls for a positive self-image as well as preparedness to discuss yourself, your capabilities, the company, and why YOU should be hired. This article will deal with the how-to of interviewing. The resume gets the interview (in most cases), but the interview gets the job.

### The Self Image

The majority of people in the world today are controlled by something called a self-image, or a system of beliefs about themselves that has been accumulated over time. Most people are not really aware that they, like a computer, have been programmed. From the very first day of birth, the process of programming begins stemming from the particular country that one is born in. The other factors of programming and conditioning stem directly from tradition, culture, race, religion, society, family, etc. Out of this context, beliefs, opinions, concepts, and attitudes are formed. It is these beliefs and attitudes that shape one's self-image, which is the sum total of his/her past experiences. To become aware of the self-image to the point of understanding how it controls one's life is very important. With this understanding, individuals can assimilate whatever they desire into their experiences. When you want something out of life, or want something to occur in life for you, it will only occur if it is consistent with your self-image, and it will not occur for you, or remain with you, if it is inconsistent with your self-image.

It is a known fact that whatever you think about usually shows up in your experience as a condition, circumstance or event. It has been called by some "the self-fulfilling prophecy." It is inevitable that one ultimately must accept what one is. This is necessary to come into complete contact with reality. Once this is done, then you can project on the screen of space, using your imagination, in order to incorporate this

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Edwards is a Career Counselor at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, NC. Given at the 31st Annual NACTA Conference on June 18, 1985 at Raleigh, NC.

desired good into your experience. Examples are your desired position of employment, the quality of life you want to experience, or whatever it is that your heart desires. In other words, see yourself successfully accomplishing all that you wish to accomplish in your mind beforehand. Once the idea is planted in your mind, do not worry or fret about actualizing the idea. This is important, because worry only serves to produce stress and anxiety. It is not an aid in the achievement of a goal.

### Preparation

(A) One of the first steps prior to the interview is to conduct background work on your particular company of interest. How can you do this? Information about a company may be obtained from the company's annual reports, Dunn and Bradstreet reports, your placement center, the public library, a friend you have in a similar company, and people who have worked there. Lack of preparation can readily be observed by the interviewer.

(B) Prepare a list of questions, which may be determined after reviewing the literature. How you state what you say is just as important as what you say. This is when your communication skills come into play. Some of the questions you may want to ask are:

1. What is your company's benefit program?
2. What educational opportunities does your company provide?
3. Is this a newly created position?
4. If not, what happened to the previous employee?
5. Are there locations other than those listed in your literature?
6. Is there room for upward mobility?
7. How often are performance reviews given?
8. What is the company's policy on transfers to other cities?
9. Is there any travel involved?
10. What is expected of me in the first year?

These are questions that you may not find answers to when reviewing the literature. It is very helpful to have questions in mind. Do not ask questions that are answered in the literature or that were discussed in the interview, unless you did not understand the answers or would like to have more detailed information. If the need occurs, address your concerns at the time the issue is being discussed.

You have now researched the company and identified questions. You have become aware of the company's size, its products or services, its location, and other facilities. You have also determined whether it is a subsidiary of another company or not.

You now need to be aware of typical questions that the interviewer will ask you. Some of the questions that the company may ask you are:

1. Why do you want to work for the company/organization?
2. What are your strengths?
3. What are your weaknesses?
4. What is your goal in the next five years?
5. What makes you qualified for this position?
6. Are you more comfortable leading or following?

7. Are you willing to relocate?
8. What do you expect to gain from the job?
9. What were your major accomplishments in college and/or your work?
10. What were your major disappointments and how did you handle them?

It would be to your advantage to give serious consideration to the answers to these questions prior to your interview. However, don't get upset if you are asked few or none of these questions. An interviewer may come from a different direction. This does not mean that you will not be given full consideration.

What is the next step in the interviewing process? Attention to your personal appearance is important. Check your dress and grooming. You should be neither overdressed nor underdressed, that is, your dress should be neither too formal nor too casual. This is important, because first impressions are lasting ones. Sloppy or casual dress can prevent you from having a productive interview. Don't let the interviewer remember your suit and not you.

Your speech should be in keeping with the formality of the occasion. Don't try to impress anyone by using big words or ostentatious language. Speak in a well modulated voice and an interesting tone.

The following points should be remembered:

1. Arrive early — at least five to ten minutes — this will give you time to relax and check yourself for last minute grooming details.
2. Exhibit a friendly and warm personality.
3. Practice your handshake and your opening lines.
4. Display confidence and maturity through a positive self image.
5. Exercise effective communication skills.
6. Maintain good eye contact and be aware of your body language.
7. Throw out chewing gum and discard cigarettes before the interview.

### Controlling the Action

Experts in the field of job hunting suggest that the interviewee can take control of most interviews by using a three-stage approach. The stages are: need development, need awareness, and need satisfaction.

**Need development** is to obtain from the interviewer, the needs of the company relative to your area of study and interest. This process will make you aware of what the position is all about. Preparing questions and researching the company will give you some idea of the company's needs.

**Need awareness** gives you an opportunity to talk more and to clarify. Your restating of information demonstrates your comprehension and listening skills.

**Need fulfillment** is selling yourself to the interviewer. This means communicating your educational background and work experiences and any other relevant information in order to inform the interviewer of your qualifications.

### Other Useful Information

Do not discuss salary unless it is addressed first by the interviewer. A way of obtaining information relative to salary is to state that you would want the

salary to be commensurate with the job to be performed. You should find out what the salary range is for your area of study or job interest. This may be obtained from your placement center or salary reports at the public library. Check with the reference librarian. By all means, be honest in stating past salaries and other information, for this can be verified.

It is important to watch the body language of the interviewer. Don't continue to talk if you see the interviewer is watching his/her watch, looking away, doodling, or displaying any other signals of loss of interest. Interviews usually last 30 minutes. Make sure the interviewer has your correct telephone number and address where you can be reached. Before the interview ends, restate your interest in the company and your capabilities to perform the job. Ask when you can expect to hear from him/her. Thank the interviewer for his/her time. It will be helpful to ask for a calling card at this point. Shake hands and leave promptly.

#### Follow-up

Immediately after your interview, record what took place in the interview and any information you may need to send back to the company. Record the interviewer's name, address, and the date of the interview. Jot down your impressions of the interview.

If you desire, send a follow-up letter. This may be especially beneficial if you have additional information that may be of use in the decision making process of the interviewer.

If you have not heard from the company and the proposed date of contact has passed, contact them to check to see if a decision has been made.

In summary, the lasting impression in an interview is usually the first impression. Since how you feel about yourself is projected to others, one can readily see the problems a negative self-image can cause in the first few minutes of the interview, which is undoubtedly the most important. Therefore, make sure you feel good about yourself before you enter the interviewer's office.

Don't restrict yourself to one or two interviews. The more you interview the better your chances will be to land the job of your choice. The job market is very competitive. Interviewing early for a part-time, summer, or permanent position will increase your odds of obtaining desired results.

The key to all personal success is knowledge of how to change or enhance your self-image, so that it is consistent with the quality of life and success you desire.

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## Panel

### What Helped Me As A Student

Panelists remarks given at the 31st Annual NACTA Conference, June 18, 1985, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

Bowen and Whitford graduated from 4-year agricultural programs at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro and North Carolina State University, Raleigh, respectively. Martin and Sharp are 2-year agricultural graduates from Catawba Valley Technical College, Hickory, NC and North Carolina State University, respectively.

#### Blannie E. Bowen

It is an honor to be able to attend and participate in the 1985 NACTA Conference. I trust that my comments will be of interest as the panel discusses what it was that helped them as students enrolled in two and four year agricultural programs in North Carolina. My comments will be slanted toward my experiences as an Agricultural Education major at A&T State University, North Carolina's 1890 Land Grant institution located in Greensboro, some 80 miles down the road from here in the Capital City of Raleigh. A few background comments will set the stage for my views on the topic at hand.

I grew up on a small tobacco and hog farm on the border of Bladen and Columbus counties just over 100 miles from here in Raleigh. Many of my relatives have lived in that area of Southeastern North Carolina for over 150 years. In fact, the 1850 U.S. Census for Bladen County indicated that my Great Great Grandfather, Thomas Bowen, was a farmer and a cooper or a person who made barrels or casts. My family is large — 13 children in fact. My father finished the 7th grade and my mother the 8th. I can more accurately be labeled a first generation college graduate. All of my sisters and brothers graduated from high school and five of us finished four year colleges. I am pleased to say that my twin brothers graduated from NC A&T in May, 1984.

Before I entered A&T in August, 1971, I studied high school vocational agriculture for four years. It is accurate to say that I had very good vo-ag instructors at East Arcadia High School for three years and Elizabethtown High School for my senior year. However, my best agriculture instructors were my father and my older brother who exceeds me by five years. They were actively engaged in production agriculture. Decisions they made had to be correct since poor decisions meant the difference between a

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