
Effective Interviewing

Facilitator Discussion Guide

Version 2.0

Facilitator Discussion Guide to Effective Interviewing: Introduction

The Learner Application Guide (LAG) for Effective Interviewing was designed to be used in two ways:

- An individual can use the Guide by himself or herself as a way of developing a more refined focus on the kind of career position that would best suit his or her background and values.
- A small group (say three to five people) can come together to plan their job searches, contributing their insights and support to one another through this process.

What's This Learning Component for?

This Facilitator Discussion Guide (FDG) is intended to help you conduct the second kind of session—in which a small group completes the learning activities in the Guide together under your direction. In the course of this meeting (which might last about 45 minutes to an hour), you will facilitate three main activities:

- First, you will conduct an activity that will give the group an opportunity to practice answering a question in the behavioral interview format.
- Next, you will have the group practice selecting and answering questions from a list of “tough” interview questions.
- Finally, you will use a sample excerpt from a Letter to Shareholders to conduct a discussion about how to read information about the hiring company and develop high-gain questions to ask about the company during the interview.

How Do I Prepare for this Session?

This program, like the two other programs in the Managing an Effective Job Search (MEJS) Workshops Reinforcement Series, is based on a 90-minute facilitated workshop that is delivered regularly at ACS annual meetings and in other venues as appropriate. Best case, you should have attended the workshop on Effective Interviewing, which will provide you with additional background on the subject, as well as a chance to experience all of the learning activities you will facilitate as a member of a small group.

If attending the facilitated workshop is impossible for you, you should have studied the LAG on your own carefully before conducting the session, and have completed all the activities yourself (before you look at the “answers” contained in this FDG).

When you invite participants to your session, make sure they have viewed the video component and completed their own copy of the LAG before coming to work with the group. If they wait until the group session to read their Guide, the session will still work, but may take significantly longer.

Finally, study this FDG carefully before your first session. Over time, you will undoubtedly add questions and discussion points of your own.

Activity 1: Practicing the Behavioral Interview Format (20 minutes)

INTRODUCE the activity:

- We've spent this much time on the subject of the behavioral interview because the more familiar you are with the format the better you can use the format to highlight your experiences and capabilities in a behavioral interview.
- It's like a dance, and the better you know the steps, the more graceful you can be.
- So let's practice the dance with a partner to give you a sense of how the format works.

DIRECT participants to the Learner Activity Guide (LAG) and review the instructions for the activity.

CONDUCT the activity:

Put participants into pairs, with one person being Partner A and the other Partner B. Tell Partner A to select a question from the list to put to Partner B. Call time after about two minutes and tell the partners to switch roles. Call time again after another two minutes and debrief the activity.

DEBRIEF the activity:

ASK as the interviewing Partner, where did the candidate Partner spend the most time? On Context? Action? Result? About the same amount of time on all three? *(Discuss. Often, people will jump right to Action, and spend little or no time on Context or Result. Context is needed to orient the interviewer, and Result is useful to stress results and performance.)*

ASK as the Partner being interviewed, how was your experience answering questions in this format? Which of the three parts was easiest? Which if any was more difficult?

MAKE A TRANSITION to handling tough questions:

- Knowing the Context-Action-Result (CAR) format of the behavioral interview makes it easier for you to answer questions put to you by interviewers.
- Nevertheless, you will get some tough questions from time to time, and that's the subject we'll look at next.

Activity 2: Handling Tough Questions (20 minutes)

INTRODUCE the activity:

- The ability to handle difficult questions is a skill, and the more you practice a skill the better you get at it.
- So let's take a few minutes to practice handling some difficult—but typical—questions.

DIRECT participants to the LAG and review the guidelines for handling tough questions and the instructions for the activity.

CONDUCT the activity:

Put participants into pairs or small groups. Assign one of the “tough questions” on the list in the LAG to each pair or group. Give the groups about three minutes to develop a response. After about three minutes, call time and ask each group to review its question and present its response.

Note to facilitator: You can choose a tough question from the list below, or you can assign one of your own favorites to a team.

Why should I hire you? Why are you leaving your current position? Tell me about a situation when your work was criticized. Where would you see yourself in five years? Can you work under pressure? Would you lie for the company? Aren't you overqualified for this position? What changes would you make if you came onboard?

MAKE A TRANSITION to doing due diligence:

- The third aspect of preparing for a successful job interview is to research the hiring company.
- We refer to this activity as “doing due diligence,” and it’s the topic we turn to next in this session.

Activity 3: Doing Due Diligence (20 minutes)

INTRODUCE the activity:

- Doing due diligence can be one of the most interesting parts of the whole interviewing process.
- Let’s spend a few minutes seeing what we can learn about a real company in the pharmaceutical industry, PharmChem, that might interview a chemist.

REVIEW the kinds of questions a candidate should find out about the hiring company (see the list in the LAG.)

DIRECT participants to the LAG and review the instructions for the activity.

CONDUCT the activity:

Return participants to their small groups. Give the groups about 5 minutes to review the Letter to Shareholders and develop answers to Focusing Questions. After about 7 minutes, call time and ask one group to share its thoughts on each of the Focusing Questions.



What does the Letter indicate about the job market for chemists in this company?

Company is increasing personnel at 5% per year. Need for more productivity in R&D.



What kinds of qualities or characteristics might the company be especially interested in hiring?

Innovation, excellence, team orientation.



What questions could you ask that would indicate to your interviewer that you've read the Letter and done your due diligence?

What are you doing to increase productivity in R&D. How does the merger and acquisition affect the company?

Note to facilitator: You may want to offer your services to answer specific questions participants might have after the workshop concludes. You should also remind participants to contact careers@acs.org for questions about content of this workshop, and for any other questions they have about their job search.