

MODULE 3 Communication and Terminology for Work Search

TOPIC 4 Employment Interviews

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- ◆ demonstrate understanding of job requirements; be able to verbalize their own skills and experience in the context of an employment interview to demonstrate that they meet those requirements
- ◆ clarify misunderstandings / verify understanding in an interview
- ◆ be familiar with other language strategies which will enhance their performance in an employment interview

ACCOUNTING TERMINOLOGY WORKSHOP

TOPIC	SKILLS	CLB COMPETENCE AREA	COMPETENCIES	PRE-TASKS	TASK	POST TASK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Accounting Employment Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listening/ Speaking ◆ Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ exchanging information ◆ suasion ◆ unformatted text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ be familiar with employment interviews procedures ◆ understand culturally determined expectations and procedures at an interview ◆ be able to articulate own skills and experience using language that is expected by employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ be aware of certain employment interview “rules” ◆ be familiar with employment interview procedure ◆ identify and be aware of kinds of employment interview questions ◆ categorize clarification of meaning language ◆ be familiar with different language strategies appropriate for employment interviews ◆ analyze dialogue of an employment interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ role play an employment interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ find a job ad and write a dialogue for it

Facilitator's Guide for Module 3

Topic 4: Employment Interviews

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Content

Facilitator should be aware of typical employment interview questions and employer expectations.

Delivery

As many copies as necessary should be made of the following handouts:

- ◆ Handout 1 Job Ad
- ◆ Handout 2 Kumar Somasundram's Résumé
- ◆ Handout 3 Interview Questions
- ◆ Handout 4 Vocabulary Matching Activity
- ◆ Handout 5 Functional Language
- ◆ Handout 6 More Clarification Language
- ◆ Handout 7 Strategies for a Persuasive Interview (two pages)
- ◆ Handout 8 Employment Interview (three pages)

Terminology List (optional)

Materials needed: access to an overhead projector, OHT 1, 2.

Prepare questions for pre-task 11 on chart paper.

Methodology

Introduction

- (10 minutes)** 1. Elicit from participants:
- What is an interview?
 - Have you had job interviews in your country?
 - What questions did they ask you?
 - How did you prepare for such interviews?
 - How would you prepare for an accounting job interview in Canada / Ontario?

Ask participants to interview their partners (or discuss the above questions in groups of three). Discuss by having volunteers report the answers.

Pre-Tasks

- (20 minutes)** 1. (Optional)
- Ask participants to write their own “Top Ten Rules for an Employment Interview in Canada”. Let them work in groups of four, choosing one participant to be secretary. Review, having volunteers read the rules to class (or write them on the board), and verify with OHT 1. Elicit vocabulary explanation from class.
- Ask the class if these “rules” are the same or different in their country.
- (20 minutes)** 2. Elicit from participants what they know about typical interviews for an accounting management position. Ask participants to discuss in groups the following questions (have them written on the board):
1. What type of an interview do you think you might have when you apply for an accounting/management position?
 2. Will the interview be formal or relaxed?
Will there be one interview or several?
A written test?
A practical test?
 3. What people will you have an interview with?

Notes for facilitator:

- ◆ If the position entails dealing with the public (customers, department staff, etc.), one's personality and attitudes will be assessed. There will likely be an interview with a personnel (human resources) department representative, department's supervisor/manager, or a VP (vice president), depending on the seniority of the position for which you are applying.
- ◆ If it is a large organization, there might be three or four interviews before the final hiring decision is reached.

Discuss answers with the class.

(25 minutes) 3.

- a) Ask groups of four participants to write eight employment interview questions for an individual applying for the job featured in the classified ad in Handout 1. Assume that the applicant has the accounting background described on the résumé in Handout 2.
- b) Instruct participants to include questions asked during the greeting stage. Have participants discuss the intention of these questions and how they relate to the purpose of the interview.
- c) Take up with the class by having volunteers write questions on the board. Have a class discussion on grammar and appropriateness of phrases/words being used. Give examples of greeting questions on the board.

Examples of greeting stage questions (i.e., icebreakers):

1. Did you have any trouble finding us?
2. We hope we didn't keep you waiting too long.
3. You haven't been here very long.
How do you like Toronto / Ontario / Canada?

(15 minutes) 4. Distribute Handout 3 and ask pairs to select questions that *should not* be asked by an interviewee (an applicant) during a job interview. Review orally with the class.
(Optional)

(15 minutes) 5. Have groups of three participants match the terms with their explanations on Handout 4. Take up with the class orally (volunteers read the answers) and on the board/OHP.
(Optional)

(20 minutes) 6. Elicit from groups phrases used to ask for repetition, clarification, elaboration (i.e., giving more details), and verification. Give participants about ten minutes and then have volunteers write expressions on the board (in four columns); class corrects.
(Optional)

<u>Repetition</u>	<u>Clarification</u>	<u>Elaboration</u>	<u>Verification</u>
=	=	=	=

Also, refer participants back to Module 1, Topic 1 where clarification language was reviewed.

(15 minutes) 7. Ask pairs to work on Handout 5 selecting inappropriate phrases and strategies. Review orally with the class or on OHP (OHT 2).

(40 minutes) 8. Distribute Handouts 6 and 7, which contain more useful expressions that might be used by an interviewee during a job interview. Ask groups of three participants to read expressions and negotiate the meaning of those that are not clear. Have selected participants read and explain unclear expressions to the class.

(10 minutes) 9. Go back to Handouts 1 and 2. Ask participants to re-read the résumé and the job ad.

(30 minutes) 10. Ask participants to listen to the facilitator reading the script of a portion of a job interview. The script on Handout 8 could be distributed before or after the facilitator reads it to the class.

(Optional) **Note:** The facilitator could prepare a cloze exercise to accompany the interview script (i.e., class listens a few times to the interview and fills in the missing words). Participants compare with partner's work.

Review as a class (volunteers read sentences to class).

- (30 minutes)** 11. If participants do not have Handout 8, distribute it now. Ask groups to analyze the interview: underline inappropriate expressions/responses used, replace them

with more appropriate responses/expressions (perhaps from Handout 6). Participants are guided in their analyses by negotiating the answers to the following questions: (prepared on chart paper)

1. What did Kumar Somasundram do right?
2. What did Kumar Somasundram do wrong?
3. Did he answer appropriately by providing sufficient information?
4. Did he seek clarification when necessary?
5. Did he ask appropriate questions?
6. Did he show a sincere interest in getting a job?
7. If you were Mr. Kowalski, would you offer Kumar the position of Controller?

Take up the questions with the class (volunteers from each group present some answers) and show some possible, more appropriate phrases/ expressions/ responses using the Facilitator's Notes.

Task

(45 minutes) 1.

Have participants work in groups of three and write a script of a job interview, using their résumés and a job ad from previous lesson handouts. Participants could use parts of Handout 8 (corrected version) as a model. Limit length to one page. Ask participants to practice reading their scripts in pairs.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Participant A | - plays an interviewee |
| Participant B | - plays an interviewer |
| Participant C | - plays an evaluator, who evaluates both participant A and B according to questions used in Pre-Task 1 |

Then participants switch their roles and practice reading the same interview again.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Participant C | - becomes an interviewee |
| Participant A | - becomes an interviewer |
| Participant B | - becomes an evaluator |

Out-of-Class

Post-Task

Participants could find a job ad for which they would like to apply and write a job interview for it (could tape with another classmate at home). Then bring it to the next class to present.

OHT 1

Top Ten Rules for an Interview

1. Be on time. (10-15 minutes prior to the interview.)
2. Dress in a business-like fashion. (If not sure, choose a conservative style.)
3. Smile occasionally. (Try to create an alert, open, and pleasant appearance.)
4. Keep your interview conversational. (Be an active participant, not a passive respondent. Don't limit your answers to "yes" or "no.")
5. Do not give monologues. (Answers should not be longer than two minutes. Don't try to control the interview.)
6. Keep your purpose in mind. (Mention your main points and describe what you can do for this organization.)
7. Emphasize the positive. (Put negative aspects in the best light.)
8. Provide details. (Quantify the size of staff you supervised, the cost reduction you achieved, or the increase in sales you brought about.)
9. Express your interest in the job. (State your desire to work for the organization and tell the interviewers why you want to work for their company, why you are a perfect candidate for the position)
10. Follow-up. (Send a thank-you letter for the time, consideration, and information, or make a telephone call after each interview)

Adapted from: Delvca, M.J. Best Answers to the 201 Most Frequently Asked interview Questions. Chicago: McGraw Hill, 1989.

Handout 1

CONTROLLER**(Manufacturer Located in Brampton)**

Reporting to the President, you will have full responsibility for financial & accounting matters including preparation of financial statements, management reporting, banking relationships and supervision of daily accounting and administration. You are an energetic, take-charge professional with extraordinary organizational, financial management and cost accounting abilities. Solid computer and people skills are essential, as is a CA/CMA/CGA designation. Previous manufacturing experience is a must.

Please forward your resume to

G.G.S Plastic Engineering Inc.

FAX# (905) 791-1450

Handout 2

	<p>KUMAR SOMASUNDRAM 25 Sanromano Way, Apt 1002 North York, Ontario, Z5T 1X5 (416) 665-XXXX</p>
Summary	<p>C.A. with ten years of financial management reporting experience, including six years of cost accounting and three years of public accounting. Specialized in food service industry, gaining extensive supervisory experience. Involved with project development and network accounting systems. Proficiency in Paradox, dBase, Lotus 1-2-3 –5.1, Excel and many accounting software packages.</p>
Experience	<p>Fiscal Director June 1994-Aug. 200X DAYTON Corporation, New Delhi, India.</p> <p>Reported to CFO (Controller of Financial Operations). Prepared operational budget of \$48 million. Developed variance analyses and cost standards for company's seven geographical regions. Was in charge of maintaining cost accounting for division.</p> <p>Job Accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Designed and implemented weekly managerial accounting seminars to improve fiscal responsibility of all division managers by reviewing and teaching techniques to minimize expenses and maximize revenue. ➤ Reorganized reporting and accounting structure within division, providing improved analysis and control. ➤ Minimized costs by 17 per cent <p>Manager of Cost and Budget Nov. 1991-May 1994 DELHI WIDGET, Delhi, India.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reported to director of financial planning. Analyzed and recommended cost reduction and revenue enhancement measures. Prepared operating Budget. <p>Job Accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cut costs by 15 per cent in the first year. ➤ Was in charge of organizing and teaching educational series of courses for non-accountants to improve fiscal responsibility of managers. <p>Staff Accountant Sept. 1989 – Sept. 1991 PRECISE ACCOUNTING, Delhi, India</p> <p>Performed audit tasks. Participated in a management accounting assignment by providing technical accounting assistance.</p>
Education:	B. S. Business, University of Delhi, 1984-1988
Other Information:	Chartered Accountant in Delhi, 1988-1991
References:	Available upon request

Handout 3

Interview Questions

Discuss and circle the questions that an interviewee should not ask during a job interview. Give the reasons:

1. What is the size of your company?
2. What is the job title?
3. What are the products / services your company provides?
4. Who will work with me?
5. To whom will I report?
6. How many people will I supervise? (for a supervisory/managerial position)
7. Will I be given any training? (for a self-starter position)
8. What are the hours?
9. What is the salary? (at the first interview)
10. When can I start the job?
11. What are the chances for promotion?
12. What holidays and other benefits will I have? (at the first interview)
13. How many coffee breaks will I have throughout the day?
14. Could I see the office where I will be working?
15. Could you tell me about the work schedule?

Adapted from: Lynham, S., and M. Brown. Interviews. Hilton Kegnes: The Chalkface Project, 1991.

Handout 4

Vocabulary Matching Activity

Match the following terms with the numbered phrase that best explains the term or concept (only eight answers are correct).

_____ a) career expectations / goals	1. the salary you can be paid
_____ b) qualifications	2. the things you can do
_____ c) salary range	3. the ideas you have about your employment future
_____ d) promotion	4. the things that indicate you are able to do something
_____ e) benefits	5. the upper and lower limits of what you can be paid
_____ f) rapport	6. what you hope to be able to accomplish in your field of work
_____ g) remuneration	7. medical / dental coverage, sick days, holidays, etc.
_____ h) skills	8. the most you can be paid
	9. a standard that measures the amount of work done
	10. an increase in responsibility and/or salary
	11. a comfortable feeling established between people

Adapted from: Wiley, T.S., and M.S. Wrigley. Communicating in the Real World: Developing Communication Skills for Business and the Professions. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1987.

Handout 5 / OHT 2

Functional Language

The following phrases or strategies might be used by an applicant when he or she doesn't understand an interviewer's questions or wants to verify that the interviewer has been following the applicant's answers / descriptions.

Discuss with your partner:

1. Which do you consider inappropriate?
2. Why?

1. Asking for clarification

- a) Could you repeat that, please? I don't understand.
- b) What was that?
- c) I don't understand. Please repeat?
- d) Sorry?
- e) I'm not quite sure that I understand you.
- f) Would you repeat that, please? I don't quite understand.
- g) Just run that past me again?
- h) What?
- i) Pardon?
- j) Would you mind repeating the question?
- k) Sorry, but I'm not sure what you mean exactly. Could you elaborate?
- l) Come again?

2. Verifying understanding

- a) See what I mean?
- b) Do I make myself clear?
- c) Do you follow me?
- d) Is my point clear?
- e) I'm sorry, can you follow me?
- f) Can you keep track?
- g) Is my line of argument clear?
- h) Am I being clear?
- i) Understand?
- j) Are you with me?
- k) Am I difficult to follow?
- l) Do you know what I mean?
- m) Do you understand this point?

Adapted from: O'Grady, C., and M. Millen. Finding Common Ground: Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Job Seekers. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, 1994.

FACILITATOR'S ANSWER SHEET FOR HANDOUTS 3, 4, 5

Handout 3	Handout 4	Handout 5	
		Answers to #1	Answers to #2
1	a - 6		
2	b - 4	b	a
3	c - 5	d	d
7	d - 10	g	f
9	e - 7	h	i
10	f - 11	i	j
12	g - 1		l
13	h - 2		m
14			

Handout 6 – More Clarification Language

To expand partial understanding:

- 1) Draw a likely inference and ask if it is correct:
 - ◆ “By..., do you mean...?”
 - ◆ “So you want me to talk about...?”
 - ◆ “So you’re interested in what I would do if...?”
 - ◆ “When you say..., do you mean...?”
 - ◆ “So what you want to know is...?”
- 2) Ask questions to clarify meaning:
Repeat the word, then ask what it means.
 - ◆ “I’m sorry, what exactly do you mean by...?”
 - ◆ “What does that mean exactly?”
 - ◆ (repeat the word or phrase with rising intonation) “I’m sorry I didn’t quite get what you meant there.”
- 3) Ask for more details:
 - ◆ “Could you tell me a bit more about that situation?”
 - ◆ “I’m sorry, could you elaborate on that?”
 - ◆ “Could you go into that a bit more?”
- 4) Useful strategies for clarifying underlying intention include:
 - ◆ “So basically you’re a bit worried about...”
 - ◆ “So what you’re actually concerned about is whether I’ll be able to...”
 - ◆ “So would you like me to tell you about...”
 - ◆ “Are you concerned that I might / might not...”
 - ◆ “So do you mean you’re worried about...”
- 5) In the interview, labels may function to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>structure a list</i> - the first point I’d like to make is... - secondly..., finally... ◆ <i>organize information flow</i> - I’d like to refer back to my point about... - Getting back to... - Moving on to... ◆ <i>identify a purpose or motive</i> - I mention this because... - I’m raising this in order to... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>assign emphasis</i> - My main point is... - The most critical thing is... ◆ <i>introduce a suggestion when asked a hypothetical question</i> - If I were in that situation, I would... - Here’s what I would do... ◆ <i>introduce a conclusion</i> - So in other words... - Bringing this to a close I’d like to say...
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Adapted from: O’Grady, C., and M. Millen. *Finding Common Ground: Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Job Seekers*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, 1994.

Handout 7 (page 1 of 2)

Strategies for a Persuasive Interview

1. **Be an active participant in the interview process, not a passive respondent.**
 - ◆ Sometimes interrupt the interview if you have a meaningful comment to make, or a relevant question to ask:
 - “Regarding your point about... “
 - “I’d like to add...”
 - “You mentioned...”
 - “do you think...?”
 - ◆ Offer a summary statement of your suitability for the position.
 - ◆ Make use of the time available to elaborate, substantiate, and comment.
 - ◆ Ask the panel when you should expect to hear of their decision.
2. **Express interest in employer by demonstrating common interests, views, and concerns.**
 - ◆ Claim common knowledge:
 - “I’ve read your annual report and...”
 - “I visited your computer department last week and noticed...”
 - ◆ Refer directly to the organization and its work:
 - “What interests me most about the work of [x] is...”
 - “I’m very keen to get this position because I’m most interested in the work you’re doing on....”
 - ◆ Show you possess the skills and qualities the employer needs.
 - ◆ Refer to favourable comments made by others about the organization:
 - “I spoke to [x]. She told me about your work in...”
 - “I know [x]. He’s very pleased with the in-house training you provide.”
 - ◆ Be optimistic, specify your career goal, and show how this position relates to it:
 - “This job would enable me to contribute ... and also to develop skills in...”
 - “Eventually I want to be in the position of...”
 - ◆ Notice and attend to the interviewers’ ideas and opinions by:
 - Picking up on their comments,
 - Showing interest in their answers to your questions,
 - Offering verbal and non-verbal feedback when they are talking: “I see”, “right”, “that’s really interesting”.
3. **Avoid apologetic, pessimistic language that reduces and qualifies achievements:**
 - “I’ve done a bit of work in that area...”
 - “I could be wrong but...”
 - “I’m not really sure about that but...”
 - “fairly good”, “just a bit”, “pretty good”
4. **Support your claims and arguments:**
 - ◆ Clarify, amplify, and elaborate.
 - ◆ Provide evidence, give concrete examples to illustrate your claims, substantiate assertions with facts, examples, and statistics.
5. **Demonstrate relevant knowledge:**
 - ◆ Refer to relevant research and reading.
 - ◆ Use the technical and professional language of your field.

Handout 7 (Page 2 of 2)

Strategy	Language
1. Avoid powerless talk ➤ Avoid qualifiers ➤ Avoid language which defends and justifies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ You know... ◆ sort of...; kind of...; just ◆ How can I get local experience if no one will give me a chance?
2. Express adaptability and flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ I might need some advice on that but I'm very adaptable. ◆ That could be a difficulty. However, I'm most interested in developing in that area.
3. Exert control over talk ➤ Use clarifying strategies ➤ Use formulations and summaries to interpret what is being said ➤ Use directing strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Do you mean... ◆ Are you saying... ◆ So you're concerned there could be communications problems. ◆ You seem concerned that my experience may not be relevant. ◆ So what you're worried about is... ◆ So it seems you feel there could be difficulties with .. ◆ Could I just make a point here... ◆ Can I just go back to your concern about . . ◆ May I ask a question?
4. Reassure through asserting the value and relevance of overseas experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ I hold... ◆ I'm eligible for... ◆ I'm aware of your project [x] and I feel that my experience is relevant. ◆ I'm confident I can... ◆ I believe you'll find my experience relevant. ◆ I'm quite sure I'd have no difficulties coping with...
5. Acknowledge concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ That's true. ◆ I realize that. ◆ Yes, I realize X is different here. ◆ I understand your concern. However... ◆ I appreciate that, but...

Adapted from: O'Grady, C., and M. Millen. Finding Common Ground: Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Job Seekers. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, 1994.

Handout 8 (page 1 of 3)

Employment Interview

Mr. Kowalski ↔ Mr. K. Mr. Somasundram ↔ Mr. S.

- Mr. K.:** Good morning, Mr. Somasundram. How do you do?
- Mr. S.:** Fine, thank you.
- Mr. K.:** Please sit down. My name is Mr. Kowalski and I am the Personnel Department Officer. I believe your interview was set up for ten o'clock. How come you are a half-hour late? Did you have trouble finding our location?
- Mr. S.:** Well, I got caught in the morning traffic on the way here.
- Mr. K.:** I understand. Since we are behind schedule, let's start our interview right away. I will ask you some questions and then answer any questions you might have about the position or our company. Could you tell us a little bit about your background?
- Mr. S.:** Well, I was born in Sri Lanka and completed my school there. My father was a businessman and my mother raised the kids. I...
- Mr. K.:** I did not mean your personal background, I asked you to describe your professional background. Anyway, the controller's position requires preparation of financial statements and management reports. Have you ever...
- Mr. S.:** I've done a bit of work in that area. I mostly dealt with preparation of operating budgets, and revenue or cost reporting.
- Mr. K.:** I see. If you were to zero in on one of your strengths, what would it be?
- Mr. S.:** Let me think. I am very analytical and detail-oriented and therefore I feel that I am a very good candidate for the controller's position.
- Mr. K.:** Oh. If you were to choose one of your weaknesses, what would it be and how would you rectify it?
- Mr. S.:** I'm sorry, could you elaborate on that?
- Mr. K.:** How would you correct such a weakness?
- Mr. S.:** Well, to tell you the truth, I don't think I have any weaknesses.
- Mr. K.:** Do you consider yourself a self-starter?
- Mr. S.:** As my résumé indicates, I reorganized the reporting and accounting structures, initiated educational services of courses, implemented weekly managerial accounting seminars...
- Mr. K.:** Yes. Thank you.

Handout 8 (page 2 of 3)

- Mr. S.:** ...and developed variance analyses.
- Mr. K.:** Yes, thank you. A candidate for this position is expected to have solid people skills. Can you give an example or two of your ability to manage or supervise?
- Mr. S.:** I supervised a group of people at Dayton Corporation.
- Mr. K.:** How big a group was it?
- Mr. S.:** I don't remember the exact number of people - maybe 10 or 15.
- Mr. K.:** Uh-huh. What kind of people do you like working with?
- Mr. S.:** I love to work with hard-working, committed individuals.
- Mr. K.:** Tell me then, what kind of people do you find the most difficult to work with and why?
- Mr. S.:** Why? I dislike being around lazy, uncooperative, and insubordinate employees.
- Mr. K.:** Oh. Are you comfortable about working in a team environment?
- Mr. S.:** Yes, definitely. I feel that I have excellent leadership skills and quite a lot of experience in building team morale. I had a very good rapport with people I managed.
- Mr. K.:** I will give you a hypothetical situation and would like you to describe your approach. Let's say that the director of finance gives you a report that is incorrect and asks you to distribute it. You point out the mistakes, he admits that he is aware of them but he still wants you to issue that report. What would you do?
- Mr. S.:** I have never had a confrontation with my superiors in my previous jobs. As a loyal employee, I think I would follow whatever the director says.
- Mr. K.:** I see. In your previous jobs what kind of pressures did you encounter?
- Mr. S.:** Sorry?
- Mr. K.:** Did you have many deadlines to meet or did you have to work a lot of overtime?
- Mr. S.:** Of course, I had to work a lot of overtime as a Fiscal Director. However, we had a flexible approach to deadlines and I tried to organize my responsibilities well, so I was usually ahead of time in terms of monthly or annual reporting.
- Mr. K.:** Do you mind then working overtime when it is required?
- Mr. S.:** Not at all. Thank you.

Handout 8 (page 3 of 3)

- Mr. K.:** Could you tell me what are some things about your last job that you found difficult to do?
- Mr. S.:** I really disliked, I mean, had a low tolerance for mistakes. Some of accountants at Delhi Widget were, I feel, unqualified for their positions, and I had to correct their cost analysis quite often and... Are you with me?
- Mr. K.:** Yes, I understand. Mr. Somasundram, what do you think is your greatest achievement to date?
- Mr. S.:** I don't quite follow you.
- Mr. K.:** What was your biggest achievement at your previous positions?
- Mr. S.:** I'm very proud of my continuous progress and increase in responsibilities, and I'm particularly proud of the goals I managed to achieve as Fiscal Director of Dayton Corporation.
- Mr. K.:** Well, it seems that your experience does not fully match the job requirements of the Controller's position. Why would you feel that you are a good candidate?
- Mr. S.:** Well, don't I have a C.A. designation? I believe that is one of your professional requirements. Besides, I'm a fast learner and I'm eager to learn your company's procedures.
- Mr. K.:** I see. If we were to hire you, what would you expect the company to do for you?
- Mr. S.:** Let me think. I would definitely need assistance and training in the initial stages.
- Mr. K.:** Oh, we need a self-starter, a take-charge professional.
- Mr. S.:** I assure you that I possess these traits.
- Mr. K.:** Before we finish, what is it that you are looking for in our company?
- Mr. S.:** Ideally, I would like to use my skills and contribute to the company's future growth.
- Mr. K.:** Very well. And the last question. What kind of remuneration do you expect?
- Mr. S.:** So you want to know what my salary expectation is? Well, I am quite flexible. I guess the current market rate.
- Mr. K.:** I see. Well, thank you very much for your time. . . .
- Mr. S.:** Should I call you back to learn about your decision? I am very keen on getting this position.
- Mr. K.:** That won't be necessary. We will contact you, either by phone or by letter, within a week.
- Mr. S.:** Oh, okay. Thank you and see you soon, hopefully.

Mr. K.: Yes, goodbye.

FACILITATOR'S NOTES FOR HANDOUT 8

Employment Interview

Mr. Kowalski ⇔ Mr. K.

Mr. Somasundram ⇔ Mr. S.

Mr. K.: *Good morning, Mr. Somasundram. How do you do?*

Mr. S.: *Fine, thank you.* 1

Mr. K.: *Please sit down. My name is Mr. Kowalski and I am the Personnel Department Officer. I believe your interview was set up for ten o'clock. How come you are a half-hour late? Did you have trouble finding our location?*

Mr. S.: *Well, I got caught in the morning traffic on the way here.* 2

Mr. K.: *I understand. Since we are behind schedule, let's start our interview right away. I will ask you some questions and then answer any questions you might have about the position or our company. Could you tell us a little bit about your background?*

Mr. S.: *Well, I was born in Sri Lanka and completed my school there. My father was a businessman and my mother raised the kids. I...* 3

Mr. K.: *I did not mean your personal background. I asked you to describe your professional background. Anyway, the controller's position requires preparation of financial statements and management reports. Have you ever...*

Mr. S.: 4 *I've done a bit of work in that area. I mostly dealt with preparation of operating budgets, and revenue or cost reporting.*

Mr. K.: *I see. If you were to zero in on one of your strengths, what would it be?*

Mr. S.: *Let me think. I am very analytical and detail-oriented and therefore I feel that I am a very good candidate for the controller's position.* 5

Mr. K.: *Oh. If you were to choose one of your weaknesses, what would it be and how would you rectify it?*

Mr. S.: *I'm sorry, could you elaborate on that?*

Mr. K.: *How would you correct such a weakness?*

Mr. S.: *Well, to tell you the truth, I don't think I have any weaknesses.* 6

Mr. K.: *Do you consider yourself a self-starter?*

Mr. S.: *As my résumé indicates, I reorganized the reporting and accounting structures, initiated educational services of courses, implemented weekly managerial accounting seminars...* 7

Mr. K.: *Yes. Thank you.* 8

- Mr. S.:** *...and developed variance analyses.*
- Mr. K.:** *Yes, thank you. A candidate for this position is expected to have solid people skills. Can you give an example or two of your ability to manage or supervise?*
- Mr. S.:** *I supervised a group of people at Dayton Corporation.*
- Mr. K.:** *How big a group was it?*
- Mr. S.:** *I don't remember the exact number of people - maybe 10 or 15. 9*
- Mr. K.:** *Uh-huh. What kind of people do you like working with?*
- Mr. S.:** *I love to work with hard-working, committed individuals.*
- Mr. K.:** *Tell me then, what kind of people do you find the most difficult to work with and why?*
- Mr. S.:** *Why? I dislike being around lazy, uncooperative, and insubordinate employees. 10*
- Mr. K.:** *Oh. Are you comfortable about working in a team environment?*
- Mr. S.:** *Yes, definitely. I feel that I have excellent leadership skills and quite a lot of experience in building team morale. I had a very good rapport with people I managed. 11*
- Mr. K.:** *I will give you a hypothetical situation and would like you to describe your approach. Let's say that the director of finance gives you a report that is incorrect and asks you to distribute it. You point out the mistakes, he admits that he is aware of them but he still wants you to issue that report. What would you do?*
- Mr. S.:** *I have never had a confrontation with my superiors in my previous jobs. As a loyal employee, I think I would follow whatever the director says. 12*
- Mr. K.:** *I see. In your previous jobs what kind of pressures did you encounter?*
- Mr. S.:** *Sorry? 13*
- Mr. K.:** *Did you have many deadlines to meet or did you have to work a lot of overtime?*
- Mr. S.:** *Of course, I had to work a lot overtime as a Fiscal Director. However, we had a flexible approach to deadlines and I tried to organize my responsibilities well, so I was usually ahead of time in terms of monthly or annual reporting.*
- Mr. K.:** *Do you mind then working overtime when it is required?*
- Mr. S.:** *Not at all. Thank you. 14*
- Mr. K.:** *Could you tell me what are some things about your last job that you found difficult to do?*

- Mr. S.:** *I really disliked, I mean, had low tolerance for mistakes. Some of accountants at Delhi Widget were, I feel, unqualified for their positions, and I had to correct their cost analysis quite often and... Are you with me?* 15 16
- Mr. K.:** *Yes, I understand. Mr. Somasundram, what do you think is your greatest achievement to date?*
- Mr. S.:** *I don't quite follow you.*
- Mr. K.:** *What was your biggest achievement at your previous positions?*
- Mr. S.:** *I'm very proud of my continuous progress and increase in responsibilities, and I'm particularly proud of the goals I managed to achieve as Fiscal Director of Dayton Corporation.*
- Mr. K.:** *Well, it seems that your experience does not fully match the job requirements of the Controller's position. Why would you feel that you are a good candidate?*
- Mr. S.:** 17 *Well, don't I have a C.A. designation? I believe that is one of your professional requirements. Besides, I'm a fast learner and I'm eager to learn your company's procedures.*
- Mr. K.:** *I see. If we were to hire you, what would you expect the company to do for you?*
- Mr. S.:** *Let me think, I would definitely need assistance and training in the initial stages.* 18
- Mr. K.:** *Oh, we need a self-starter, a take-charge professional*
- Mr. S.:** *I assure you that I possess these traits.* 19
- Mr. K.:** *Before we finish, what is it that you are looking for in our company?*
- Mr. S.:** *Ideally, I would like to use my skills and contribute to the company's future growth.*
- Mr. K.:** *Very well. And the last question. What kind of remuneration do you expect?*
- Mr. S.:** *So you want to know what my salary expectation is? Well, I am quite flexible. I guess the current market rate.* 20
- Mr. K.:** *I see. Well, thank you very much for your time.*
- Mr. S.:** *Should I call you back to learn about your decision? I am very keen on getting this position.* 21
- Mr. K.:** *That won't be necessary. We will contact you, either by phone or by letter, within a week.*
- Mr. S.:** *Oh, okay. Thank you and see you soon, hopefully.* 22
- Mr. K.:** *Yes, goodbye.* 23

FACILITATOR'S ANSWER SHEET FOR HANDOUT 8

1. *Should say "Good morning" or "How do you do?" or "Pleased to meet you".*
2. *Should apologize for being late, e.g., "I apologize for being late, unfortunately..."*
3. *Should describe his professional background, education (related to the position applied for), and any relevant (to the applied position) job experience.*
4. *Shouldn't interrupt, should wait for a full question.*
5. *"I feel that I am a very good candidate for..." could skip this comment, too much boasting/problem of being too confident.*
6. *Should mention one weakness (since all of us have it), but the one that wouldn't interfere with performing controller's job.*
7. *Goes beyond the point, response too lengthy.*
8. *After "Thank you" should stop answering.*
9. *Should remember the number of people supervised – important!*
10. *Very subjective, opinionated response, not showing team-player abilities.*
11. *Contradicts himself (if compared to #10)*
12. *The answer doesn't prove his managerial and conflict-resolution skills.*
13. *Inappropriate response, should use one of "Asking for clarification" expressions (Handout 6).*
14. *Shouldn't use "Thank you". It is impolite*
15. *Very subjective opinion of subordinates.*
16. *Should rather say: "Do you follow me?"*
17. *Should not emphasize his education, but rather his related experience.*
18. *Shouldn't expect training – a Controller has to be a self-starter.*
19. *Contradicts himself (versus #18)*
20. *Should give a salary range, by saying "a current market rate" gives an impression that he will take whatever offered regardless of his qualifications and prior experience.*
21. *Should never offer calling back to learn about the decision, instead should thank for an interesting/informative interview and say that "he is looking forward to a positive response."*
22. *Shouldn't show his disappointment and shouldn't say "see you soon, hopefully". Instead, he should use the expression underlined in #21 above.*
23. *Should say "Thank you, goodbye/Have a nice day/afternoon", etc.*

Terminology List

- ◆ business-like
- ◆ career expectations
- ◆ career goals
- ◆ qualifications
- ◆ a salary range
- ◆ a remuneration
- ◆ a promotion
- ◆ benefits
- ◆ a rapport
- ◆ skills
- ◆ a schedule
- ◆ a personal background
- ◆ a professional background
- ◆ a weakness
- ◆ to rectify
- ◆ to elaborate
- ◆ a self-starter
- ◆ to implement
- ◆ people skills
- ◆ uncooperative
- ◆ insubordinate
- ◆ a team environment
- ◆ team morale
- ◆ leadership skills
- ◆ a superior
- ◆ a confrontation
- ◆ a loyal employee
- ◆ to encounter
- ◆ deadlines
- ◆ overtime
- ◆ to entail
- ◆ unqualified
- ◆ cost analysis
- ◆ an achievement
- ◆ a progress
- ◆ job requirements
- ◆ a good candidate
- ◆ company's procedures
- ◆ salary expectations
- ◆ a current market rate
- ◆ to be keen on