

*The Second Interview Process:
Views From Employers, Career Advisors, and Students*

Draft Report

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Overview

The second or on-site interview signals the possible completion of a task often started months before: the job search. Students covet the invitation to visit an organization; sensing a job offer is within their grasps. How much assistance do students receive from their institutions in preparing for this event? According to students who responded in this project, very little in terms of a formal workshop or class. Information on interviewing techniques and a video on dining etiquette are often available; but little beyond these basics. Do students understand the second interview well enough to be successful to attain that coveted position?

To answer this question, a research project was designed that compared the perceptions of three groups on the second interview process. The first group was comprised of employer representatives from the company's human resources staff; the second was a group of college and university career advisors; and the final group contained students who had actually gone through second or on-site interviews. These groups were queried on the dynamics of the process (itinerary), interview time, and personnel involved in the candidates visit. From this information, typical second interview scenarios were developed and compare. The information presented in this session highlights the preliminary findings.

Method

Participants in this study were identified from several sources. Employers, registered members of a regional college placement association, were identified for this population. If an organization was represented by more than one member, only one member was placed in the pool. Approximately, 375 employers were selected for the project. Similarly, 350 college members from the same organization were identified. If an institution had a decentralized system, two individuals could have been selected from one institution.

Student participants were identified from students registered with Michigan State University's Career Development and Placement Services. To be placed in the pool to be surveyed, a student must have obtained at least one on-campus interview during the 1992-93 interview season. Approximately 1500 students were selected and surveyed within three months of graduation.

A survey was designed that tapped into the dynamics and characteristics of the second or on-site interview process. The student form was longer than the forms for the other two groups. In addition to questions on the interview, students also described their campus recruiting success, job search strategies, their preparation for both on-campus and on-site interviews, usefulness of various sources of information on organizations they interviewed, and the types of training they received on second interviews. Employers and students prepared a detailed itinerary for an on-site visit: employers a schedule typical for their organization and students the actual activities at their most recent second interviews. Career advisors provided similar information but in a different format.

Highlights

The response rates from employers, career advisors and students were 25%, 21%, and 30%, respectively. The majority of employers represented companies larger than 5,000 employees (68%) though they commonly recruited for smaller units: 70% served units of 5,000 or less. Manufacturing comprised the largest segment of the employer group (42%) with other sectors equally represented at around 15%.

Career advisors represented schools ranking in size from 450 to 47,000 with the median size being 5,800. The units where these respondents work served an average of 4,800 students with the median being 2,100. This group was comprised of mid-40's (average 44), women (56%), with an average of 12 years in the profession and 6 years in their current position.

Students responded at a 30% rate. This group was evenly comprised of white (93%) men (48%) and women (52%) with an average age of 25 (median 23) and grade point average of 3.10 (range 2.30 to 3.90). They represented business, engineering, agriculture (packaging), communication, and liberal arts (Arts & Letters, Natural Science, and Social Science) majors, with Business being the most heavily represented. Students were further separated into two groups: Group I -- those who obtained second (on-site) interviews from campus interviews and Group II -- those who did not receive a second interview from a campus interview. Group II differed from Group I in that it contained proportionally more women and liberal arts majors.

Major Findings:

- Employers revealed that on-site interviewers would be primarily white (82%) males (68); the majority with experience in the position available to the potential candidate. The interviewers are likely to be 31 to 40 years old (59%).
- Students reported that the on-site interviews lasted a shorter period than employers and career advisors. Students who obtained their interviews from non-campus employers reported very short interview sessions.
- Students reported more time spent interviewing than employers and career advisors.
- Career advisors expected students to be involved in a mix of interviewing situations, particularly multiple candidates and multiple interviewers. Employers and students indicated that this did not frequently happen.
- Students reported much more time spent with upper management and supervisors than employers indicated.
- Career advisors expected students to spend more than 25% of their time with personnel when, in fact, it was only about 10%.

- Students reported being involved less in formal interviews than employers and career advisors.
- A review of itineraries revealed similarities with employers and Student Group I, except for the time spent testing, with human resources, and wrapping-up.
- Student Group II schedules are very abbreviated and intense with little time spent outside of interviewing.
- Formal questions commonly asked during interviews were similar though students reported a broader range of questions, many of them behavioral in nature. This item is currently being recoded into behavioral and traditional types of questions to determine how much behavioral interviewing is occurring.
- Informal questions varied between groups with employers emphasizing behavioral aspects while students reporting more personal types of questions.
- Career advisors and employers placed career goal questions high on their list but students did not indicate that they were frequently asked about their career goals.
- While employers and career advisors held similar beliefs about the importance of selected factors in the second interview, career advisors placed much more weight on testing (all types) and dining etiquette than employers.
- Both employers and career advisors rated interaction with co-workers and support staff highly in the interview -- look back at how much time students actually spend with these groups during the interview! Not much.
- Numerous employers commented that no one question was designed to "weed out" candidates -- the entire interview process is designed to do this. Several others did not want to reveal their questions, believing students could then prepare for the interviews. Those who did respond emphasized locational and career related questions. Unfortunately, students do not report these questions high on their list of frequently asked questions.
- Comparisons of students from Groups I and II reported differences in their activities during interviews and the resources they utilize -- particularly note that students from Group I spend more time preparing.

While the second interview scenarios developed by employers, career advisors, and students were similar, enough critical differences existed to warrant some reconsiderations of second interviews dynamics -- commonly held beliefs were not supported. Students are reporting different situations than employers and career advisors. During a period where the workplace is rapidly changing, it is important to view the new dynamics of the second interviews.

Characteristics of Employer Respondents (n = 94)

Size of Parent Organization:	> 5,000	68%
	1000 - 5000	20%
	< 1000	12%
Size of Division You Are Responsible for Recruiting:	> 5000	30%
	1000 - 5000	30%
	< 1000	40%
Type of Organization	Manufacturing	42%
	Retail	13%
	Financial Services	16%
	Processing	
	(ie, Chemicals)	9%
	Service (Other)	3%
	Other	17%

Characteristics of Career Advisor Respondents (n = 71)

Institutional Size	Range 450 - 47,000 Average 9,145 Median 5,800
Number of Students Unit Serves	Range 100 - 37,000 Average 4,828 Median 2,100
Types of Students	All students 73 % Business 9 % Arts & Letters 4 % Others 14 %
Talked to Employers About Second Interviews:	21 Average 14 Median
Received Feedback from Students on Second Interview:	44 % Yes
Provided Information on Second Interview:	26 % Yes
Years Involved in Career Service Profession:	12 Years
Years in Current Position:	6.3 Years
Age:	Range 24 - 63 Average 44
Gender:	Female 56 % Male 43 %

Characteristics of Student Respondents (n = 445)

	Total Sample	Student I (n=281)	Student II (n=164)
Gender: Female	52%	49%	55%
Male	48%	51%	45%
Age: Average	25	25	25
Range	20-43	22-43	20-41
Median	23	23	23
Grade Point: Average	3.10	3.13	3.06
Range	2.30-3.90	2.30-3.90	2.40-3.75
Race:			
Caucasians	91%	91%	92%
Afro-American	3%	3%	4%
All Others	6%	6%	4%
College:			
Agriculture	10%	10%	11%
Business	46%	50%	40%
Engineering	17%	17%	16%
Communications	10%	10%	10%
Liberal Arts	17%	13%	23%

Responsibilities

	Personnel Staff	Unit Manager	Immediate Supervisor	Work Group	Other
Pre-visit corres.	80%	10%	6%	0%	12%
Itinerary	66%	23%	11%	5%	11%
Meeting candidate	56%	34%	20%	20%	13%
Hosting candidate	39%	35%	21%	19%	12%
Post-int. corres.	80%	13%	5%	0%	12%
Decision to hire	31%	73%	37%	21%	10%

Participants from the Organization in the Interviews

Male: 68%

Female: 32%

Ethnic/Racial Composition:

Caucasian	82%
Asian-American	4%
Afro-American	8%
Native American	2%
Hispanic	3%
Other	< 1%

Age: 23-25 1%

26-30 11%

31-40 59%

41-50 26%

51-60 2%

Primary Source of Information about Position Being Interviewed for:

Worked in position 31%

Currently work in position 14%

Works in similar position 16%

Used standardized questions 15%

Worked in similar position 10%

Participated in decision to hire 10%

Never worked in position 3%

Typical Second Interview Characteristics Reported by Employer, Career Advisor, and Students

	Employer	Career Advisor	Student I	Student II
Length	1/2 to full day	1/2 day	Less 1/2 - 1/2 day	Less 1/2 day
Total hours	8	8 - 8 1/2	7 1/2	4 1/2 - 5
Total interviews (hrs.)	3 1/2	3 1/2	4 1/2	3 1/2
Interview situation (% of time)				
1 : 1	74	57	72	68
2 : 1	20	31	24	26
1 : 2	1	5	1	2
2 : 2	2	7	3	4
Time spent with (%)				
Upper management	20	19	43	40
Supervisors	44	48	29	34
Potential co-workers	22	18	14	9
Personnel staff	13	27	10	9
Other	7	<1	3	7
Formal interviews (%)	75	71	59	58
Number formal interviews	4	4	3	2

Definitions

Formal Interviews

Those situations where interviewers ask candidates standard or prepared questions in a manner that both parties recognize the information will be used in the decision to hire or not to hire.

Informal Interviews

Those situations where interviewers ask spontaneous questions in an unusual setting (i.e. outside an office or meeting room).

On-Site Itinerary: Employer Schedule

	Eating	Orientation	Interview	Tour	Testing	Human Resources	Wrap-Up	Travel	No Activities
7 AM	24% (11%) ¹	4%	2%	---	---	---	---	1%	68%
8 AM	11% (5%)	26%	14% (3%) ²	1%	4%	1%	---	2%	41%
9 AM	1% (1%)	30%	39% (8%)	4%	7%	2%	---	---	16%
10 AM	---	15%	56% (15%)	7%	7%	1%	2%	---	13%
11 AM	3% (2%)	8%	49% (16%)	12%	7%	2%	2%	---	19%
Noon	61% (22%)	3%	11% (5%)	3%	1%	---	4%	---	27%
1 PM	16% (8%)	9%	35% (10%)	6%	2%	1%	6%	---	30%
2 PM	---	6%	46% (13%)	6%	4%	1%	13%	---	43%
3 PM	---	7%	28% (7%)	6%	3%	---	20%	1%	52%
4 PM	---	4%	14% (2%)	5%	2%	1%	4%	5%	80%
5 PM	3%	---	4% (1%)	3%	---	---	1%	1%	89%
6 PM	5% (1%)	2%	1%	---	---	---	---	1%	95%
7 PM	4% (1%)	---	---	---	---	---	---	1%	96%
8 PM	3% (1%)	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	97%

¹ Percent dining with a specific official (manager/supervisor)

² Percent interviewing with a specific official (manager/supervisor)

On-Site Itinerary: Student Group I

	Eating	Orientation	Interview	Tour	Testing	Human Resources	Wrap-Up	Travel	No Activities
7 AM	6%	3%	1%	---	---	1%	---	---	89%
8 AM	5%	5%	9% (5%)	2%	1%	6%	---	---	71%
9 AM	2%	6%	25% (12%)	4%	2%	8%	---	---	54%
10 AM	---	6%	40% (21%)	6%	2%	4%	---	---	40%
11 AM	4%	3%	43% (23%)	7%	3%	2%	1%	---	38%
Noon	29%	1%	30% (16%)	6%	2%	3%	1%	---	41%
1 PM	12%	1%	32% (15%)	7%	1%	2%	1%	---	43%
2 PM	3%	1%	33% (16%)	8%	2%	5%	1%	---	47%
3 PM	---	3%	27% (13%)	9%	1%	4%	2%	---	53%
4 PM	---	4%	18% (8%)	5%	1%	5%	5%	---	62%
5 PM	6%	4%	9% (6%)	3%	---	1%	4%	1%	73%
6 PM	9%	2%	2% (2%)	1%	---	1%	2%	---	83%
7 PM	6%	2%	1% (1%)	2%	---	---	1%	---	88%
8 PM	6%	1%	---	1%	---	---	---	---	92%

Typical Formal Interview Questions: Top Five Categories

Employer	Career Advisor	Student I	Student II
Educational Preparation	Career Goals	Work Experience	Work Experience
Work Experiences	Work Strengths/ Weaknesses	Handle Stress	Job Skills
Job Skills	Experience	Strongest Skills	People Skills
Career Goals	Technical Skills	What Can You Offer	Work Expectations
Technical Skills	Why Should You Be Hired	Weakest Skills	Long Term Goals
Geographic Preference (Mobility)		(Job Skills)	
Communication Skills			
Motivation			
Job Interest			

Typical Informal Interview Questions: Top Five Categories

Employer	Career Advisor	Student I	Student II
Outside Activities (Hobbies)	Hobbies/Interest	Free Time/Hobbies	Free Time/Hobbies
Personal (Motivation, Attitude)	Sports/Recreation	Family/Hometown	Getting To Know You
Geographic Mobility	Locational Preference	Future Plans	Conflict Resolution
Interpersonal Communication	College Experiences	MSU	Previous Work Exp.
Job Environment	Personality (Humor)	Relocation	

**Comparison of Employer and Career Advisor of
Importance of Selected Factors/Situations in Second Interview**

	Employer		Career Advisor	
Formal Interview	4.24	(85)	4.43	(98)
Candidate Presentation	3.87	(80)	4.56	(93)
Conduct During Meals	2.90	(33)	3.75	(74)
Behavior - Social	2.79	(29)	3.85	(79)
Behavior - Tours/Organization	3.40	(52)	3.80	(73)
Interactions Org. Members (Intro).	3.76	(70)	4.62	(100)
Psychological Tests	1.50	(7)	3.57	(52)
Skill/Knowledge Tests	2.01	(23)	3.87	(65)
Drug/Physical Tests	3.15	(58)	4.44	(86)
Interaction - Future Work Members	3.86	(74)	4.01	(83)
Interaction - Support Staff	3.14	(40)	3.56	(54)

Typical Questions That Cause Candidates to be "Weeded Out" During Second Interview

Employer

Are you willing to relocate? (Geographic preference)

What are your goals/expectations?

Do you have an interest in this type of job/work?

Do you have the ability to do this job? (Skill questions, especially technical, sales, and interpersonal skills)

Career Advisor

Knowledge of company

Career goals

Is the job right for you/why do you want to work for us?

Mobility/Relocation

Why should we hire you?

Student Reported Differences Between On-Campus Interview and Second Interview
 ("1" = not at all, "5" = very great extent): Average and Percent Rating >4

	STUDENT GROUP I					STUDENT GROUP II				
	On-Campus Average	On-Campus %	On-Site Average	On-Site %	On-Campus Average	On-Campus %	On-Site Average	On-Site %		
Spent time preparing	3.36	(42)	3.95	(71)	* 3.18	(39)	* 3.60	(53)		
Felt stress before	3.04	(34)	3.44	(49)	3.00	(39)	3.22	(44)		
Felt stress during	2.70	(24)	2.85	(28)	* 2.82	(44)	2.69	(20)		
Discussed specific job	3.00	(28)	4.24	(85)	3.00	(37)	* 4.43	(88)		
Discussed salary	1.45	(6)	2.54	(22)	1.50	(17)	2.42	(26)		
Focused on career goals	3.09	(34)	3.87	(80)	3.00	(29)	3.86	(74)		
Focused on job knowledge	3.18	(39)	3.71	(63)	* 2.94	(28)	* 3.93	(71)		
Focused on work experience	3.66	(59)	3.73	(63)	* 3.40	(51)	3.64	(59)		
Focused on social/interests	2.82	(28)	3.06	(36)	* 2.37	(9)	* 2.88	(39)		
Focused on know. comp.	2.64	(24)	2.89	(33)	* 2.49	(9)	* 2.48	(55)		
Spent in informal conversation	2.64	(19)	3.51	(51)	2.54	(23)	3.24	(50)		
Obtained sense working for	2.53	(15)	4.01	(79)	* 2.17	(9)	3.86	(64)		
Decided to accept job if offered	2.83	(23)	3.82	(66)	* 2.49	(6)	3.98	(74)		

**Students Evaluation of Sources for Organizational Information During the Interview Process
("1" = not very helpful to "5" = extremely helpful) Average, % Used**

STUDENT GROUP I

STUDENT GROUP II

	On-Campus Int. % Used	On-Campus Int. Average	On-Site Int. % Used	On-Site Int. Average	On-Campus Int. % Used	On-Campus Int. Average	On-Site Int. % Used	On-Site Int. Average
Career services	91	3.37	61	3.33	87	2.92	29	2.92
Career Information Center	74	3.47	51	3.46	81	3.02	36	3.00
Campus library	20	2.89	15	2.75	30	2.19	16	3.00
Parents	34	2.92	35	3.16	41	3.34	41	3.07
Professors/faculty	33	3.12	33	3.24	41	3.09	30	3.09
Brothers/sisters	17	2.79	19	3.06	27	3.13	24	3.12
Friends in org.	26	3.47	31	3.75	32	3.89	47	4.07
Friends outside org.	34	3.22	37	3.23	43	3.42	48	3.75