

**Course Name- Complete guide for campus interviews: Step by step preparation for Internships and Full-time jobs**

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**Week-03**

**Lecture-01**

**How interviews work**

Hello folks, we'll have an interesting session today where we talk about interviews, get into the nuts and bolts of it. Mainly we're going to talk about two things. Firstly, we're going to talk about the interview process itself and then we'll get about something interesting called the STAR interviews, also called behavioral interviews. Hit some of the topics like some questions and best processes for interviews and then go on with it. I think at the highest level, first students need to know what interview flow process looks like. So normally there's a bunch of things that happen before you actually have the interviews and then you actually end up with a job.

So the process goes like this. Normally the hiring manager sits with the HR person and then decides, hey, I'm looking for a candidate. I'm looking for the specific set of skills. And consequently, these are some of the questions I would like to be answered during the interviews.

These questions are not wild questions. They specifically relate to those skills that are being mentioned in the job description. So if your job description talks about certain set of technical skills, like for example, expertise in certain languages, like Java or something else, or talks about certain processes that you need to be aware of, they would be part of these questions that come up. Similarly, if there are questions related to a business or the people skills that a person has, they would also be framed as set of questions that should be asked on an interview. Consequently, once these questions have been decided, a set of questions or a template of questions are generated and then these questions can either be technical questions itself or they can be behavioral or star questions.

And every interviewer asks these questions that have been identified and then rates every candidate on a scale. So it could be something like candidates are classified as a higher, no higher, a poor fit, a great fit or it could be on a 1 to 5 point scale where 5 or 4 is a good fit, 3 is an average and anything below that is a poor fit. Once all the interviews are handled, a set of questions have been asked and candidates have been marked onto the scores that they have been decided by the interviewers. All the interviewers are actually called together. So the hiring manager, the HR person and all the interviewers come to a room and then kind of like an open discussion happens where the different questions raised and the scores are discussed.

No candidate normally comes out with a full hire or a go from everyone. There would be some candidates who are preferred, some candidates who have some certain drawbacks and different interviewers and talk it out. Finally, after the discussion, a final decision is made where it is decided whether a candidate should be hired or not. So that's the interview process. Occasionally, it can be that, hey, we need more information.

We'll get back to do one more round of interview. But most cases, the interview is final. All the interviewers have made a decision and then the interviewers decided, the hiring manager

decides that, hey, let's give out an offer or let's go reject the candidate. We have talked about this. There's something called a star interview framework.

And this is also called a behavioral interview model. Now we'll talk about why we need this star pattern of interviews and why it is normally something that is expected on every interview that happens for students. A star framework or a behavioral framework can be broken into four different categories. words of course but four different buckets they mean one s for situation situation is the kind of situation that a person was in before they undertook a task the task itself which is the work that they have decided to undertake or that was assigned by the manager a set of actions that the candidate performed and and finally a set of results that were achieved as consequence of these actions Every behavioral question is structured such that the answers are generated along these four parameters and a good candidate would be able to explain all these four points and then bring out the action and the results to a very fine and a clear answer. But why really do we need a star or a behavioral question? If you think over it, if you look at maybe some of the UPSC questions or maybe some of those questions you would have seen from YouTube videos or somewhere else, you would see that candidates are asked kind of like strange out-of-box questions.

It's like, hey tell me tell me about the foreign policy of a country or tell me about a certain economic model or compute a certain amount of analytical question for a certain answer for a certain analytical question right the problem with such random questions is that it varies from one candidate to another and there is no way to come out with a standard a way to compare between different candidates. So if someone gave a successful answer to a question or not versus a different success or a failure from a different candidate, there is no way that these two answers can be compared. So firstly, there's a point of how do we go about standardized answers and make it such things such that it can be compared across candidates. So that's the first point. Second point is that there is a understanding within businesses that your past action is a clear reflection of your future potential.

So if you are a person who has worked on certain skills, have been able to successfully achieve results based upon those skills in a job that you have done, it can be inferred that given a similar situation, you'll be able to execute them successfully in future. And consequently, those who have failed in the past and have had no success would be poor fits for a similar role granted to them in future. So this is really the reason why star behavioral questions are asked to candidates because an interviewer can actually gauge the kind of work and success or failure that has been achieved by a candidate and consequently make a hiring or no hiring decision. Now, every interview is of course of these two patterns. This has become the standard, de facto standard where you have either behavioral questions or very specific technical questions related to your role.

So, if you are someone related to software related roles, analytical related roles, you would find that bunch of your questions are always technical. That is, you would be asked things related to the technology or the engineering work that you bring to the table. A star interview question or a behavioral question is not that significant for these two roles because these two roles require high levels of technical expertise and not really things related to a certain activity that is orally expressed in the past. Your work and your technical knowledge can be expressed purely from technical questions asked. Now, that said, even for such roles, there is one final interview with your hiring manager, someone very senior in the organization or with HR person where they see that this person is not a complete misfit for the organization.

For the judgment of a misfit or a fit, of course, behavioral questions are asked because that is the only way in which past experiences can be talked about and consequently inference made about what would be a future fit of the candidate for that company or for the team. But like I said, for those roles, for example, like a software engineer, for analyst related role, a data scientist as an example, these are very specifically highly technical or technology driven roles. And consequently, the amount of importance given to star interviews is definitely order of magnitude less compared to technical interviews. It is completely the opposite if you look at roles, for example, such as consulting, product management or things related to general management. So anywhere where there is a business and people experience required and where you are expected to handle a large amount of people or business itself.

The expectation is that you are able to draw or explain your past successes and talk about those metrics and measures or the actions you have done. And consequently, inferences will be made based upon these star interview questions. Of course, we will get a little bit deeper into what these star interview questions are later. But at the highest level, if it's something managerial, you can expect a lot more of behavioral interviews or a star interview. And if it's something very engineering or technology related, you can expect a little less of focus towards star interviews.

Despite everything else, it has been increasingly noted that behavioral interviews have lead to a very good estimation of how candidates are a fit for a company. So, as I said, irrespective of the role, you can expect at least one round or one set of questions from someone in the organization talking about your fit with the company. During the interview, one of the few things that you have to understand, so irrespective of the technical knowledge that you have, irrespective of the behavioral questionnaire that is asked and the actions you discuss, there is an art to interviews. And the art to interviews is around you expressing yourself as a great fit for that role and the company with respect to those skills that are mentioned in the job descriptions. It is your duty to actually bring all these out.

It is your duty to explain them in a way that is understandable and relatable by the interviewer. So if you are able to be, for example, a great storyteller, have a way in which you narrate your experiences, clearly it's a good way to sell your skills and your fit with respect to a company. Similarly, even for technical questions, if you understand the jargons of the workplace, if you understand the skills required for that specific job and you are able to bring those frameworks, technologies, skills and a clear understanding of the jargons that are commonplace in that workplace within your interview, it becomes very clear that you are someone who is familiar with such kind of roles and consequently are a great fit for such kind of roles. Okay. What an interviewer is trying to estimate is you are no stranger to both the role and the kind of technology space or the space you decide to be in.

The better you highlight your fit, better you are as a candidate. Your actions speak a lot. So remember that if you even have done technical work, the better you understand the technical work that you have, better you would be able to explain or even do well during your interviews. And of course, if it is anything related to behavioral interviews, you can express it better. So it is action and task driven.

And everything is related to logic and analytical framework that you bring to the workplace. So if you are asked a very technical questions too, you might have a certain way to approach the problem. It is not important that you get certain answers alone. It is important how you arrived at the answers. So if you use a certain method, certain optimization, there's a certain way you

collected data, a certain way in which you are actually able to look through the data, all these become critical for the different roles that are being interviewed for.

So again, please do look through the job description and look through the skills that are mentioned. Highlight, underline those skills that are clearly talked about in the job description and ensure that during your interview process you bring that flavor out. You try and hit all those relevant points that are both the technical, people and business skill as mentioned in the job description. I want to add one point here before I move on is that everyone wants results-driven, successful individuals. If I am an interviewer, I want to see candidates who actually deliver on outcomes.

I want to see individuals who, despite challenges, rise above challenges and deliver again. The only reason you might not deliver is if there is a huge learning curve and consequently you have learned something from it. So remember, even at the times of failures, if there is some learning that you have done and able to show that you have remedied or again driven results, those become very interesting conversations to have. So companies are looking for successful candidates, results-oriented candidates, and that is how you should present yourself during these interviews. There are going to be certain tools and frameworks that bring out how analytical or logical you are for that particular industry.

And it also is important that you understand some of these frameworks specifically for the industry that they are in. For example, Gantt charts is something that is very relevant for say anything related to process or program management or anything related to supply chains. If you're talking about root cause analysis, it's a very important tool if you're doing things like for engineering related rules. So there's a bunch of frameworks over here. Some of them should be well known to you, but find those frameworks such as these that I mentioned on the screen, but use some of them for the discussions you have.

Every discussion that you have, when it is structured through frameworks and it has a logical approach to those answers, it makes it a greater fit for the industry and consequently it also makes you sound much more logical and analytical as you talk about the problem. So definitely read about these tools and frameworks. If some of them are new, dig deeper into it. If some are not new, then kudos to you. But learn everything that is relevant to you for your industry sector or the jobs section that you're heading towards.

We'll do a couple of quick questions. I think that's necessary to understand how this interview process works. It's a common question that students have asked. One of the questions is, hey, I do not really fit with the job description skills. So there are candidates who have come to us and asked us, I'm very excited about a certain field, for example, a software field.

But when you look at the job description, there's a bunch of things that absolutely make no sense to me. I've never had any practice in. Can it still be a good fit for this kind of role? We have done a certain set of skill assessments, so you can take a look at that and make an estimation for yourself. But even if you have not, if you look at the job description and find that there is maybe less than a 70% match, you can make a quick estimation of those key skills required, both people, business and technical skills. and try and mark with respect to where you are in that skill categorization.

If you meet 70% of the skills and above, you are a good fit. But if you are not, then you really need to seriously consider about, hey, is this the sector I want to get in? Is this a specific kind of

job skills that I want to, like a job role that I want to get into? You might be a great software engineer, just not a good, for example, front-end developer. Back-end may be your cup of tea. You might be a great engineer. You might be a great thermal engineer and have nothing to do with, say, things related to, say, metallurgy or materials processing.

Therefore, any role that is focused upon a branch of engineering that is not your cup of tea might not be a great fit for you. And those kind of roles are not something that you should be applying for. Remember that even if you manage to crack interviews, the job description is a very clear indicator of the kind of work you will be doing in the workplace. If you have no interest, if you have no aptitude for that kind of roles, you should not even be applying for such kind of roles. So that's the first set of questions that pop to my mind.

students often come to us saying that, hey, I'm having trouble getting shortlisted. So, I reached out to a certain company, I applied, maybe I applied for like hundreds of companies, but I never really got shortlisted with that company. What could be the problems? Now, this is a very generic and a broad question, but I think there are a few things that you need to look through. Firstly, Do that skill analysis that I just mentioned. And see if really this kind of roles are the ones that you should be applying to.

If not, it is very clear. You don't fit. So therefore, there is no chance that an interviewer would actually call you over for interviews. You just would not even go through the screening route. But if your analysis of yourself is, hey, I have the certain set of skills. It is just that I'm not able to present myself in that right way. When I read a job description, it makes perfect sense.

I've done work related to that. I should be getting calls, but I'm not really getting calls. Then there could be two problems. First and foremost is that your resume does not reflect the fit with respect to that job description. So if your resume is, for example, very generic, it does not talk about the skills and the experience required as mentioned in the job description, then clearly, first it gets booted out at any sort of preliminary screening. And secondly, even if someone within the company interested in your profile reads it, they would see there is no connection or no fit between the resume and the job description.

Remember, they do not know you personally. You might be someone who has all that knowledge within you, but if you do not express it, other people do not know it. So that's the first part of it. There are roles where you'll have to send over both your resume as well as cover letter. If your resume is a fit, but if your cover letter is too generic, it doesn't talk to the point, then it's again a source of failure. So you need to analyze your failure with respect to all the three criteria.

Now, before I jump, I want to just add one more point. What is a cover letter and how is it different from a resume? All your skills as such would be reflected on your resume. Cover letter is a clear expression of interest. why you, why the company, why that role, right? You need to express it shortly, succinctly, within maybe a paragraph or two and explain your passion or interest for that role. So if a cover letter doesn't explain why that company, why that role and why you, and it just talks about random things which are very generic, a person reading it would not be convinced that you are a great fit and consequently ignore you for that role.

So remember, cover all your bases on these three directions and then think about why you are not getting shortlisted. Once you have done that, you can ask the question that you have had a lot of interview calls, but you are not able to get through interviews. Clearly, if you're not able

to get through interviews, there are a couple of things. One, the experiences that you have might not be, even though they have been highlighted in the resume itself, they might have been modified just to make a fit. But your actual experiences that you're discussing over an interview does not reflect the actual skills required for the job description.

So you might have explained that you have, for example, great leadership skills and maybe talked about a couple of honorary posts that you had when you were working in your school days. But when it comes to showing leadership skills as a behavioral interview that an interviewer asks, you fail to show how you showed leadership. How did you manage people? How did you overcome obstacles? How did you inspire others? How did you achieve results? Maybe those things are not coming out really well. It could be that you do not have this experience itself or you are not able to communicate them really well. So think on those two dimensions and see where it really falls.

If communication is an issue, remember there are ways in which you can improve your delivery make it more effective without worrying too much about your vocabulary or your improvement in the native language itself. For example, English is not a native language, but if you are trying to be proficient in the language, you might not be proficient, but still you can, despite the lack of proficiency, you can communicate ideas and your skills well if you follow certain practices. For example, talking always from the behavioral star interview patterns. We will talk a little bit more about it. Finally, if you have a knowledge of STAR but you have not practiced it, it's going to be a train wreck.

When I began my career and I had to interview for managerial roles, I just felt that the people who had trained, especially US students who are trained on these models and walked into those interviews had a huge advantage over people such as me who are engineers but walking into these roles without practicing much on how to explain answers and make yourself an effective communicator. So if you have not practiced STAR, it clearly tells on the interviews, practice, practice, practice until you become really proficient of explaining every answer in the proper structure of a situation, task, action and result. In fact, if you follow that process, your communication skills would actually surprisingly show a large improvement, even though you might have native proficiency in the language you are trying to communicate, which invariably happens to be English. We will look into some of these behavioral cues that a person sends across through interview.

So a final note can be that you actually speak well. At least you speak effectively. And you have work experience. But despite that, you're somehow lacking. You're not coming through.

You're not closing the loop for the interviews. Now, it could be related to a bunch of other things. But one key challenge could be that you're not able to project your body language. You're not able to come across as convincing. I know that these things should not really matter for, let's say, a technical interview.

This is what we would feel like. But people are judgmental. People make calls about, hey, can they work with you? Can you be a candidate that they can pull into the company and give work onto? So these judgments are being always made by your interviewers, by your hiring manager. So if you don't have, for example, a good, confident, open smile, if you're not smiling regularly, You don't have to be cracking into a smile. A genuine, pleasant smile during the interview that encourages a conversation. If you're not welcoming, you don't have welcoming gestures.

We'll discuss a little bit more in the body language. But if you don't have those things, it comes across as, hey, the person is too negative, too pessimistic, too closed to feedback or mentorship. very low in confidence not clear about what they're saying even though you might be saying technically relevant things if you are not projecting them out with confidence the image that is conveyed or the message that is taken by the interviewer may be very different from what you're trying Remember, this is a very good trip. Always be over-dressed and over-groomed rather than under-dressed and under-groomed. You never ever will fail an interview for looking the best you can look, being well professionally dressed, but you will definitely come across as someone who doesn't have the consciousness required to actually be a good employee. Or you will come across as someone who is too lazy if you are dressed badly, if you do not give the polish or the professional attitude required to be successful as an employee.

So err on the side of being overdressed or professionally attired and being well-groomed. Communication is less about fluency and control over the language, at least from an interviewer's perspective. It is more about showing that you are a confident speaker, that you can discuss things analytically, logically, and clearly. So if you use STAR framework, for example, you can talk about things much more clearly and analytically without actually getting lost into the language and the nuances of how you communicate as a fantastic English speaker.

That's irrelevant. Having a good body language encourages people to understand that you are a sincere candidate. You have passion, enthusiasm for what you're doing. If there is one single thing that is always on top of a mind of an interviewer, it is whether the candidate is passionate for that role. Do they see themselves as someone who would love to work in the company? Because they do not want people who hate the role do not like the company, come over there and become deadweights to the team. So always look at how do you show the confidence, how do you show your passion, how do you show your enthusiasm for the work.

And towards the end, I suggest few things. There is a fantastic discussion by a TED Talk by Ami Kadhi. You may want to take a look at that. And then it gives you some sort of like good postures and good practices to do before you step on to the interview. it enables you to come across much more relaxed, much more confident. So, watch some of the stocks, do a little bit more deep dive into body languages, body postures, be more confident, be genuine, be nice.

I think your interviews should go well, if you at least covered basis on these directions. A very important, I think, final set of questions that we wanted to look at is, what happens if you do not match 100% with the job description? would I get rejected? Did I get rejected just because I was not a complete fit for that role? From experience where I have interviewed maybe 100 to 200 candidates for different teams across my roles in the technology sector, and based upon experiences of Vinod, for example, hiring maybe thousands of candidates, We have always noticed that there is no one, no candidate ever that we have stumbled across who is a perfect fit. And there is never ever a candidate where all the interviewers agree that the candidate is a perfect fit. Every candidate is always someone with either, oh, they have a set of mediocre skills in some directions, but they have some outstanding skills in certain directions.

That's normally how the candidate selection pool is. Sometimes we do meet with candidates who are a good fit, but never 100%. So don't worry if your skills are not 100% for the job. If you're 70% or above, it should be a fantastic fit. If you're less than 70%, if you're less than 50%, if you're less than 30%, you really need to start considering, hey, is this really the job skills or job sign I'm trying to apply for? Should I be applying for something else? So understand things from the recruiter's perspective and understand that no hiring decision is from 100% fit.

Do not be someone who has a negative score on the interviewer. So for example, if you have an interview and then it comes across really bad, that is going to hurt. If you have a few averages and some fantastic, that is probably going to work out perfectly OK. You don't have to have fantastic answers and fantastic interview calls every single time. You just need to ensure that they are okay, better in most and a few fantastic ones.

Like few replies, few work that you do is fantastic. That's more than enough. Try not to be in the place where someone has a bad opinion or takes away that, hey, I never want to hire this candidate, right? That's going to really hurt you. And so that with that we end the whole discussion about looking through interviews, preparing for interviews and then delivering I think confident interviews. We will step a little bit deeper next time into the nuances of star interview questions.