MODULE 2: Communication and Terminology for Work Search

TOPIC 2: Employment Interview Questions

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- identify eight areas of engineering practice and use associated verbs and phrases to describe them
- in the context of an employment interview, describe and give examples of personal skills and attributes based on previous engineering experience

TOPIC	SKILLS	CLB COMPETENCIES AREA	COMPETENCIES	PRE-TASKS	TASKS	POST TASKS
♦ Employment Interview Questions	♦ Listening/ Speaking	♦ exchanging information ♦ suasion	♦ give concrete examples of professional engineering experience ♦ describe personal skills and attributes within an engineering context in an employment interview	♦ identify specific information in interview answers ♦ identify and define eight areas of engineering functions ♦ associate related verbs and phrases in an engineering context ♦ identify personal skills and attributes within an engineering context	♦ answer employment interview questions by describing skills and personal attributes within an engineering context	♦ evaluation of employment interview

Facilitator's Guide Preparation for Module 2
Topic 2: Employment Interview Questions

PREPARATION

Content

See Module 2 Topic 1.

Delivery

As many copies as necessary following handouts should be made:

- Handout 1A, 1B — Job Interview Excerpts
- Handout 2 — Comprehension Check
- Handout 3 — Engineering Functions Reference Handout
- Handout 4 — Engineering Functions and Verbs
- Handout 5 — Verb and Noun Collocations
- Handout 6 — Interview Questions (one copy for each group, cut into strips)

Materials needed: chart paper, markers, overhead projector and OHT 1 and 2.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

(15 minutes) 1. Explain that the Work Search Module is a two-day workshop and that they are going to build upon their work from the previous lesson.

Review transferable skills with the participants (skills that can be taken with you and adapted to a variety of work

environments). Divide participants into groups of three and give each group a sheet of chart paper with a marker. Without opening their books, have them list what they think are employers' "top ten transferable skills." Give them five minutes maximum. Have each group post their list on the wall and discuss as a whole class. Make sure the following are mentioned: analytical/problem-solving, flexibility, interpersonal, oral/written communication, organization/ planning, time management, motivation, leadership, initiative/ self-starter, team player.

2. Explain that there are various types of interviews and that today we are concentrating on the screening interviews usually conducted by Human Resource departments of large companies. In small companies, interviews tend to be more technical.

Pre-Tasks

(25 minutes) 1. Explain that participants will have the opportunity to read parts of an interview. Distribute Handouts 1A, 1B, and 2. Have the participants read the two interview excerpts and answer the questions. Ask them compare their answer with a partner. Take up with the class. Make sure the purpose of this pre-task is clear: interviewees must provide concrete examples of their skills and attributes.

(20 minutes) 2. Explain that to have an effective interview for an engineering job, engineers have to relate their skills and attributes within the context of their previous professional practice.

Elicit from the class what they think are the eight kinds of engineering activities and write them on the board.

Engineering activities can be divided into eight groups: research, development, design, production, construction, operations, sales, and management. Group the participants according to discipline and have them discuss each activity and write a group definition. Alternatively, if there are time limits, the groups can be assigned two or

three activities each. Elicit examples from volunteer groups. Distribute Handout 3 as a reference.

(25 minutes) (optional) 3. Distribute Handout 4 and have participants match the verbs with one of the eight groups. Have them add any other verbs and generate their own lists (also note that one verb may fit into more than one group). Use OHT 1 to review the activity as a whole class.

(30 minutes) 4. Explain to the class that some verbs and nouns are commonly associated. Distribute Handout 5 and have participants associate the verbs with the phrases. Make sure that participants decide on the most common or typical associations. Take up as a whole-class activity using OHT2.

(30 minutes) 5. Have participants refer to their list of skills and attributes from the previous lesson. Explain to the participants that they will be given the opportunity to provide concrete examples from past job experiences to substantiate the attributes and skills they claim to have. This is a vital part of the interview process and one for which they can prepare. Have participants refer to the eight engineering activities and the interview excerpts when they prepare examples to justify their skills and personal attributes. Explain that this preparation is important for the next task, which is an opportunity to practise answering interview questions.

(15 minutes) (optional) 6. Afterwards, have the participants exchange information with a partner. They should share their information and give each other advice and make suggestions.

Tasks

(30 minutes) 1. Explain that they are now ready to go to an employment interview. If possible give participants time to compile a list of questions that they have been asked during their actual job interviews. (These questions may be used for the group task: have participants write them on cue cards or slips of paper). Explain that for the task the class will work in

groups. Each group will be given interview-type questions written on strips of paper. Each question must be answered by relating skills or attributes that to their engineering experience. Emphasize that the questions are not easy, but that they are typical interview questions. Instruct participants to get into groups (discipline specific or other) and distribute the strips of paper. One participant chooses a strip, reads the question, and selects another to answer the question, thus simulating an actual interview. Continue the process, ensuring that all participants answer at least two or three questions.

Post-Task

(10 minutes) 1. Ask for participant responses to the activity. What difficulties were experienced? Why do they think employers ask such questions? Reassure participants that one can prepare for the interview and that practice and an analysis of one's skills and personal attributes is an important part of the job search process.

Handout 1A

Interview Excerpt 1

Interviewer: What was your last position as a chemical engineer?

Interviewee: In my country, I was in charge of quality control at a rubber factory. We produced custom extruded and molded rubber parts for many industries, such as construction, manufacturing, automotive, and transportation. My job was to establish and conduct quality-control programs and strategies to ensure consistency in production and to adhere to ISO standards. We formulated exact types of rubber compounds and design products with the precise profile to meet the specifications of the customer.

Interviewer: How did you get along with your team or work group?

Interviewee: Well, in my country, we didn't have teams or work groups. But I was in charge of quality control and since we were understaffed, I needed the support and help of the production personnel to make sure that the production lines were operating smoothly and that there wasn't a lot of waste material. There were many difficulties. I had to encourage the workers to work as a team. I had to motivate them to work together to ensure that the gaskets and seals were up to standard, even though they were not used to doing it. We had QC Inspectors, but communication was very poor between the supervisors and the production workers. I listened to complaints and problems on the factory floor. I really had to use my team-building skills in order to make sure that quality-control standards were being maintained and that the production workers were working together. Otherwise, we would have lost our customers and, shortly after, our jobs. I think that I developed good interpersonal skills in my last job. The supervisors began to trust me, and the workers respected me.

Handout 1B

Interview Excerpt 2

Interviewer: All engineers have technical knowledge that they gained from their academic training and applied in various practical ways on the job. But sometimes it's the personal attributes of the engineer that make him or her particularly valuable to the employer. Describe any such attributes you may have, which would make you a valuable employee.

Interviewee: First of all, I am results-oriented. Ever since I started working, I was always focused on the end product of my work. I always ask myself questions like "What is the purpose of the activity I am pursuing?" and "What is it intended to accomplish?" So, when I was introducing a work-saving device on the production line, I always kept in mind that its purpose was to reduce the cost of production.

Secondly, I am also proactive in my work. In my own work as an industrial engineer, I am always trying to address and deal with situations before they become problems. For example, I am constantly monitoring the production line to see if there is any way it can be streamlined. I also try and stay updated on the latest developments and resources that are available to increase efficiency in production.

Handout 2

Comprehension Check – Interview Excerpt #1

Answer the following questions:

1. What was the interviewee's previous job?

   _____

2. What are some of verbs the interviewee used to describe his previous engineering experience?

   _____

3. What skills did the interviewee say that he had? _____

   _____

4. How did he prove it? _____

   _____

5. What key verbs did he use to prove that he had those skills?

   _____

   _____

Comprehension Check – Interview Excerpt #2

1. What personal attributes did the industrial engineer say that he had?

   _____

   _____

2. How did he prove that he had them? Identify any key verbs or words.

   _____

   _____

   _____

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Answer Key to Handout 2

Interview Excerpt 1A

Interviewer: What was your last position as a chemical engineer?

Interviewee: In my country, I was in charge of quality control at a rubber factory. We produced custom extruded and molded rubber parts for many industries, such as construction, manufacturing, automotive, and transportation. My job was to establish and conduct quality-control programs and strategies to ensure consistency in production and to adhere to ISO standards. We formulated exact types of rubber compounds and design products with the precise profile to meet the specifications of the customer.

Interviewer: How did you get along with your team or work group?

Interviewee: Well, in my country, we didn't have teams or work groups. But, I was in charge of quality control, and, since we were understaffed, I needed the support and help of the production personnel to make sure that the production lines were operating smoothly and that there wasn't a lot of waste material. There were many difficulties. I had to **encourage** the workers to work as a team. I had to **motivate** them to work together to ensure that the gaskets and seals were up to standard, even though it wasn't technically their job. We had QC Inspectors, but communication was very poor between the supervisors and the production workers. I **listened** to complaints and problems on the factory floor. I really had to use my **team-building skills** in order to make sure that quality-control standards were being maintained and that the production workers were working together. Otherwise, we would have lost our customers and, shortly after, our jobs. I think that I developed **good interpersonal skills** in my last job. The supervisors began to **trust** me, and the workers **respected** me.

Comprehension Check

1. What was the interviewee's previous job?
   - He was in charge of product quality control at a rubber factory
2. What verbs did the interviewee use to describe his previous engineering experience?
   - (see all underlined words)
3. What skills did the interviewee say that he did?
   - team building skills and good interpersonal skills
4. How did he prove it?
   - He proved it by giving a concrete example of how those skills were put to use or enhanced within an engineering workplace.
   - He motivated the production staff and got people to work together, and quality-control standards were met.
5. What key verbs did he use to prove that he had those skills?
   - (see bold words in text)

FACILITATOR'S NOTES (CONT'D)

Answer Key to Handout 2

Interview Excerpt 1B

Interviewer: All engineers have a technical knowledge that they gained from their academic training and applied in various practical ways on the job. But sometimes it's the personal attributes of the engineer that make him or her particularly valuable to the employer. Describe any such attributes you may have, which would make you a valuable employee.

Interviewee: First of all, I am **results oriented**. Ever since I started working, I was always **focused** on the end product of my work. I always ask myself questions like "What is the purpose of the activity I am pursuing?" and "What is it intended to accomplish?" So, when I was introducing a work saving device on the production line, I always kept in mind that its purpose was to reduce the cost of production.

Secondly, I am also **proactive** in my work. In my own work as an industrial engineer, I am always trying to address and deal with situations before they become problems. For example, I am constantly **monitoring** the production line to see if there is any way it can be **streamlined**. I also try and stay **updated** on the latest developments and resources that are available to increase efficiency in production.

Comprehension Check

1. What personal attributes did the industrial engineer say that he had?
   - results oriented, proactive
2. How did he prove that he had them? Identify any key verbs or words that you heard (bolded words)
   - results oriented - being focused on the end or final product; keeping in mind the purpose of the activity
   - proactive - addressing and dealing with situations before they become problems, staying up to date on latest developments in the field

Handout 3

1. ***Research*** involves seeking new knowledge or a better understanding of the significance and relationship of facts already known.

2. ***Development*** involves making the discoveries and results of research available in the form of useful products, methods, or processes.

3. ***Design*** is the process of converting concepts and information into detailed plans and specifications from which a finished product or facility can be manufactured or constructed.

4. ***Production*** is the industrial process by which products or articles are manufactured from raw materials.

5. ***Construction*** is the process of translating designs and materials into structures and facilities such as buildings, highways, and power and communication facilities.

6. ***Operations,*** in engineering, is the application of engineering principles or the performance of practical work. In manufacturing, operations involve procuring supplies, maintaining plants, and directing personnel. Engineers are prominently involved in the operations of utility companies, railroads, communications companies, and traffic-control systems for large cities.

7. ***Sales***, in technological industries, often requires the service of a sales team that has the engineering and/or technical background to give customers the product specifications and technology they require.

8. ***Management positions*** are occupied by engineers in many industries. They are responsible for the solution of problems of policy, finance, organization, public relations, and sales. They also have the responsibility for the selection and supervision of personnel and the coordination of research, development, production, and all other departments.

(Source: Wright, P.H. Introduction to Engineering. New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1994.)

Handout 4/OHT 1

coordinate consolidate chair	conduct execute strengthen analyze arrange	assess diagnose investigate survey	interpret systematize document introduce	ensure pioneer delegate resolve	oversee upgrade supervise devise	assemble expand improve implement	develop repair control
Research	**Development**	**Design**	**Production**	**Construction**	**Operations**	**Sales**	**Management**

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Answer Key to Handout 4/OHT 1

coordinate consolidate chair conduct execute strengthen analyze arrange assess diagnose investigate survey interpret systematize document introduce ensure pioneer delegate resolve oversee upgrade supervise devise assemble expand improve implement develop repair control

Research	Development	Design	Production	Construction	Operations	Sales	Management
analyze	document	plan	assemble	survey	coordinate	introduce	implement
coordinate	introduce	strengthen	devise	assemble	systematize	expand	coordinate
conduct	pioneer	execute	execute	repair	implement	improve	consolidate
investigate	improve	improve		coordinate	delegate	delegate	chair
document	upgrade	diagnose		upgrade	supervise		delegate
				interpret	analyze		supervise
					arrange		resolve
					supervise		oversee

Handout 5/ OHT2

	facilities	production costs	plant layouts	surveys	equipment installation	procedures	designs	data	deadlines are met	research into development	training programs	incentive programs	project estimates	equipment repair	floor staff	operations	plans meet standards	specifications	contract documents	testing procedures	systems	technicians
conduct																						
interpret																						
ensure																						
implement																						
supervise																						
oversee																						
assess																						
analyze																						
co-ordinate																						
prepare																						
develop																						

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Answer Key to Handout 5/OHT2

	facilities	production costs	plant layouts	surveys	equipment installation	procedures	designs	data	deadlines are met	research	training programs	incentive programs	project estimates	equipment repair	floor staff	operations	plans meet standards	specifications	contract documents	testing procedures	systems	technicians
conduct				Y						Y	Y	Y		Y		Y				Y		
interpret				Y			Y	Y				Y						Y	Y		Y	
ensure					Y				Y					Y			Y	Y				
implement				Y		Y		Y			Y	Y				Y		Y		Y	Y	
supervise				Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y				Y		Y
oversee		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y				Y		Y
assess	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
analyze		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y			Y	Y	Y	
co-ordinate		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	
prepare		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y					Y	Y	Y		
develop	Y			Y		Y	Y				Y	Y				Y		Y		Y	Y	
design	Y		Y	Y							Y	Y									Y	

Handout 6

Change drives this organization. How flexible are you? How do you deal with change?
You don't seem to have the appropriate experience/education for this position, Why should I hire you?
What can you do for us that someone else can't?
How long will it take for you to make a meaningful contribution to our organization?
Describe a situation where you had to work under pressure and deal with deadlines.
In what ways did your last job prepare you to take on greater responsibility?
What is your management style? Give examples from your previous job that demonstrate this style.
Are you a good manager? Give some examples.
How did you get along with your team or work group in your previous job?
Tell me about a responsibility in your last job that you really enjoyed.
In your last position, what were your most significant accomplishments?
How would you describe your personality?
What is the most recent skill you learned?
Have you ever had to hire someone? What types of positions? What do you look for when you hire someone?
Describe the best boss/supervisor you ever had?
What personal attributes do you think will be needed in this position?
What kind of people do you like to work with?
What are your strengths?
What are your weaknesses?

Terminology List

Engineering Functions

- research
- development
- design
- production
- construction
- operations
- sales
- management
- to co-ordinate
- to consolidate
- to chair
- to conduct
- to execute
- to strengthen
- to analyze
- to arrange/
- to assess
- to diagnose
- to investigate
- to survey
- to systematize
- document
- to introduce
- to ensure
- to pioneer
- to delegate
- to resolve
- to oversee
- to upgrade
- to prepare
- to supervise
- to devise
- to assemble
- to expand
- to improve
- to implement
- to develop
- to design
- to repair
- to interpret