

# The Intern...You're ~~Fired~~ Hired!

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Spring is here – a fresh crop of students and interns are eager and available for work. Is there a way to select one for your company, even if you don't have a reality television show?

Here are some tips that can make your process as big a hit as *The Donald's*.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW: EMPLOYER PREP

To ensure success, prepare before you dive in to your interviews.

### 1. Know what you are interviewing for – use the internship as a test for what you want *down the road*.

The big reward for the Apprentice winner (besides momentary media stardom) is an executive position in one of Trump's companies. Each weekly task is a test that showcases the leadership and management qualities they will need in that role down the road: creativity, resilience, flexibility, adaptability, charisma, business judgment and effectiveness. Learn from *The Donald*. Know the qualities and type of potential you are looking for.

**2. Have a measurable way to judge success.** Each weekly assignment on *The Apprentice* has a crystal clear, black or white measure of success: i.e. whoever sells the most lemonade wins. Be clear about the deliverables and outcomes you require from your own apprentices so you can direct your interviews.

**3. Know the intangible people factors that are necessary – the emotionally intelligent factors.** Each week, one of Trump's losing team members is fired based on interpersonal dynamics: was the person a whiner? A prima-donna? Not enough of a team player? Inflexible? Focus on these same kinds of behaviors while interviewing.

**4. Give your intern interesting work, not just all the stuff no-one else wants to do.** Maybe your tasks aren't as glamorous as the Donald's. Nevertheless you can give your students and interns work that is meaningful and fun in addition to the "grunt" assignments.

**5. Provide feedback & supervision from a consistent and knowledgeable source** Each team on *The Apprentice* is closely monitored by one of Trump's right hand staff. Make sure your own interns know who to go to for feedback, counsel and advice.

### 6. Make sure you have senior management buy-in.

Every week, Donald provides personal face-to-face feedback. Follow his lead. The position you are hiring for is not "just an intern" - these people are ultimately spokespeople for you and your company.

### Do you know what you are interviewing for?

Employers responding to NACE's *Job Outlook 2004* survey were asked to rate the importance of candidate qualities and skills on a five-point scale, with five being "extremely important" and one being "not important." The most desired characteristics were:

- Communication skills (4.8 average)
- Honesty/integrity (4.7)
- Interpersonal skills (4.5)
- Motivation/initiative (4.5)
- Strong work ethic (4.5)
- Teamwork skills (4.5)

## **THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

1. First, screen your candidates for functional skills (i.e. can they answer phones, research on the internet, analyze financial statements, design web-sites).
2. Candidates that pass this base-line requirement should be asked “Why do you want to do this job (or work in this company)? Take great caution if the opportunity does not make sense or fit into the applicant’s area of interest. The job may seem like a good idea at interview time, but it may prove difficult to compete with a nice warm bed at 7 am.
3. The rest of the interview should examine behavioral factors that create the difference between a dream or nightmare experience. As psychometricians, The Wenroth Group highly endorses behavioral selection testing as a tool to assist in this process. But with or without testing, interviews are paramount. The factors to focus on include resourcefulness, co-operation, attitude, conscientiousness, willingness to take on new assignments, adaptability, communication skills, quality of work.

## **THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

In general, the best predictor of future performance is certainly past performance. Many students and interns don’t have past performance – at least not at work. But they certainly do have years of experience at school in academics and in sports. So start by substituting the work “teacher” for “boss”, the word “classmates” or “teammates” for “colleagues”. And use these questions as a guideline.

### **Questions about perseverance.**

- Tell me about your least favorite subject in school, why you dislike it, how you perform, what you do to prepare for every day classes and for tests?
- What would your teacher/professor *in this subject* say about your strengths/weaknesses?
- Tell me about your favorite subject? How do you study differently? Why do you like it, how do you perform, what do you do to prepare for every day classes and for tests? What would your teacher/professor *in this subject* say about your strengths/weaknesses?

### **Questions to find out if your candidate knows how to handle pressure, stress, and competing priorities.**

- How do you prepare for a big test or research project?
- What do you do before a play-off game in your sport? If you had a big paper due and a big party the night before, what would you do? Has this ever happened to you?

### **Questions about team building skills**

- Tell me about one group project that you worked on successfully. What was your role?
- Tell me about a project that was unsuccessful? What happened differently? Why?
- Did you ever have an uncooperative member? In what way? What did you do? How did you do? What would you do differently?

### **Questions about their attitude, flexibility, and interpersonal skill**

- Tell me about your relationship with your teachers/professors? Have you ever gotten a grade that you thought was unreasonable or unfair? What did you do? What would you do differently now?
- Have you ever had a teacher or classmate that you really didn't like or thought was unreasonable?
- Have you ever been given unfair treatment in sports – by a coach or a referee? What were the circumstances? What did you do?
- Have you ever changed your opinion about a teacher or classmate? What were the circumstances?
- Do you prefer to study alone or in groups? Tell me about a time when you were not able to study the way you wanted?

### **Questions about realistic judgment**

- Tell me about a time when you were surprised by your success in a class or project or sports activity? Were you ever surprised by failure? What did you do? Why did it happen that way?
- Did you ever realize at the last minute that you were not going to finish a project or paper on time? What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when resisted peer pressure? How about a time when you didn't? What were the consequences?

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### **Questions about communication/negotiation skills**

- Have you ever been able to renegotiate a grade in a class? Is this something you typically do?
- When you and your friends go out, who typically makes the plans?
- What do you do when others disagree with your preferences?
- What 4 adjectives would your best friends use to describe you? How about the people you are not friendly with?
- What 4 adjectives would your coach use to describe you?
- What adjectives would your professors use?

### **Questions about managing up**

- What do you wish you got from your teachers that you don't get? What do you do about it? What would be different if you did get it?
- Who was/is your favorite professor? What was/is his or her style?
- Who was/is your least favorite professor? What was/is his or her style? Have you been able to make accommodations?

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT CONSCIENTIOUSNESS**

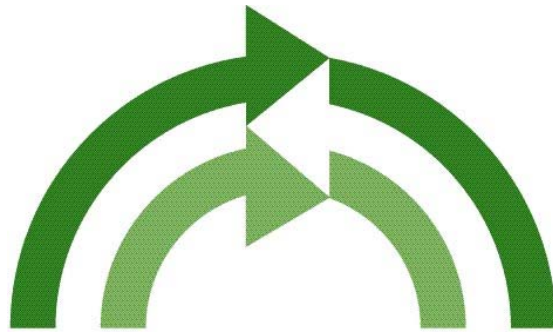
- Do you plan your work?
- How far ahead of time (a day? A week? A semester?)
- Do you stick to your plan?
- What do your teachers/professors say about your work quality?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of your work? In all subjects? If not, why not?

**Apprenticeships work!** According to results of the 2004 Job Outlook survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):

- 82.5% of companies surveyed said they offer internship and/or co-op programs.
- For the third straight year, employers rated their internship programs as the most effective recruiting method they use for hiring new college graduates.
- During the 2002-03 academic year, employers said they converted more than 38 percent of their interns and nearly 51 percent of their co-op students into full-time hires.

### **INTERNSHIPS WORK**

With the proper preparation and screening, you and your interns stand a mighty chance of success. And that is a wonderful thing for everyone. These questions will give you a headstart in making good selection decisions.



## **THE WENROTH GROUP**

*Applying the science of personality to the art of workplace behavior.*

The Wenroth Group is a consortium of Business Psychologists specializing in leadership development and executive coaching across the lifespan as people:

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- perform inside them,
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