



GSS Interview Checklist

Presentation

- Dress professionally and conservatively. A general guideline would be "bankers' dress". Remember, you can always remove the tie, but you can't create one if you fail to bring it to the interview!
- Sit upright, maintain good eye contact, and have a firm handshake. Believe it or not, shifting glances, rare eye contact, or "weak fish" handshakes can make lasting impressions for the bad. Good, solid eye contact and a hearty handshake help to make a favorable first impression.
- Listen to the interviewer and be careful not to cut them off or interrupt. While occasional guttural affirmations, "aha" "hum", "I see" are normal, be careful that they do not appear everywhere.
- Good diction has fallen on hard times over the past 30 years. Many people have developed unwitting habits such as saying "like" before every sentence, or "I mean like", or "so..." It is generally advisable to avoid such filler phrases, because they can become "killer phrases" killing any attempt you are making to demonstrate that you are a seasoned candidate. Teenagers may speak this way, but not world-class drug company pros, or up-and-coming pros.

Sell Yourself and Your Interest in the Role/Company:

- Speak with confidence about your strengths. Remember to spend the time *prior to the interview*, carefully reviewing both the job description, as well as notes taken from discussions with the Hiring Manager and/or Recruiter, outlining the key requirements for the position. Ask and answer, "what is it about my own background in light of these specified requirements which demonstrates my suitability/qualifications for this opportunity?"
- Talk about relevant achievements and related experience when answering questions. Be specific, and do not rely on mere generalities. For example, don't say "I did a great job at XYZ". It is much better to say, "Here are some of the things accomplished during my tenure at XYZ." Intersperse first-person singular with first-person plural examples. "I" is important to show leadership, accomplishment, etc., and "We" demonstrates collegiality, team-player, and "company-first" approach. Be sure to use a healthy blend of both descriptors. By and large, talk about experiences working as a part of a team first, and then describe individual contributions afterwards.



- Display enthusiasm and take-charge-approach and initiative. This can be demonstrated by the use of action-oriented verbs such as “led, championed, developed, applied, conceived and “spear-headed”.
- When addressing questions about areas where you have no direct experience or have only limited experience, always draw attention to similar situations or experiences where you *have* gained related exposure.
- Turn potential negatives into positives. If for example, you do not have eight years drug discovery experience, and are asked, do not merely say “Gee, I’m sorry, I don’t.” Rather, you might say, “If you are looking for someone who meets the exact requirement of 96 months in drug discovery, well, that’s not me. However, if you are looking for someone *who has consistently achieved results more common to someone with more experience than I have*, well, I meet that criteria, and here’s why.” Then, go into examples. Or, if asked about a particular technical competency, or, therapeutic background, where you simply do not have a lot of experience, acknowledge that, *but then turn immediately to the positive* of how you have scaled the learning curve before and have taken on new challenges with great vigor and enthusiasm. “I only had 2 years of parallel synthesis experience gained during my Post-doctoral work at Scripps, but when an opportunity arose in my company due to someone’s departure, I stepped up to the plate and took on that group. Sure, it involved some 15-hour days, but I demonstrated by my leadership of that group, that I am adaptable, nimble, and able to take on new and difficult assignments successfully.”
- Be able to articulate *why* you are interested. Simply put: Why are you there? What is it about the company, its people, the particular role that interests and excites you? Why make a move right now? Here, while you want to avoid speaking ill of others or your current employer, if there are in fact objective financial or long-term pipeline directions that concern you, these things can be cited to good effect. They should however, not be harped on. Focus more on what you want to be moving *toward* instead of that from which you’re moving away.
- Maintain humility. This may sound contradictory to what’s said earlier regarding self-confidence, but bear in mind that the examples cited above are based on objective criteria, presumably backed up by references you would ultimately provide to the company. So long as they are interspersed with a good dose of “we, us, our people” and “the company”, your interview will undoubtedly send the right message.

Ask Relevant Questions

- Ask about expectations and objectives. “What do you expect the person in this role to achieve over the next 6 months, 12 months, and beyond?”



- Inquire about the priorities. "What is most important in the role and in the successful candidate?"
- Understand the challenges. "What do you perceive to be the challenges or hurdles that lie ahead for the company, this group, this particular role, etc.?"
- Ask about growth potential. "What is the projected career track for this role given that the person meets all of the objectives set forth for them?"
- Remember, by asking good questions, you are, psychologically, interviewing them, just as they are interviewing you. Studies show that "dialogical interviews" are more impactful than "monologues" where either you or the hiring manager does most of the talking. Foster good dialogue by asking good questions, and creating some "give and take" to the interview.

Leave A Positive Impression

- Convey your enthusiasm and interest in the company, the role, and the unique challenges the opportunity presents.
- Express confidence in your ability to handle the job.
- Don't be anxious. Avoid questions like "So what comes next?" or "When can I expect to hear from you?"
- Thank the interviewer for their time and let them know that you will look forward to hearing about potential next steps.

Remember Bill Russell and Michael Jordan

- Many would say that these were the two greatest NBA (National Basketball Association) players of all time. They certainly were the greatest winners, as they had upwards of 17 titles between them. But they had another, more interesting thing in common, at least for our discussion. Each of them would get dreadfully nervous before a big game. If two stars of this caliber experienced this, do not be alarmed by your nagging nerves before "game-time". If you are "practiced up" and "prepared" you will very likely deliver in the clutch!



Scientific Seminar Pointers

- In cases where your interview involves a scientific seminar, in addition to the principles/pointers stated above, *remember to stick to what you know.*
- Don't get distracted with "wild-card" or "side-bar" questions. Diplomatically acknowledge the question, thanking the person for it, but if you do not know the answer, thank them, and indicate that it would require some significant thought and inquire whether it would be possible for you could correspond with them about it later.
- *Remind yourself that you know what you know, better than probably anybody in the room,* because the presentation is YOURS. This is, no doubt, the product of your hard-work, in some cases, stretching back a number of years. Remind yourself of this, and stick to what you know, rather than trying to create a false impression, or improvise off the cuff. Candidates have missed out on job offers because they got "too cute" in seminar presentations, and tried to "bite off more than they could chew" by entering into a discussion regarding subjects with which they were just not familiar.
- Also, when and wherever possible, confer with the Hiring Manager before the visit, to ensure that the topic on which you are presenting will be appropriate to the occasion. Sometimes candidates will have two or three different seminars they could conceivably give. Why not ask the chief decision-maker which one would be most appropriate? This will maximize the potential success and effectiveness of the seminar.
- Finally, always bear in mind the "bottom line" or application of what you are presenting. What is its value to Drug Discovery or Development? How does it address the kinds of things Company XYZ is seeking to do? Toward that end, be sure that, even if you receive a flurry of questions in the seminar, that you reserve that last few minutes to deliver concluding remarks. This is the "so-what" of the presentation. A quiet beeper on your watch, set to go off two to three minutes before the scheduled end of the seminar, will remind you to "get in gear" and deliver the "so-what" portion of your message, often the most critical component of the talk.
- Again, remember Michael Jordan and Bill Russell when it's time to stand up and speak!