

Interview Like a Pro

Office of Career Success
August 12th, 2025

Fast Track to a Public Accounting Internship: Summer Series

Public Accounting Essentials: Presented by Sean Wandrei

~~• June 16, 10 – 10:45am~~

Semester in the Profession (SIP) Program Overview: Presented by Catherine Lowry

~~• July 8, 12 – 12:45pm~~

Fall 2025 Recruiting Overview & Resume Workshop: Presented by Alaina Kendrick

~~• July 10, 4 – 4:45pm~~

Elevator Pitch & Networking for Success: Presented by Alaina Kendrick

~~• July 28, 12 – 12:45pm~~

Interview Like a Pro: Presented by Alaina Kendrick

• August 12, 10 – 10:45am



Overview of Today's Workshop

- Gameplan for Interview Success
- Interview Fundamentals & Strategies
- Creating Interview Stories
- Developing Impact: STAR Method
- Professional Communication & Interview Follow-up
- Mock Interview Practice with Big Interview



Interview Success Gameplan

Research

Understand the job description, company, and industry

Leverage networking to learn more about the opportunity

Align your interview stories accordingly

Practice

Utilize IConnect, The Isenberg Guide to Interviewing & Big Interview

Practice with family and peers to increase confidence

Schedule a mock interview with a Career Coach to hone your skills

Execute

Create an interpersonal connection

Demonstrate a genuine interest and thoughtful preparation

Market your skills and experiences effectively

Being nervous is ok – focus on your performance!



Interview Fundamentals & Strategies



1. Be Professional, Prepared, Engaged

First impressions go a long way

- Basic etiquette
- Professional attire
- Don't just be on time, be early
- Introduction
- Maintain a positive attitude



Do your Research

- Mission, values, history, industry trends
- Review the job description
- Learn more about the people
- Prepared questions

Be Engaged

- Actively listen
- Body language
- Minimize distractions
- Take notes
- Pay attention to everyone

Interview Fundamentals & Strategies



2. Effective Communication

Pre-Interview:

- Be available and responsive
- Show excitement and gratitude for the opportunity
- Determine the nature of the interview: phone, virtual, or in-person
- Confirm details: date/time, directions, parking, who you will be meeting with, contact info

Post-Interview:

- Thank you message
- Follow up communications



Interview Fundamentals & Strategies



3. Project Your Confidence!

- You deserve to be there
- Emphasize your value
- Do not get discouraged
 - Respond to rejection emails with appreciation
 - Ask for feedback
 - Expanding your network
 - Learning experience



Interview Prep Grid

Common First Questions:

- *Tell me about yourself*
 - *Walk me through your resume*
1. Who are you? (Present-Past-Future)
 2. Why are you uniquely qualified?
 3. Why this role/company/industry?

Why this Role/Company/Industry

1. Understand the job description
2. Research the company and industry
3. Develop alumni/industry network

STAR Format for Behavioral Interviews

"Tell me about a time when....."

S = Situation

T = Task

A = Action

R = Results

Questions To Ask Interviewer(s)

1. Ask about what you discovered in your research and networking efforts
2. Ask about their experience and workplace culture
3. Ask questions to help your decision-making, should you receive an offer



Be prepared to talk about yourself & your interest in the role/company/industry

Tell Me About Yourself (Adapted Elevator Pitch)

1. Who you are

- Name, class year, major/relevant academic programs

2. Why you are uniquely qualified

- Relevant experience where you gained skills this position is seeking
- Consider jobs, activities, courses, projects, internships

3. Why this role/company/industry?

- Share your mid- to long- term career interests
- Consider sharing problems you enjoy solving related to skills in job posting

Express your excitement and confidence to close your answer!

“My name is Sam, and I’m a sophomore Accounting major at the Isenberg School of Management at UMass Amherst. I am on track to meet the educational requirements for CPA licensure by May 2029 and have a strong interest an audit career.

Since joining UMass, I have advanced both my interest in accounting and my collaborative skills, particularly through participation in Delta Sigma Pi.

I’m excited about the opportunity to intern with [Firm Name] because I’m eager to learn from professionals who set the standard for integrity and excellence in public accounting. I look forward to sharing more about how my background and motivation make me a strong fit for this audit internship.”



Why this Role/Company/Industry?

Analyze Job Description:

- What are the required skills and desired qualifications? You may not have all of them, that's OK - focus on your strengths and unique experiences you bring!
- What challenges would you face in this role, and how can you solve them?
- Be prepared to address gaps that may exist – how do you plan to fill them?
- Why is this a good fit for your skill sets and desired career path?

Research Company:

- “About Us” – Mission/Vision/Values, Company History & Leadership, Products & Services, Strategic Goals, News/Media
- **Networking:** Find alum/industry professionals and ask insightful questions ([TIARA](#))
- **Research hiring team** on LinkedIn – look for potential connection points

Research Industry:

- [LinkedIn Workforce Reports](#) (and Featured Research)
- [Lightcast Research Reports](#)
- [What Can I Do with this Major?:](#) Occupational Outlook section
- [IBISWorld Database](#) (UMass Business Library: “Career Exploration” Collection)
 - Offers trends, industry summary and forecast, market segmentation, product/services performance, innovations, “call prep questions,” and more
 - Meet with Business Librarian *Alison Messier* to learn how to navigate these resources and how databases can support interview prep!

UMass Library Guide for Business

UMass Amherst Libraries | LibGuides | Business: Home | Business: Home

Business : Home

Welcome!

Contact Business Librarian [Alison Messier](#) for help with homework assignments, thesis preparation, research, special projects or any questions about using the UMass Amherst Libraries. Appointments can be scheduled for research consultations, reference questions, assignment assistance, or for general information. Follow the “[Make An Appointment](#)” link on the left-hand side to request an appointment with Alison. For instant service, please visit our [Get Help](#) page, or use the links to the left below.

Fall 2023 Business Librarian Office Hours

In-person

- Mondays (starting 9/11), 2:00 - 5 p.m., ISOM Rm. 219
- Thursdays (starting 9/14), 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., ISOM Learning Commons/Business Hub

Virtual

- Wednesdays (starting 9/13), 1 - 3 p.m., Zoom

Is another time more convenient? Feel free to email Alison at amessier@umass.edu to request a time that works best for your schedule.

Business Resources

- Academic Articles
- Journals
- News and Trade Journals
- Case Studies
- Books (print & eBooks)
- Career Exploration**

Business Databases A-Z

Citing Business Resources

How do I find career opportunities and information about jobs?

- **Isenberg students:** Connect with the Chase Career Center at [iConnect](#), join [Handshake!](#)
- **UMass Amherst students:** Check with your school's career development office, visit [Career Services](#), and join [Handshake](#).
- UMass Amherst Libraries subscribe to two databases that point to companies' career opportunities: [Firsthand \(Vault & Career Insider\)](#) and [American and Foreign Companies with Global Operations \(iWorld\)](#).
- Explore online recruitment websites such as [LinkedIn](#), [Indeed](#), [CareerBuilder](#), etc.
- Search for professional associations for your target industry, because they might have a job board (e.g. the [Association of International Certified Professional Accountants Jobs](#) page). Consider joining the association for your target industry before you graduate to take advantage of potential student discounts.
- Investigate a company directly. More information on identifying companies is detailed below.

Career Information Resources

- [American and Foreign Companies with Global Operations \(iWorld\)](#)

Searchable directory of US and foreign companies with substantial overseas operations. Search by geographic location, industry, sales, employees, and keyword. UMass students - you can use this database to locate potential overseas US employers.

[more](#)

There is a very common set of behavioral interview questions that you should always be prepared to answer

- Tell me about yourself?
- Why are you interested in this role?
- Why are you interested in working for our company?
- Why are you the best fit for this position?
- What recent trends or developments interest you within this industry?
- What are your biggest strengths/weaknesses?
- How has your education prepared you for this role?
- Why should we hire you?
- Tell me about a time when you...
 - provided excellent customer service
 - analyzed a large amount of information or data to inform a process/decision
 - solved a complex problem
 - collaborated effectively on a team
 - assumed a leadership role
- What questions do you have for us?

Analyze the job description and use a T-diagram to align your skills & experiences with relevant stories to use in your responses

What They Want	What I Have
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate strong teamwork dynamics• Ability to identify and address client needs• Use flexibility in prioritizing tasks while using professional skepticism• Record of success in researching and analyzing pertinent client, industry and technical matters• Self motivated, takes responsibility for personal and professional growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration on club committee for alumni panel event• Customer service role at Shaws• Balancing academic workload with demanding athletics schedule• Market research project in Customer Insights and Analytics class• DataCamp Data Analyst Career Track: Data Analyst Associate Certification



ChatGPT can quickly analyze and extract relevant keywords and skills from one or more job descriptions

Analyze the following 3 job descriptions for supply chain and sourcing internship opportunities and extract keywords and key skills to help me prepare for an interview for any or all these positions:

This prompt will yield:

- Top Keywords & Skills Across All Three Roles
 - Analytical/Technical Skills
 - Interpersonal/Communication Skills
 - Sourcing/Procurement Skills
 - Project/Process Management
- Qualifications & Traits
- Tools & Systems
- Key Themes by Company
- Interview Preparation Tips

Top Keywords & Skills (Across All Three Roles)

Analytical & Technical Skills

- Data analysis
- Supplier market analysis
- Demand forecasting / consumption forecasting
- Gap analysis
- Comparative bid analysis (RFI, RFP, RFQ)

Interview Preparation Tips

1. Review STAR stories for:

- Analyzing data to identify trends or inefficiencies
- Managing a project or process from start to finish
- Working cross-functionally to solve a challenge
- Improving a process or reducing costs

2. Know your tools:

- Be ready to talk about how you've used Excel (e.g., VLOOKUP, pivot tables, charts)
- If you've used ERP systems or tools like SAP or Ariba, describe how and why

3. Demonstrate these traits:

- Attention to detail
- Communication and collaboration
- Proactivity and ownership
- Curiosity and willingness to learn



You can also use your Top 5 Clifton strengths to identify relevant stories

Achiever

- Balancing academic workload with demanding athletics schedule

Developer

- Collaboration on club committee for alumni panel event – *creating team assignments across marketing and communications, identifying alum, event agenda and logistics, etc.*

Adaptability

- Customer service role at Shaws

Analytical

- Market research project in Customer Insights and Analytics class
- DataCamp upskilling: Data Analyst Track

Maximizer

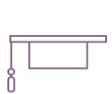
- Collaboration on club committee for alumni panel event – *working with faculty advisor to establish system to sustain alumni relationships*



Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Overview

Competencies

There are eight career readiness competencies, each of which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.



Career & Self Development



Equity & Inclusion



Teamwork



Communication



Leadership



Technology



Critical Thinking

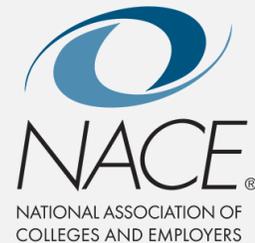


Professionalism

What is Career Readiness?

Career readiness is a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management.

[naceweb.org/
career-readiness-
competencies](https://naceweb.org/career-readiness-competencies)



There is no shortage of example behavioral questions to find – you can use ChatGPT to gather questions tailored to the job description

Sample Interview Questions

CAREERS > RESOURCES > SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewers may ask very simple questions, or they may get creative. It's important to have questions for the interviewer with your answers. It's also important to have questions for the interviewer.

Most Common Interview Questions

General Interview Questions

Case Interviews

Questions for the Interviewer

Questions Not to Ask

How to Handle Inappropriate Questions

Additional Interview Resources

Provide me with 5 behavioral questions and 5 technical questions for a business school student majoring in Accounting and interviewing for a first-round audit internship with a Big 4 firm in the United States. The questions should reflect the skills and competencies typically assessed for audit roles at the internship level, based on the following job description: [JD]

✓ Behavioral Questions

1. Tell me about a time when you had to meet a tight deadline. How did you prioritize and manage your tasks?
Assesses time management and ability to work under pressure—key in busy audit seasons.
2. Describe a time when you worked on a team project and faced a conflict. How did you handle it?
Evaluates teamwork and interpersonal skills.



The STAR Method provides a concise structure for you to talk about how your skills were integral to delivering impact

Situation: Briefly describe the situation with enough context to understand the circumstances. (1-2 statements)

Task: Describe the task or challenge you were facing. What goal were you working towards? (1-2 statements)

Action: Describe your actions. Employers want to know your individual contributions to the outcomes. (3-5 statements)

Result: Describe what happened - did you improve something, and how? What did you learn? When able, use quantifiable data to demonstrate specific impact. (1-2 statements)



Stories crafted with the STAR method keep your answers structured and organized

Q: Tell me about a time you took the initiative to solve a problem?

Situation: As a Guest Services Agent at the Hilton, I frequently fielded questions about local restaurants and attractions, and a line would often form at the Concierge Desk, crowding the lobby.

Task: I needed to find a way to provide information quickly, serve a greater number of guests and make the check-in process more efficient.

Action: I created a *Guest Recommendations* pamphlet containing brief write-ups, menus, directions, and contact information for area restaurants and attractions, to be distributed upon check-in.

Result: I greatly reduced the wait time at the Concierge Desk and positioned the Hilton as truly caring about guest satisfaction. Local businesses promoted were thrilled and referred a higher number of people to the hotel. The pamphlet is still in use today, and the experience really allowed me to strengthen my customer service and problem-solving abilities.

Engage and Impress: Your Turn to Ask Questions

- Prepare 3-5 questions ahead of time
- Avoid asking about pay or benefits right away
- Don't ask questions that can be answered by the company website
- Demonstrate thoughtfulness and curiosity
- Best Types of Questions to Ask
 - *Role*: What does success look like in this role?
 - *Team*: Can you tell me about the team I'd be working with?
 - *Company*: What are the current goals that the company is focused on? How would someone in this role support hitting those goals?



Interview follow-up is equally as important as the interview itself!

Thank You Messages

- Ensure that you have business cards or contact information before you leave your interview
- Send separate thank you emails to everyone you interviewed with (within 24 hours)
- Reiterate your interest and personalize each thank you with key takeaways or insight gained
- Didn't get to say something during the interview? Now's your chance to add it in. Reinforce important points you didn't fully get to cover

Follow-up

- After sending thank you notifications, allow *two weeks* before contacting again
- Reiterate your interest and ask for any needed process clarifications without pressuring the recruiter/hiring authority for a response or decision

Feedback

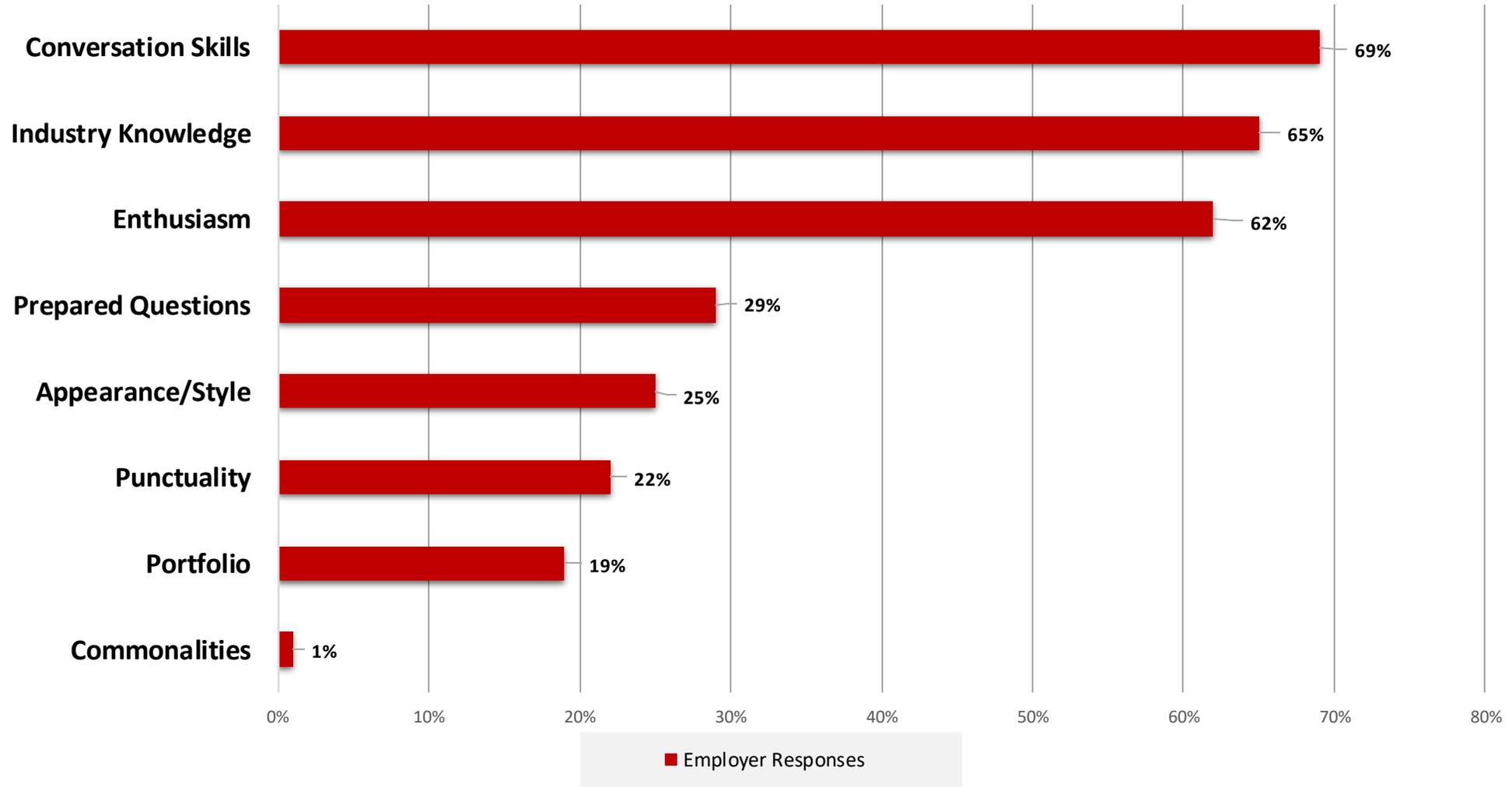
- Analyze your performance and take notes of areas for your improvement
- You can potentially gather feedback from the employer, but only **AFTER** the process has concluded



What Impacts the Decision to Hire a Candidate?



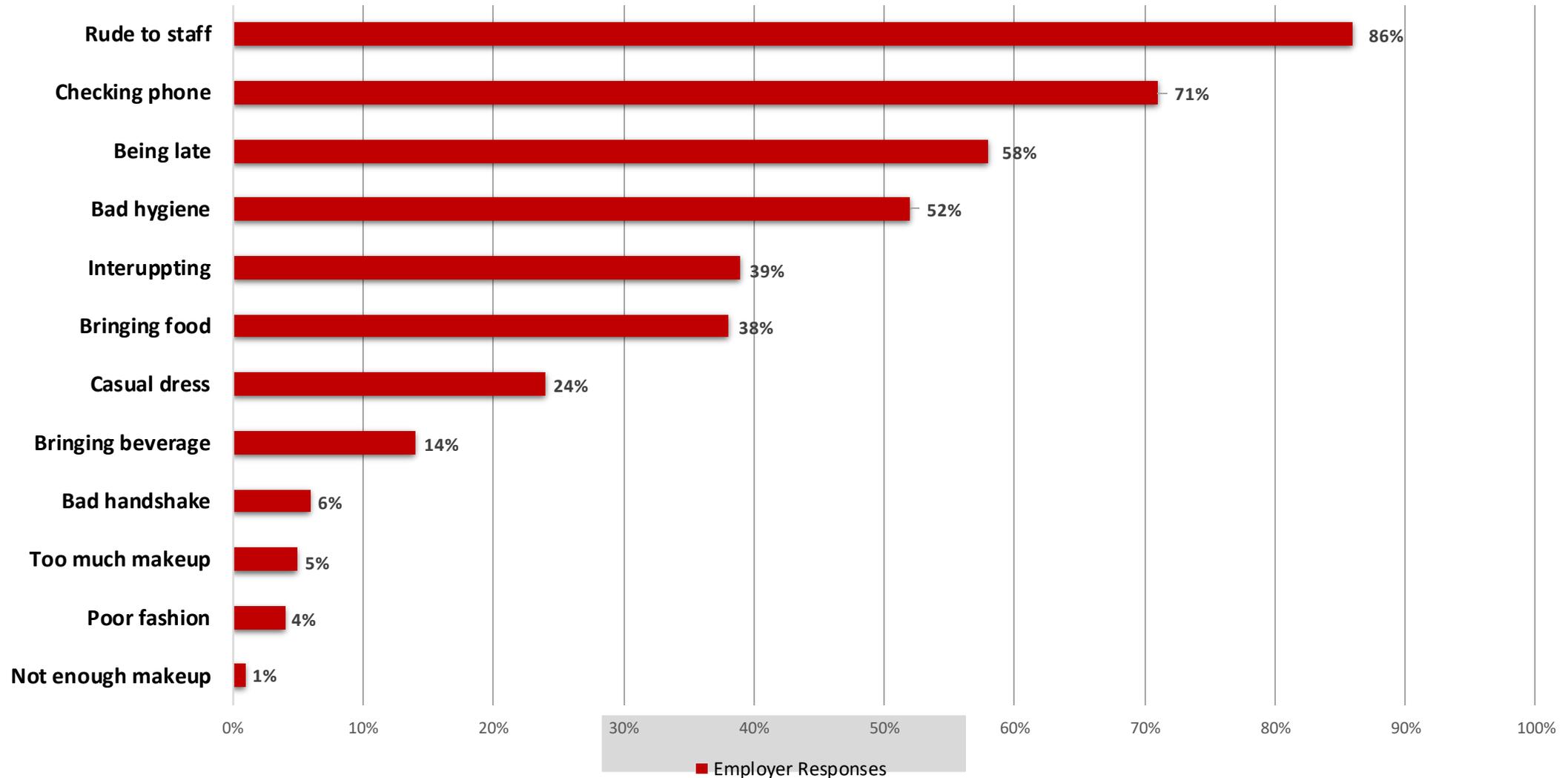
Positive Factors



What Impacts the Decision to Hire a Candidate?



Negative Factors



Big Interview is a primary tool for interview prep: Identifying questions, building STAR responses, practicing your delivery

Access [Big Interview](#) on IConnect
(*Guides & How-Tos > Interview Prep*)

- Question Library
- Practice Question Sets by Industry & Competency
- STAR Answer Builder
- Fast Track and Mastery Track Video & Practice Based Interview Curriculum



Use Big Interview to build, catalog, and practice your STAR interview stories

My Answers [Select all](#)

STORY NAME	DETAILS	ACTIONS
<input type="radio"/>  Solving a problem without needed information Created on: Apr 5, 2025 10:11 AM	COMPETENCIES Problem solving, collaboration, cross-unit collaboration (+ 2 more)	Actions ▾

Outline the problem or task [Edit Answer](#)

Describe your situation

In my role as Training and Development Specialist, I was asked to develop a training plan for a group of staff members who were working in the same positions across separately managed areas and were now being merged as part of a larger university structural re...

What approach did you take? [Edit Answer](#)

Describe your situation

Aside from job descriptions for both roles and the members who currently held the positions in each other information provided as related to training, procedures, and overall transfer of positional knowledge limited to no documented processes or procedural information made available was anecdotal.

Considering the lack of formal documentation and procedures, I sought out resources on building workplace knowledge transfer systems to help me in the planning stages of my project.

To start gathering information, I first contacted the incoming supervisor who would be overseeing the newly forming team. Unfortunately, this supervisor did not respond, and I was unable to connect with them as a critical resource at the beginning stages of my project. Ultimately, I needed to leverage my relationship with higher authority to facilitate his engagement.

What were your results? [Edit Answer](#)

Describe your situation

My supervisor and the Human Resources Department appreciated my approach and my thoroughness, not only in collecting scattered resources and including relevant perspectives and experiences, but also in summarizing the process in a comprehensive report.

The short-term training solutions were able to be implemented right away. This consisted of the supervisor organizing a new merged staff schedule and more informal opportunities for cross-training through on-the-job shadowing.

Ultimately, management in the area and Human Resources were able to utilize my longer-term training solutions to develop a more formal and extensive two-month training for the merged position, including the creation of training schedules, checklists, and procedures.

I am proud to have been part of the beginning stages of a large workplace merge and believe that the collaborative work accomplished during this project set the stage for future positional and systems merges taking place within the area.

Remember - you have access to several interview prep resources on UMass' Career Development & Professional Connections & IConnect

University of Massachusetts Amherst Visit Apply Give

Career Development & Professional Connections

About Us Students Employers Resource Library

Career Journey **Tool Kits** Connections Jobs & Internships

Your Career Journey

Whether you are a prospective student or about to graduate, your career

UMassAmherst Isenberg School of Management Welcome, Dan

Iconnect

ISENBERG'S VIRTUAL CAREER CENTER

one.isenberg ISucceed Resumes Your Profile Appointments Handshake

Undergrads Grad Students Belonging & Inclusion **Guides & How-Tos** Career Coaching Jobs & Internships Student Orgs Our Team

[Interviewing : Career Development & Professional Connections](#)
[Interview Prep – IConnect](#)

Questions?

[The Isenberg Guide to Interviewing](#)

[Big Interview](#)

[Virtual Interview Etiquette](#)

[UMass Library Business Research Guide](#)

[Isenberg Dress for Success Guide](#)

[Professional Wardrobe Closet](#)

