



Mock Interview Strategy: Maximizing Experiential Learning

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Interview skills are critical to a student's success in obtaining a job and beginning their career in the fashion industry. The importance of teaching students how to interview is supported by an evaluation of the relevant literature (Maurer, Solamon, Andrews, & Troxtel, 2001; Moynihan, Roehling, LePine, & Boswell, 2003). Research also emphasizes the value of using applied learning approaches for subjects requiring a deeper understanding of the subject matter (A. Kolb & D. Kolb, 2005), with interviews being one area where applied learning is especially advantageous (G. Reddan, 2008). Mock interviews offer the most value in boosting students' confidence, identifying their strengths and weaknesses in an interview setting, preparing responses to commonly asked questions, reducing anxiety through practice, and providing feedback in a low-stress environment.

This research study offers an activity for providing students with optimum interview practice, feedback, and self-assessment within the limitations of one class period. Professor Rougeaux-Burnes has developed an assignment that allows students to experience interview preparation, practice their interview skills in a realistic setting, and receive feedback from multiple sources. As participants in the feedback process, students observe interviews of their peers and offer a written critique of their performance in addition to completing a self-assessment of their own performance. As a result, a great deal can be learned in a short period of time. This assignment can also be easily adapted to different classroom settings and time allowances with continued positive results.

Before the interviews took place, class time was used to lecture about appropriate interview behavior and preparation. Students were required to find a current job or internship listing and research the company, allowing them to practice realistic interview planning. Interviewers were selected with consideration given to their experience conducting job interviews to ensure that the exercise would be as realistic as possible (R. Harchar, 2005). Interviewers were given the students' chosen companies and postings to allow them to role-play appropriately. In addition, interviewers were given a list of suggested questions to cut down on their needed preparation. The proposed mock interview process involved students sitting for an interview for approximately 15 minutes with two interviewers, one professional with fashion industry experience and one faculty member from the Career Services department at the university. Interviews were video recorded to allow students to view their performance and that of their peers and conduct an assessment. Immediately after the interview, 5 minutes was allotted for the interviewers to evaluate the student and give verbal feedback about their question responses, professional dress, body language, and preparation for the interview.

By the end of the assignment, each student participating in the activity had participated in a realistic professional interview for a current job or internship posting, received feedback from multiple sources and conducted multiple evaluations of the necessary skills to interview

successfully. In addition to gaining realistic interview experience, one of the most valuable benefits of this study was the students' ability to watch six other interviews of their peers, each containing different interview questions and feedback from the professionals.

Results of the self-assessment suggest that students took the activity seriously and felt that the experience raised their confidence in their ability to interview. Students were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and suggest alterations they would make to their performance in the future. When asked to identify areas needing improvement, their answers varied, ranging from needing to prepare more thoroughly to calming nerves or being aware of their body language.

This assignment would be uncomplicated for an instructor to adapt to his or her own classroom setting. There is a small amount of preparation and organization that must be done in advance, addressing the need for a schedule, location, carefully selecting interviewers, and assisting in the preparation of the interviewers. Students must also be adequately prepared and be given the opportunity to reflect on the activity through self-assessment, so the process may produce the most constructive results.

Future iterations of this assignment may include multiple professionals conducting interviews simultaneously. This would allow for the assignment to take place during a single class period with a larger number of students or allow for longer interviews with a smaller class size. It could also offer the students the opportunity to sit for multiple interviews with people of different backgrounds and personalities, experiencing a variety of interview styles. Additionally, the professor could provide interviewers with formal evaluation rubrics to record student performance. This would be beneficial due to student anxiety, which can make processing immediate verbal feedback challenging.

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