

Communication Skills: Lecture No. 25

Module 8

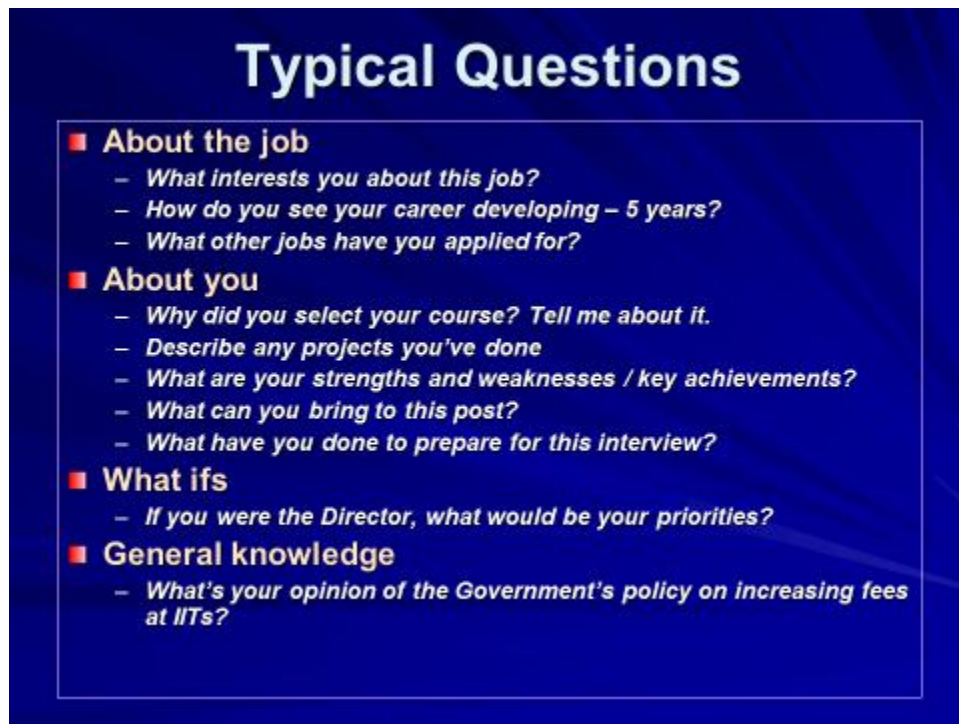
Lecture 4

INTERVIEW SKILLS



In this lecture, I will discuss in detail most of the typical questions that will be asked in an interview and suggest possible ways for giving acceptable answers. However, I would like you to be as open-minded as possible and think of creatively answering those questions, especially, in relevance to your personality and your career profile. Besides, I will also share with you some useful tips for approaching the interview panel with confidence and enthusiasm. The following are the typical questions that are likely to be asked in various ways in an interview:

Typical Questions



Typical Questions

- **About the job**
 - *What interests you about this job?*
 - *How do you see your career developing – 5 years?*
 - *What other jobs have you applied for?*
- **About you**
 - *Why did you select your course? Tell me about it.*
 - *Describe any projects you've done*
 - *What are your strengths and weaknesses / key achievements?*
 - *What can you bring to this post?*
 - *What have you done to prepare for this interview?*
- **What ifs**
 - *If you were the Director, what would be your priorities?*
- **General knowledge**
 - *What's your opinion of the Government's policy on increasing fees at IITs?*

Suggested Ways of Answering Typical Questions

What interests you about this job?

Never say that the financial prospect is the only thing that interests you about the job. Highlight the challenges the job offers and its potential for your personal and professional growth.

How do you see your career developing in the next 5 years?

As far as possible, explain how you visualize your career developing as an integral part of the organization. In such case, you will be helping the organization to grow while it facilitates your growth. It's a mutual goodwill and win-win situation.

What other jobs have you applied for?

This is a tricky question and hence you should be careful while answering it. You must have applied for certain other jobs and expecting interview call letters from most of them. You must have already got an interview call from a company. If you a prospective candidate, informing that you have got call letters from many reputed companies can make the interviewers think that you

might not join their company. However, informing can be beneficial in cases where you can negotiate for higher perks and pay.

Why did you select your course? Tell me about it. Describe any projects you've done.

For all these questions, as discussed in the previous lecture, try to relate what you have done in the form of courses/projects with the career you seek in the form of a job.

What are your strengths and weaknesses/key achievements?

Again, as discussed before, you need to have a clear perspective of your merits and demerits. Your key achievements will indicate some turning points in your career or personal life.

What can you bring to this post?

The post has already some designated strength on its own, when you get it, you assume its strength, but at the same time, you are expected to add some value to it. Assess your personality traits, career ambition and the existing job values and see how for you can add to it.

What have you done to prepare for this interview?

A good opportunity to demonstrate how much and how thoroughly you had prepared for the interview in terms of researching the company, studying the profile of key people of the company combined with your updating of the subject knowledge.

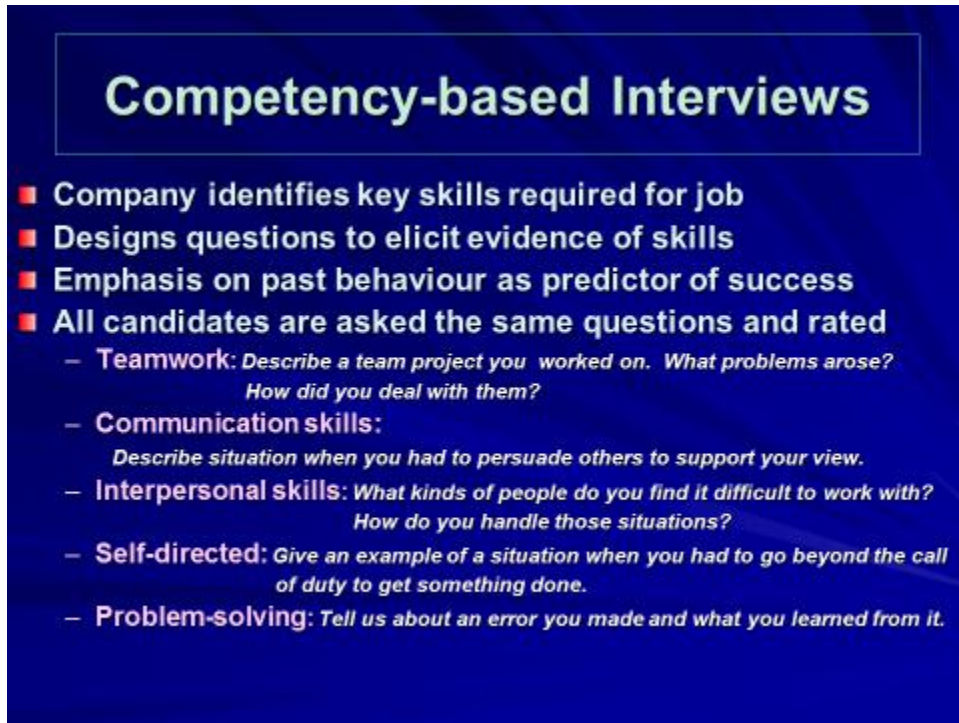
What if you were the Director, what would be your priorities?

There could be *what if* questions like this one. You can be asked what you would do if you were the CEO of the company. It would be helpful here if you had done a study of the limitations of the organization and suggest possible ways of improving it while answering this question.

What's your opinion of the Government's policy on increasing fees at IITs and IIMs?

Instead of just jumping into conclusion that it does not benefit students and hence you should be opposing it, you need to exhibit a balanced view by considering first why the Government is taking such a stance and what could be the compelling reasons. It will also reveal your analytical skills and ability to keep yourself updated in terms of general knowledge.

Competency-Based Interviews



Competency-based Interviews

- **Company identifies key skills required for job**
- **Designs questions to elicit evidence of skills**
- **Emphasis on past behaviour as predictor of success**
- **All candidates are asked the same questions and rated**
 - **Teamwork:** *Describe a team project you worked on. What problems arose? How did you deal with them?*
 - **Communication skills:**
Describe situation when you had to persuade others to support your view.
 - **Interpersonal skills:** *What kinds of people do you find it difficult to work with? How do you handle those situations?*
 - **Self-directed:** *Give an example of a situation when you had to go beyond the call of duty to get something done.*
 - **Problem-solving:** *Tell us about an error you made and what you learned from it.*

I have listed above some of the typical questions that are asked in competency-based interviews. Having identified the requisite key skills required for the job, the company designs questions to elicit evidence of skills. Candidates are checked with respect to their *competency* and *proficiency*. Candidates with proven track record will be preferred owing to their successful task accomplishments. All candidates are asked the same questions and rated according to the time taken and efficiency in answering them.

As far as communication skills are concerned, here the company is not looking for your vocabulary, fluency, and felicity of expressions but seeking your persuasive ability to influence somebody to do something in your favor. Along with this, your interpersonal skills, especially in terms of resolving conflicts will be tested by asking such questions as: *What kinds of people do you find it difficult to work with? How do you handle those situations?* Saying that you can work with anybody, thinking that you will be on the safe side, will not fetch you extra credits. People appreciate honesty here; hence, you can say for instance you do not prefer to work with hypocrites, but you can add to that by admitting that though if situation demands, you can adjust even with them.

Your employers are interested in knowing whether you are *self-directed* and *self-motivated* so that you can work even if somebody's behaviour is affecting your group's harmony. That's why they will give you an example of a situation *when you had to go beyond the call of duty to get something done*. Many people generally prefer to stay within their limits, though a leader will dare to cross any limitations. A good example is when a person takes the risk of doing someone's job. For instance, you are not supposed to take care of a new machine installation, for which technicians have come but the concerned in-charge is absent owing to sudden illness. However, if you can supervise the installation and get it done successfully, it demonstrates your innate leadership quality and selfless concern for the company.

Since the employers are interested in knowing your problem solving ability, they will ask you *about an error you made and what you learned from it*. Saying that you are a perfectionist and that you never committed an error is a neutral and safe answer. But an impressive answer is explaining how you really made an inadvertent error and learnt so much from it. In computer programming, for example, one learns a lot in debugging—the stage when the programmer identifies the mistakes and sorts them out before the programme is implemented. In such case, learning from mistakes only contribute to the strengthening of the programme.

Expect the Unexpected!

One can prepare endlessly for an interview. Nevertheless, the most interesting, the most challenging, the most threatening, the most amusing and the most rewarding part of an interview is when the candidate is caught unawares when posed with unexpected questions. Yet, handling unexpected questions will reveal one's spontaneity and creativity.

■ Funny questions are asked to identify one's ability to

think under pressure,

use one's presence of mind,

show good sense of humour,

react spontaneously and think creatively.

■ It helps to weed out candidates who do not possess creativity, or lack lateral, out of box thinking.

Take a look at some of the funny questions that I have listed below.

Funny questions . . .

- If you were an animal, which animal would you choose to be and why? (also bird, tree, building/architecture etc)
- If you were to die tomorrow, what would you do today?
- Sell this pen to me . . .
- Sell this eraser to me . . .
- Sell this coconut to me . . .
- How would you convince an Eskimo to buy a refrigerator?

Although there are some stock answers, the good answers vary depending on the creative nature of the candidate's personality. It's easy to say that (for the question on choosing an animal or bird) you will choose to be a dog (faithfulness) or a dove (peaceful) or a peacock (beautiful) but it is difficult to say something that is apparently ugly and repulsive like cockroach, lizard, etc., and defend why you want to be so. People will rarely choose crow (black and ugly) but still the bird can be defended for its ability to pick up waste and keep the environment clean for human beings. If you choose a tree, think of it in terms of its traits like giving fruits, shelter, and purifying the atmosphere.

A candidate who got selected on high rating for a management school convinced how he would make an Eskimo buy a refrigerator. One of the facts he highlighted was that regarding the fridge one can always moderate the temperature and it will be helpful to keep some vegetables in extreme weather conditions. He was perceived to be technically sound with persuasive skills, which were very much need for the job.

People react emotionally for a question like *if you were to die tomorrow, what would you do today?* They often say they will run to see their beloveds, confess their love, or send messages to concerned people. Very few might say that they would switch off their computer, sign the cheque, or return the borrowed amount. These answers appear to be simple ones but they tell a lot about the conscious and altruistic inner nature of such people.

The list goes on and on . . .

The list goes on and on...

Beneath the dozens and dozens of possible questions like those, there are really only **five basic questions** that underlie all the rest.

The person who has the power to hire you wants to know:



Five Basic Questions


1. Why are you here?
2. What can you do for us?
3. What kind of person are you?
4. What distinguishes you from hundred other people who have the same skills as you have?
5. Can I afford you?



From Your Perspective

You have to be asking yourself the same five questions, though in a slightly different form:


1. What does this job involve?
2. Do my skills truly match this job?
3. Are these the kind of people I would like to work with, or not?
4. If we like each other, and both want to work together, can I persuade them that there is something unique about me that makes me different from nineteen other people who can do the same tasks?
5. Can I persuade them to hire me at the salary I need or want?



The question at the bottom line is this . . .

The Question at the Bottom Line

■ Why should I hire you?



The overall concern is to choose the right person for the right job . . .



Your employer is not a fool!

- His organization spends vast some of money in selection processes
- Would like to reap huge returns
- The main concern is to select

**The Right Person
for the Right Job**

- The discreet choice is between

LIABILITY and ASSET!



The main concern is to select *the right person for the right job*. Selecting the right person for the right job, no matter what amount of money is spent in the interview process, is always a gain for the company. Ultimately, the discreet choice is *between liability and asset*. A liable candidate is a problem creator and a pain in the neck for the organization. S/he is a weak-minded negative thinker who lacks confidence, keeps complaining all the time, comes late to the work, does not perform tasks in time, and is inefficient and incompetent. A candidate who is an asset to the company works hard to achieve targets in time and helps the company to grow and increase its turnover. S/he adds to the reputation of the company and everybody enjoys working with him/her and are proud of his/her achievements.

Once you learn how to tackle the typical interview questions, you should keep in mind that you should also prepare your own questions.

Prepare questions of your own

Asking practical, smart and intelligent questions can impress the employers because the employers are interested in your answers as well as your questions. They would assess you not just by your

answers but the kind of questions that you would ask them at the end or during the interview process. Some of the smart questions you could ask are listed below.

4. Prepare questions of your own

☐ Employers assess you by your questions as much as by your answers.

☐ Intelligent questions about the position and the organisation will be appreciated.

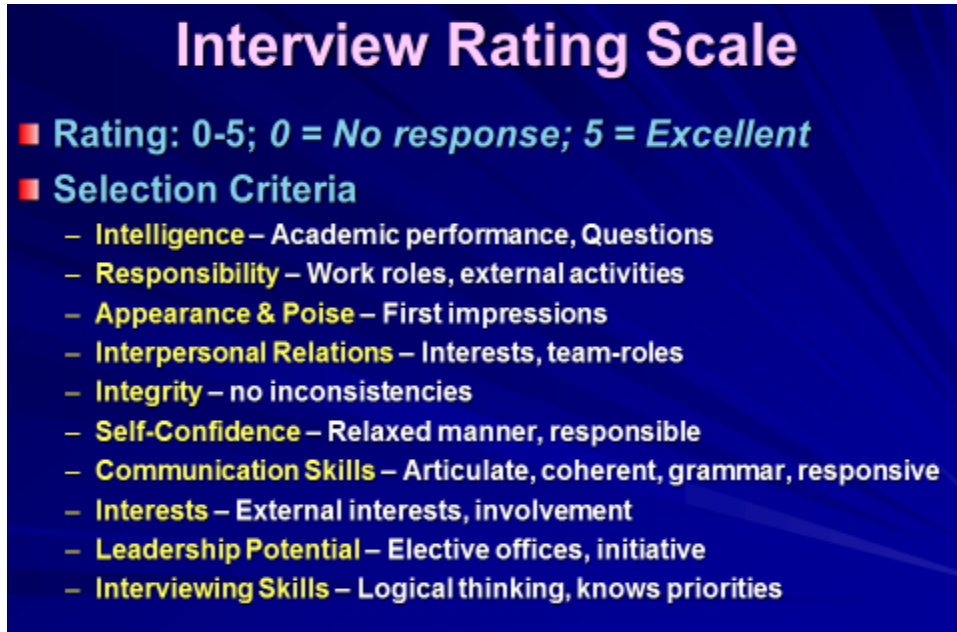
This is your opportunity to separate yourself from the other interviewees!

Smart Questions

- **If you hired me, What would be my first assignment?**
- **Where will this company be in the next 5 to 10 years?**
- **Assuming I do a good job for the company, where can I go from here?**
- **What do you enjoy the most about this company?**
- **Would you please tell me about the people I will be working with?**
- **Why is this opportunity available?**
- **Other than yourself, who else is involved with the hiring process? Is it possible for me to meet with them today?**
- **Where does this position fit within the overall organization?**
- **Is the leadership in your organization bottom up or top down?**

Interview Rating Scale

Generally the panelists use the following the interview rating scale and selection criteria. Knowing this beforehand will help you to upgrade yourself with relevant skills.

A blue rectangular slide with white and yellow text. The title 'Interview Rating Scale' is at the top in large white font. Below it, two bullet points with red square icons are listed: 'Rating: 0-5; 0 = No response; 5 = Excellent' and 'Selection Criteria'. Under 'Selection Criteria', there is a list of ten items, each preceded by a dash and in yellow font. The items are: Intelligence – Academic performance, Questions; Responsibility – Work roles, external activities; Appearance & Poise – First impressions; Interpersonal Relations – Interests, team-roles; Integrity – no inconsistencies; Self-Confidence – Relaxed manner, responsible; Communication Skills – Articulate, coherent, grammar, responsive; Interests – External interests, involvement; Leadership Potential – Elective offices, initiative; and Interviewing Skills – Logical thinking, knows priorities.

Interview Rating Scale

- **Rating: 0-5; 0 = No response; 5 = Excellent**
- **Selection Criteria**
 - **Intelligence** – Academic performance, Questions
 - **Responsibility** – Work roles, external activities
 - **Appearance & Poise** – First impressions
 - **Interpersonal Relations** – Interests, team-roles
 - **Integrity** – no inconsistencies
 - **Self-Confidence** – Relaxed manner, responsible
 - **Communication Skills** – Articulate, coherent, grammar, responsive
 - **Interests** – External interests, involvement
 - **Leadership Potential** – Elective offices, initiative
 - **Interviewing Skills** – Logical thinking, knows priorities

In the next lecture, I will discuss how you can create the first best impression by focusing on the soft skills—that is the non-verbal, body language aspect of communication.

Further References

Further References

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