



Note to the student: Below is a description of Kolb's Model. Kolb's model is the required format for writing experiential essays. Students must address four areas of Kolb's Model with each of the required subtopics in order for the essay to be considered for college credit. Please read the description of each of the four sections below, along with the examples, and use that description to determine what to write for each subtopic. This page does not count toward the 5 to 7 or 10 to 15 page length requirement.

Kolb's Model

Description of Concrete Experience

Concrete experience represents your personal participation with the people, places, activities, and events of an experience. You should describe your involvement relative to the experience, demonstrating the opportunity for learning.

Example: My career in public relations started off as a staff assistant in the Public Information Office of a community college system. After two years of on-the-job training, I was promoted to the position of community relations officer.

Reflections

Reflections represent your thinking and processing relative to the experience. You should demonstrate your learning by describing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through the reflective process.

Example: I have observed that some organizations are very good at garnering free publicity. They appear at local events and frequently appear as experts in television and newspaper interviews.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories

Generalizations, principles, and theories are constructs that organize and guide academic learning. A typical college course is built around several such generalizations, principles, and/or theories.

In this stage, you identify and describe the generalizations, principles, and/or theories to demonstrate your learning outcomes. These learning outcomes result from analyzing and reflecting on your experience. The generalizations, principles, and/or theories should be comparable to those addressed in typical college courses and should match the course description selected.

Example: Whether working with large or small one-owner organizations, it makes no difference in establishing rules, guidelines, or policies regarding image and public relations. Developing a detailed plan of action makes it much easier to schedule and implement appropriate applicable strategies.

Testing and Application

Testing and/or application represents situations in which the new learning can be used. You should describe how you did, or could in the future, test and/or apply what you learned.

Example: A fun promotional idea that emerged as a by-product profit center for the bookstore was t-shirts. We printed t-shirts with the bookstore logo on the back with advertisements for the bookstore on the front.



Name: Sample Student	Date: December 17, 2008	Individual Record Number (IRN): 9000000000
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Title of Essay: **Interviewing**

NOTE: Required essay length: 10-15 pages, using first person singular, and must be typed. Because of the protected format of this document, to spell check your work, you will need to compose your essay in a separate Word document, then paste into the appropriate areas here.

Subtopic 1: Pre-interview steps

Description of Concrete Experience: My experience in interviewing began when I became employed with Murtis H. Taylor Multi-Service Center (MSC) in 2002 as Director of Facilities and Safety Services. My duties included hiring qualified employees to fill vacated positions as well as newly created positions. In my three years of employment with MSC, the organization expanded rapidly throughout the Greater Cleveland area, creating a need to for me to hire many new employees in my department including custodians, maintenance technicians, drivers, police officers and security personnel. I learned the companies hiring processes quickly in working closely with our Human Resource (HR) Director in developing pre-interview processes that allowed me to identify the type of character, skills and experience needed to properly fill positions within my department.

With the help of the organizations HR Director, I developed general pre-interview guidelines that allowed me to gain an understanding of what skills and experience MSC desired for a potential employee per each position. They are as follows; Obtain background information related to the position to be filled, determine what qualifications are critical to the position and who should be interviewed, create questions and appropriate follow up questions related to the

organizations mission and specific qualifications of the position to be filled, seek approval through the HR department through practice interviews, placing emphasis on listening for key qualifications and utilizing follow up questions to ensure potential employees truly possess the desired skills and character required for the position.

Reflections: Looking back to my first interview with MSC I can see how my interviewing skills have improved. Initially, I was nervous, not fully prepared and did not know how to conduct and control a proper interview. I spoke too much and listened too little. Many of these problems have since been rectified in part through the use of the pre-interview steps mentioned earlier. I can take pre-interview information and compare it to the job description and the organization's mission to develop specific interview questions geared toward obtaining insight into the potential employee.

Another important pre-interview skill I have adopted is to conduct a mock interview with HR personnel and gain feedback. Early on I learned through these mock interviews that I was not a good listener and needed to control the interview better through preparation. This preparation has given me the confidence and control needed to hire in over twenty quality employees in a three-year period.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories: An interview is the first formal meeting between the employee and the employer making it a critical step for both parties. In order to properly prepare for an interview with a potential employee I must carefully examine and verify in advance the depth of candidate's skills and competencies, including educational qualifications and work related experience. Using the pre-interview steps described in the first section, I establish background information that will be the basis of my questioning as well as to determine if the

candidate is truly qualified for the position. Because this first meeting holds great importance in the decision to hire or reject, it behooves me to prepare.

I have learned the key to a successful interview is taking time to utilize these pre-interview steps allowing me to avoid making mistakes and helps to prevent hiring the wrong candidate.

Testing and Application: I have found through my direct experience in interviewing potential employees that successful interviews are a result of good preparation. I have found that the pre-interview steps mentioned earlier produce the most successful hires. As a mental health care provider, understanding potential hire's background is essential to MSC in discovering desirable and unfavorable traits. This augments efficiency in the hiring process through the discovery of elements of a persons background in advance that are not conducive to the organizations standards and culture, thus identifying unqualified or ill-suited candidates before a costly and time consuming interview is held.

Subtopic 2: Establishing rapport

Description of Concrete Experience: I have found through my experience with MSC that it is essential to establish a rapport with potential employees in the interview process to ensure they have the type of character that fits well with our mission in meeting the mental health needs of the communities and population we serve. Researching a potential employee's resume and application allows me to build background information to seek common ground, easing the tension of the interview. Establishing a rapport with a candidate allows the interviewee to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and to vet out the true character of the potential hire. This is critical to the hiring practices of my department due to the sensitivity of the organizations mission and the clients we serve.

Reflections: I learned through my tenure with MSC the importance of establishing a rapport with the interviewee. When I first accepted my position the department was in need of hiring three new employees immediately. I was thrown into the position as interviewer with little background in interviewing. I learned quickly that by establishing a rapport with potential hires I was able to create a comfort level in which the potential hires felt more open to sharing information about themselves which in turn allowed me to develop insight into their true character. I found this to be essential in choosing the right types of people with a character conducive to a role with the MSC.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories: Early on in my employment with Murtis H. Taylor, the organizations human resource director taught me the importance of establishing a good rapport with candidates in generating quality information. I learned establishing a good rapport was important in creating a feeling of comfort and common ground, easing tension, which then facilitates open communication. Here are some general principles I use in developing skills that foster good rapport:

1. Work to develop an attractive personality
2. Always display confidence, leadership, passion, kindness, humility, emotional control and a solid sense of purpose
3. Show a genuine interest in others
4. Focus on the other person and their interests
5. Try not to judge but observe
6. Establish common ground and values
7. Try to always think the best of others
8. Work hard to meet other's "crucial needs"

9. Work hard to become an excellent communicator

10. Become a good listener

11. Cultivate trust and trustworthiness

Testing and Application: Through my experience in interviewing I have had to hone my interpersonal skills and personality to better develop a rapport with interviewees. In researching a potential hire's background I have found gathering information in advance can be used in finding common ground between the interviewee and me, allowing quick development of rapport, leaving them more open to answering questions without bias or anxiety. Establishing a good rapport with an interviewee also catalyzes their demonstration of their true character. This openness allows me to hire only candidates whose character best fits the culture of the organization.

Subtopic 3: Questioning

Description of Concrete Experience: Because MSC deals with mental health patients the questioning process is paramount to hiring in employees who have the character, skills, experience and sensitivity necessary to fill open positions. With the help of the HR department, I have developed questions that form a clear view of these attributes in a potential employee and that generated over twenty successful hires for the organization. The questions are categorized under six titles; personal motivation and character, goals, communication, flexibility, stress and manageability. These are used to gauge potential employee's work ethics, compassion, tolerance, ability to take directives and constructive criticism, ability to make sound decisions and multi-task, and willingness to work in a collaborative team setting.

Reflections: At first I was given a standardized form with interview questions to use in interviewing potential hires. I found the standardized form was not generating the information

needed to confidently place new employees in my department. In my second year, with the approval of the HR department, I began to make changes to the form, creating questions directed more towards specific positions. My experience with several bad hires demonstrated that certain personality traits did not work well in the mental health environment and I set out to create questions aimed at identifying these traits. Most of the questions I created revolved around personal motivation, character traits, and flexibility. I created questions like, “Under what conditions do you work best?” “What makes a job enjoyable for you?” “What frustrates you most at work?” and “What motivates you the most to do your best?” These questions provided the means for discovery of certain character traits that are best suited for the mental health environment.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories: In 2004 I took on the responsibility of revising the interview questionnaire for my department. As described earlier in the “reflections” section, the need was there to revise these standardized questions and to create more specific questions to better bring out elements and traits in candidates that were geared toward particular jobs rather than generalized questions. Through this process I found it much harder than expected to develop questions that were not biased, which could lead interviewee’s to answer the question in a certain way.

I also learned to create questions that would not be confusing to interviewees through brevity and clarity of meaning. Furthermore, good questions must directly relate to what I am trying to learn from my interviewees. In order to accomplish this task I had to ensure the questions were short and concise to avoid confusion, that they were not biased and did not assume what they asked, all the time keeping in mind the purpose or information being sought from the question.

Testing and Application: In revising and creating interview questions for the candidates I have found that it is important to create questions that relate to the information being sought for a specific position(s). The questions asked to an interviewee could either produce relevant information or extraneous information. It has become clear that the key to a productive interview is in the quality of the questions asked and the mode of delivery. Questions posed in a one on one interview can avoid ambiguity and lend themselves to further elaboration and clarification, if needed. Questions on a questionnaire lack these qualities, but do offer time and flexibility for candidates to consider their responses and to answer without possible stress or environmental impacts of the in person interview process.

When creating interview questions I try to keep in mind to avoid biased questions, never ask questions that assume what they are asking, ask only questions that are relative, and to avoid wordy or confusing questions. I have also come to avoid culturally insensitive questions and to educate myself on cultural differences to better understand the candidate's responses. For example, a person from Asian decent may not make eye contact in the same manner that Western cultures do to communicate. Keeping these principles in mind when creating interview questions allows me to not only fashion the interview to the organization's needs, but to stay apprised of variations in interviewee's style and presentation and to consider other external factors that may impact my ability to truly discern the appropriateness of the candidate.

Subtopic 4: Other forms of data gathering

Description of Concrete Experience: I have discovered many forms of data gathering that can be helpful in current as well as future interviews. I have found that by including a questionnaire section to the application for employment we are able to ask questions that are very specific to the desired position. The applicant's answers provide insight into their thoughts and feelings

regarding particular issues such as client/patient treatment, ethical versus unethical behavior, beliefs, cultural awareness and overall conviction to the position. Many times I am provided with enough information from the questionnaire that I can reject certain applicants before the interview process begins, saving time and money.

Other forms of information gathering include; direct observation, such as the interviewee's body language and appearance, criminal background checks, their resume, information on previous work experience, references and, most importantly, post interview surveys. The latter is a comparative tool that helps me to improve my interviewing skills to continually improve my interview efficacy.

Reflections: It has become apparent to me that data gathering is not limited to background checks, resumes and interview checklists. There are many other forms that can be helpful in determining character traits and qualifications of a potential employee. I have learned that timeliness, proper appearance and dress and being prepared can be indicators of future behavior and should be documented. Nonverbal cues are also revealing, i.e. eye contact, and warrant documenting if notable. A potential hire appearing overly nervous in replying to certain questions or contradicting a previous statement may be a red flag that I should use scrutiny in assessing their candidacy.

The gathering of data from previous successful and unsuccessful hires along with data from post interview survey's, provides me with a basis of comparison that can be used to determine certain common traits in potential hires as well as a comparison of interview methods and processes allowing me critical insight into potential problems in advance.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories: I have come to recognize that face-to-face interviews are the most productive means to gather data. There are many other forms of data gathering that I

commonly use to develop background information on a candidate before an interview or to verify items after the fact. Many times I have had to request additional information from interviewees before and after interviews to further determine qualifications, experience, and references. I have also used surveys from past and present interviews to gather data to use in comparing previous successes and failures in past hires and to identify critical information that may help in my final decision to hire or pass on a candidate. It has been helpful to me to log this information and have it available as a learning tool. I often revise and edit my observations to fit my growing interviewing skills and experiences.

Resumes, applications, and questionnaires are also other forms of data gathered and used in determining perspective employee's qualifications for a particular position. There are also instances when I have used telephone interviews to gather data before a face-to-face interview is scheduled to determine whether to eliminate or accept the candidate for further interviewing. There are many different ways to gather data before, during or after the interview. Most methods are used to some degree or another to gain the most complete understanding of the candidate ensuring he or she is truly qualified and capable of handling the demands of the position.

Testing and Application: I have found in my experience that the best way to gather data on potential hires is through an actual face-to-face interview. However, there are many forms of gathering information on potential hires that can be used as either support for the actual interview, or to eliminate candidates who do not have the qualifications, experience, or traits needed. Resumes, references, questionnaires, surveys, gestures, body language and appearance are among the data I commonly gather to develop background information on potential hires. This information helps in creating interview questions, developing a sense of the candidate's character, uncovering areas of common ground, discovering candidate's strengths and

weaknesses, and identifying potential conflicts. Gathering as much data or background information as I possibly can on a candidate allows me to make better decisions regarding a candidate's abilities to perform the demands of the position offered. It also familiarizes me with the whole picture of a person and not just one aspect that is captured on paper or in their style of dress that day.

Subtopic 5: Controlling the interview

Description of Concrete Experience: Early on in my position the HR director taught me that controlling the interview is essential to having a successful interview. I learned that it is my job as an interviewer not to take over the interview with extreme questioning, but to allow the interviewee to answer questions in his or her own manner. My job is to keep the interview on track, steering the questioning toward the topics I created in advance, ensuring the discussion leads to the information needed to affect a hiring decision.

Reflections: In looking back I can see how my perception of what it means to control an interview has changed. I have found that controlling an interview does not mean acting as a superior or controlling the interview through a battery of questions. I have found through my experience that interview control is attained through preparation. When I come properly prepared to interview I can ask specific questions and guide conversation toward information that is relevant to the needs of the position. I have found this to be one of the most difficult tasks in interviewing, as the balance in establishing a rapport and sticking to the relevant topics can be hard to manage evenly. Preparedness allows me to establish clear guidelines of what I need to take out of the interview, and the confidence this breeds helps me to stay on track to properly control the interview.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories: My experiences interviewing at MSC have given me the confidence to control an interview through good preparation. Having background information on the interviewee allows me to familiarize myself with their skills, past employment, and character traits, from which I can center questions used to guide the interview in gaining only relevant information.

In controlling the interview and guiding the questioning in a calm and confident manner, I can retrieve quality information on the potential hire without overbearing the interviewee, who could become nervous or sensitive possibly hindering their honesty or accuracy in answering questions. Controlling the interview ensures the information collected is relevant and answers critical questions and that the interviewee is comfortable enough to allow his or her true character to show through.

Testing and Application: My ability to control an interview is essential to having a productive interview. This means that I am able to keep the interview on track, generating only relevant information from the questions asked and keeping the tone and momentum of the interview moving in a direction as best suited to the information sought. It is also important to control the interview through creating a sense of calmness, having a likeable personality, and asking well thought out, non ambiguous and value focused questions.

Having the confidence needed to control an interview stems from the examination of background information that provides insight into the candidates qualifications, character, goals, and overall attitude toward the position. Having the confidence to control an interview stems from good preparation and practice exercising these skills in many different interview environments. Interview practice can take place in several areas of the workplace when I am posing questions to try and get information or identify what a colleague or supervisor needs from

me in the clearest, quickest way so I can take the correct and most sensible action. This also enhances my listening skills.

Subtopic 6: Evaluation and follow up

Description of Concrete Experience: The evaluation process of the interview is vital as this is where I make the decision to consider or reject the candidate. In my position I used a standardized evaluation form that rated key areas of importance to the organization as well as my personal feedback. I was trained to keep an open mind during the interview and to honestly report what I observed.

The evaluation form consisted of 15 key elements some of which were elements I required for a particular position in my department and others were key to the organization's mission and performance standards. I trained myself not to fill the form out during the interview as I found this can have a disruptive effect on the interviewee, but also to allow the entire interview to play out and then take a look back and evaluate the items after all information is taken in. Areas such as related work experience, cooperation, interpersonal skills, character, and attitude toward the position were given special attention.

Once the interview was completed a short, confidential optional survey was given to the interviewee to be filled out and mailed back to us to help gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses for improvement of our interview process.

After the evaluation I would generate a short report to be reviewed by the HR director. If the HR director's findings correlated with mine then action was taken to either hire the individual or reject employment based on the outcome of the evaluation, report and review process. All interviewees received a follow up letter from the HR department stating acceptance or rejection of the desired position. All interviewees were thanked for their time and were

prompted to either contact me to schedule orientation or to feel free to apply for other future positions.

Reflections: Properly evaluating candidates is essential to hiring in employees that fit MSC's openings. When I first began to facilitate interviews I thought that this rigorous process was a waste of time that did nothing but create bureaucracy. Through my experience I have learned the importance of hiring in the right type of employees. Not all individuals are suited to work in an environment that provides services to an array of clients including ex-prison inmates, homeless and impoverished and persons with substance abuse challenges.

I have learned that it is important to an organization's reputation to treat people with respect. This tenet motivates a follow up letter thanking them for their time and encouraging them to pursue future positions with the organization or including a start date and orientation time if hired. Additionally, follow-up surveys provide insight into the interview process to enhance continuing improvement efforts.

Generalizations / Principles / Theories: In evaluating interviewees I use a standardized evaluation form that covers all of the basic skills and requirements for the position offered. The evaluation form's purpose is to standardize the recording of data collected during the interview to ensure an unbiased view into the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Once the evaluation is complete, I then use this information in combination with my results from questioning and other gathered information in generating a short report. The combination of these documents serves to assist in the final evaluation and comparison of candidates in determining the best match for the position offered.

Testing and Application: Through my experience in interviewing a wide variety of candidates I have found that a thorough evaluation, coupled with follow-up communication, is capital to a

successful interview. The steps described in earlier sections and my experience in evaluating potential candidates has allowed me to hire in only the most qualified candidates while gaining feedback through follow-up communication that allows me to continually improve my interview skills and processes.

Working for an organization that promotes respect makes it my responsibility to conduct respectful interviews including follow-up communication for all interviews. Through my experience I have found that follow-up communication has been a helpful means to survey my interview process, allowing me to gain valuable information for future improvements, and helping to increase the organizations ability to bring in the “right” people.