

A black and white photograph of a man from the chest up, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light-colored dress shirt, and a patterned tie. He is holding the lapels of his jacket. A large, solid red five-pointed star with a white outline is positioned over his chest, centered over the tie. The background is a solid dark red color.

CONFESSIONS *of an* MBA INTERVIEWER

*What MBA Students Need to Know
to Interview Like a Rockstar...
From the Person Sitting
on the Other Side of the Table*

BY
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*Dedicated to my coaches who have helped me unlock my
capacity and confidence to achieve my purpose.*

And to New York City, where this book was written.

BEING A ROCKSTAR

People always say experience is the best teacher. It's actually a very expensive teacher. The best teacher is actually *someone else's* experience.

Nothing is more expensive than a missed opportunity.

When it comes time to interview, this couldn't be truer. After all, why else have you made such a significant investment in your career? You've invested a substantial amount of time, money, effort and resources to get your MBA... you likely gave up a salary (if you're a full-time student), and perhaps even moved to a new town.

You did that because you wanted to get a new career – one that was challenging, rewarding, and high-paying. One that lets you make a big impact in the world by leveraging “the bigger picture” of how businesses work.

You may want to create value in the marketplace in an investment banking role. You might want to advise large corporations to make decisions in a consulting role, or create and manage a brand in a marketing role. Maybe you have goals of running your own business and taking it to the next level.

No matter the role, an MBA was your path to get there, and it took a lot to select, apply, and get into a program.

And then the real work started.

While you are learning how the world works, gaining valuable experience, and meeting wonderful friends, at the end of the day, you are where you are because *you want that dream job*.

You want to make an impact. You want to lead.

And unless you rock that interview, you might end up at a company you don't really align with, in a role that you don't really care for, doing work that might not have been worth it all.

THIS BOOK WILL ENSURE THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN.

So I'm spilling the beans.

I've been on “the other side of the table” for many years, interviewing students at schools all across the country with a highly competitive top firm in the MBA world, and I've been “on the interview circuit” with interviewers from many other top firms.

I've amassed an immense amount of insider information and experience...and I'm going to share all of it with you.

I'm going to let you know exactly the mindsets, expectations, and evaluation processes that interviewers use to advance MBA students through various rounds of interviews to the final offer.

And this isn't just my perspective...I've gotten insights from other interviewers, as well as feedback provided by interviewers directly to MBA programs, to ensure you get a full spectrum of understanding.

Only a proud few will move forward in the interview process to actually receive the internship or full-time offer that he or she desires.

The information I'm going to share with you will ensure that you're one of those few.

This book is not just a book of “helpful interview tips.” Nor is it a book that discusses in detail the competencies required to be successful. Those books already exist, and your Career Services Office can provide you with detailed guidance critical to your success.

This is a book that gives you a comprehensive understanding of the interviewer and helps you OWN THE TONE of the interview to enhance your chances of successfully landing the offer.

I’ll tell you honestly: I’ve interviewed ten candidates in one day and I would have said “yes” to advancing each one on to the 2nd round of the interview. I even considered five of them to be “Rockstars”. But even then, I could only advance three of them to the 2nd round.

SO HOW DID I MAKE MY DECISION?

Well, that’s what this book is about. But to give you a hint, the three that were advanced were all in the Rockstar category... not the “yes” category.

In my first book, *The MBA Guide to Networking Like A Rockstar*, I break down in detail the “Recruiter’s Decision Mindset” (RDM) which is critical in landing the interview. In this book, that directly translates to the “Interviewer’s Decision Mindset” (IDM) which is critical in rocking the interview and getting the offer.

The decision mindset is very clear and straightforward: Every candidate evaluated will fall into one of four buckets:

- ✓ Yes.
- ✗ No.
- ? Maybe.
- ★ Rockstar!

Advancing in the interview process to getting the offer is all about being a Rockstar. This book is designed to help you understand what it takes to stand out and be a Rockstar candidate by learning what I call the NICE model.

The NICE model is exactly what I use with my own coaching clients to prepare them for interviews. It has helped them feel completely confident when they walked into the interview room, own the tone of the interview, and know, upon leaving the room, that they nailed the interview.

It’s also helped them land some amazing job offers, including 6-figure salaries, at some of the top companies in the world.

Sound good? Let’s get started!

WHY THE INTERVIEW IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU THINK

The interview is very important because it is a company's primary tool for assessing your candidacy for a role in their firm.

THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO LAND YOUR DREAM JOB!

Don't forget the payoff that interviewing like a Rockstar can bring you.

A solid interview is centrally important to being offered your dream job – one that is challenging and rewarding.

One that values you and pays you well. And one that has values with which you align.

One that makes you happy and excited to wake up every day, because you're working with people you admire and making an impact.

My dream job is to help people land their dream job. It's why I left my previous career and started www.mbarockstar.com. And now, all the content I share on that site has become known as “*the single most important investment for an MBA student*.” That kind of feedback encourages me to wake up every day and be excited to help make an impact in people's careers.

If you have been doing all of the networking required to land the interview with your dream firm, this is where the rubber meets the road. This is where you will be put into a formal review process.

No matter what MBA program you are attending, no matter how much experience you have, no matter if your uncle is the CEO of that company... every candidate that a firm sees as a strong fit will go through the interview process.

This is a standard process that many people spend a lot of time developing. It helps the firm choose only those who are best fitted to become thriving members of that organization. Each organization will have a slightly different interview model which could include group interviews, case interviews, and multiple-round interviews.

From the interviewer's perspective, this evaluation tool is important not only to test your smarts and prowess, but to highlight those that will fare best in a full-time position at that specific company.

GETTING AN INTERVIEW IS AN ACCOMPLISHMENT IN AND OF ITSELF

In the MBA world, just being chosen for an interview can help you build great credibility.

This is something that most MBA students don't think about. When a certain company puts you on an interview list, it is a signal from that company that you are actually a great candidate in whom they are interested. That in itself is an accomplishment, so make sure to celebrate!

Regardless of whether you receive an offer from a company, the very fact that you interviewed with that company enables you to attract other companies and potentially attract more interviews.

Being selected to interview with a certain company creates a buzz about you on campus. *It brings attention to you.*

Similarly, when interacting with all of the employers on your list,

discussing where you have received interviews will help you become more attractive in their eyes. This must be done carefully, of course. You need to ensure you aren't boasting or downplaying your interest in the firm you are interacting with.

Receiving an interview is a signal to the market that you are valuable.

Reach out to firms that haven't decided on your candidacy, or perhaps didn't give you an opportunity previously, and let them know with whom you are interviewing.

For example, you might want to use language like this (could be in person, via email, or on the phone):

"Hi [insert Recruiter's name], hope you are doing well. I wanted to follow-up with you and let you know that I've received offers to interview with Companies A, B, and C. I'm really excited about these interviews, but am still committed to working with your firm. I understand you are likely making your interview selections at this time, so please let me know if I can provide any additional information to enhance my candidacy. Thank you!"

You want to avoid putting the Recruiter with whom you've built a relationship in an awkward position. Avoid language like this:

DIRECTLY ASKING FOR AN INTERVIEW:

"Wanted to let you know I'll be interviewing with your competitor, but I'd rather work for you. Can you give me an interview?"

BOASTING:

"I'm received so many interview offers, I don't know if I have time for your company anymore"

BEGGING:

"Well, I got an interview from Company A, doesn't that make me worth your time?"

QUESTIONING:

"Since Company A is interviewing me, should you also be interviewing me?"

DEMANDING:

"I got an interview with Company A, you should also offer me an interview!"

Remember, while the interview is an accomplishment, it's important to value the relationships you've created with alumni and employers – even if they decide not to interview you. When communicating, both your reputation and your school's reputation are on the line.

When I was an MBA student, one of my classmates was trying to network off-campus to interview with a company that didn't formally recruit at our program. After building a relationship with that company for a long time, he still did not hear from them about an actual opportunity to interview.

Then he received interview offers from competing firms. He let his contacts at that company know, and the following week, he was invited to do an interview.

The fact that he had received interview offers from competing firms made him more valuable in this company's view, and more importantly, convinced them of his candidacy.

That's how he broke through and actually landed the opportunity to interview.

INTERVIEWING SHOULD BE VIEWED AS A NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

Students often go into the interview to “pass the test,” but don’t limit yourself and pass up an extraordinary opportunity.

The interview is a networking opportunity which enables you to build a relationship with the interviewer, and also help you understand more about the industry.

You are going to be sitting face-to-face with one or multiple interviewers who represent a company. The interviewers will take you through the evaluation process because they need to make a decision.

At the same time, they’re getting to know you better. It’s your opportunity to establish a relationship. It’s also a chance for you to see if you would be happy there. Big companies and household names can be appealing on the outside, but things can be very different once you’re there. Don’t just be focused on making the interviewer like you, also think critically about whether you like them. Try to learn what a typical day is like, what’s the company culture like, what’s the actual work environment – gray drab cubes with high walls or a collaborative atmosphere with a lot of natural light? If these aren’t things that matter to you, try to determine what does matter to you and find out if potential employers can match it.

The evaluation process itself will include behavioral questions and potentially a case challenge or technical questions to assess your competencies and skill sets; however the interview also wants to know *who you are*.

Would you make a good co-worker? Are you fun to be around? You’ll be able to build that relationship and network with them during the evaluation process.

Even if the evaluation process doesn’t go in your favor, if you’re able to build a relationship with them, opportunities can come back to you much later down the road.

I’ll share an example of what happened to me as a candidate.

I was interviewing with a consulting firm. It was a second round interview, and I was scheduled with three interviewers. One interviewer was a Manager, one was a Principal, and one was a Partner.

Through the process, I remember my specific interview with the Partner went really well - we really connected, we shared ideas, brainstormed together, and really had an energized kind of interview. At the end of the interview, he told me “listen: either way, no matter how today goes, I really enjoyed this, and I know you’ll go far.”

One of my other interviews (with the Principal) did not go well, and I ended up not getting a full-time offer. But it was the Partner who called and delivered the feedback to me. He said: “go work for another consulting firm for two years and call me back. I’d be happy to reopen your file and bring you back to the firm here as a manager.”

Which is really outstanding.

Even though the interview didn’t go in my favor, I was able to network build the relationship that led me to a future job opportunity. Now that the foundation of the relationship was built, all I had to do was nourish that relationship over the next few years until the time I decided to explore possible roles at the company.

So remember: the interview is an evaluation but it is also an opportunity to network.

I’ve seen many MBA students walk into my interview room with something to prove. They view the interview as only an evaluation and are so caught up in trying to give me the right answer, that I only end up knowing a little bit about what they’ve done and what they can do... I don’t get to know much about who they are.

And as you’ll see in the coming chapter, this is very important to interviewers. **If an interview doesn’t go in your favor, it’s likely not a skill-set problem, it’s a mind-set problem.**

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MBA INTERVIEWERS

During my career with a top tier strategy consulting firm, I was a key member of our National Recruiting Program & Interview Team. What you need to realize is that when an interviewer walks into a room, they are taking the interview very seriously.

They're taking it seriously because they are selecting the next leaders of their company, and they are spending a lot of money on each candidate that they are recruiting into their process.

This recruiting figure ranges from a few thousand up to ~\$40K per MBA candidate that accepts the job offer. This includes all the events they are throwing, all the people they are flying in, all of the food, etc. Companies maintain a significant budget to bring talent into their company and it is a very serious game.

When you walk into that interview, I highly advise you to be equally serious, understanding and respecting the fact that these business leaders are making a big investment of time and money in recruiting you.

**KNOW YOURSELF, BE YOUR BEST &
MAKE THE INTERVIEWER'S TIME WORTH IT.**

The other thing to keep in mind is that most MBA recruiting firms will recruit with a national – if not international – model. This means that the firm is not only visiting your school and selecting the best candidate; the firm is selecting the best candidates from a pool of top programs where they usually find the type of candidate that is the best fit for them.

If you believe you are a stronger candidate compared to your peers at your program, that doesn't mean you're going to get an offer from a certain firm.

It is likely, however, that you'll get advanced to a second round of interviews. With the second rounds, you'll be competing against the other programs in the company's national or international model for placement.

This means you will not only have to be the best when it comes to your program, but also the best of the best across the entire pool of candidates.

This is where a self-assessment becomes very important – **you need to know what you bring to the table.**

This isn't meant to intimidate you. It's meant to show you that these companies take their talent acquisition process very seriously.

They are going to bring in the best of the best, and they are hoping that it is you.

All it takes to prove to them that you are the best is the right amount of preparation before you get into the interview season. A common practice among full-time students is to spend their winter break prepping behavioral questions, case challenges, and technical questions to be at the top of their game in January and February when the interviewing season begins.

Part-time students often spend their weekends focusing on interview preparation to be at the top of their game.

To be the best, you need to prepare – not only so you can be at the top of your game in terms of interviewing skills, but so that you can

know yourself. You need to have awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses before walking into that room. One part of that includes the actual interview preparation, but the other important piece is doing a self-assessment. We will talk about this in later chapters where I provide a self-assessment to help you with this process.

When interviewers evaluate multiple candidates in a day, the ones that typically stand out are the ones that are self-aware.

Unfortunately, most MBA students don't take the time to perform a self-evaluation and gain this advantage.

Finally, keep in mind that most of the individuals that you will be interviewing with are full-time individuals who work for that company. They will likely be managers, directors, and partners from various companies, whether it's consulting, finance, consumer package goods, healthcare, energy, or any other firm that recruits MBAs.

As you can imagine, all of these people are extremely busy – in their daily jobs they are working under strict deadlines and making decisions that will impact millions of dollars and millions of people.

They are taking time away from this (billable) work and investing it in you. They are really hoping to connect with the next contributing leaders of their company.

If you are able to recognize this fact, connect with them, and value their time, it will go very far in making it a great interview process for you and for them.

This is what I explain with the NICE model in the next chapter, and it's what I'm convinced has helped my coaching clients be so successful!

Remember what we discussed in the last chapter about what interviewers want? Answer: they want to know not just what you've done, but *who you are*.

By the time recruiters have selected candidates for an interview, they're pretty confident that each one of the candidates would likely do

a great job in their firm. It's why they recruit at specific MBA programs, and it's also why extending you an offer to interview is such a strong market signal about how valuable they think you are.

Thus, your goal isn't just to convince them that you've done a lot of great stuff and will continue doing it. To an extent, they already believe that.

(Important note: this is not the case for all people who interview for jobs anywhere. But for MBA students, it's a unique part of the interview process that no one really discusses.)

REPRESENT YOUR PROGRAM

Let me also mention that when you connect with the interviewer and make it a great experience for them, it reflects really well not only on you, but also on your entire program. It ensures that the relationship between the school and your MBA program continues.

I have personally seen a company reduce (or even completely remove) its recruiting efforts at a certain school after realizing that it just wasn't worth their time to recruit there. They had a national model and were finding most of their recruits were coming from other programs.

The school's talent just wasn't taking the process seriously enough, and they weren't respecting the cost required.

The company kept the relationship with that program, but they ceased all on-campus activities and reduced their budget to \$0 in terms of what they would spend on recruiting candidates from the school.

So always keep in mind that your interview experience, as well as your relationship with the interviewer, can impact not only your relationship with the company, but also your school's relationship with the company.

The reason I'm telling you this is because if you walk into the interview room knowing and acknowledging this about the interviewer, it will change the whole dynamic of the process... in *your* favor!

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN CANDIDATES

What are MBA interviewers really looking for in candidates? I call it the NICE Model.

We are looking for candidates who are NICE. NICE is an acronym that stands for Noteworthy, Intentional, Confident, and Enthusiastic:

N NOTEWORTHY

What makes this candidate special/memorable?

I INTENTIONAL

Do I trust this candidate's intentions?

C CONFIDENT

Do I know if this candidate has the right confidence to be successful in this position?

E ENTHUSIASTIC

Do I like this candidate's enthusiasm to become a thriving member of my organization?

If you are able to convey these four attributes in an interview, it will make the interview experience much more enjoyable for you and for the interviewer, who will likely advance you to the next round.

Let's go through each aspect of the acronyms in detail. I'm going to go backwards, starting with E (Enthusiastic).

E – ENTHUSIASTIC

We're looking for candidates who are enthusiastic about learning, enthusiastic about the industry, and enthusiastic about adding value.

Typically, interviewers in the first round are junior managers who will likely be managing you during your internship or as a full-time recruit.

They want to know what it would be like to work with you. Is this an individual I want to have on my team? Is this an individual I'm going to be excited to develop over time? Is this someone I want to help become a better professional, no matter what industry they are in?

As an interviewer, I'm looking for your enthusiasm to be present. Are you excited to be in the room with me? In what ways are communicating and conveying that enthusiasm?

- *Are you smiling?*
- *Are you attentive?*
- *Are you showing great body language?*
- *Are you being warm with your language and your posture?*

Are you able to make your enthusiasm clearly present or are you dreading the evaluation process? That kind of enthusiasm is really important. For example, how are you showing your enthusiasm for learning to me?

- *Have you done research on the company?*
- *Are you telling me stories of people you've interacted with and how that's affected your view of the company?*
- *Have you been reading what's in the news and can you tell me something that the company or industry has recently done that really excites you?*

This kind of enthusiasm shows me you've been attending corporate events, contacting different people, and taking the steps needed to actually show your excitement and enthusiasm of learning about the company.

Further, you've gone beyond those resources and gone online to learn whatever else you could. The people you interact with will include other members from the company, second year students, other students at your school who are tied to the organization, and even alumni that you might know who have been a part of the organization but have now moved on.

All those are open avenues available for you to go and learn about the company. Any evidence that you can show of your enthusiasm about learning through people you've met or through research you've done is very good.

If you haven't been attending the events, meeting people, or doing on-line research, it becomes difficult for me to know why you're in the room.

Many candidates take appropriate measures to signal their interest in my firm... why haven't you? If your interest is a recent development due to some changes in your priorities or situation, then it's important to explain yourself. *Show evidence of your enthusiasm to work for my company.*

Additionally, I'm looking for your enthusiasm to make an impact.

I need to understand that you are committed to the idea of being a

team player of driving change. When you are in a post-MBA position, you are going to be managing teams, projects, clients, and/or suppliers.

You are going to be in some kind of management role because you have a Master's in Business Administration or Business Management Science. Therefore, we are going to be expecting you to *manage something*.

- *Are you enthusiastic and excited about managing something and making an impact?*
- *What is this role really going to let you achieve, and why is it better than some other role at another company?*

Anything you can show in terms of your excitement and ability to want to drive change and make an impact is going to be very beneficial to your candidacy.

In order to do this, talk about other areas where you've made an impact and what that looks like. Tell stories. This is what the behavioral portion of the interview is all about.

Also just having a goal and idea of why this specific company is going to help you achieve your goals of making an impact is a great thing to prepare before an interview.

Sharing that goal with your interviewers will help them recognize your enthusiasm to learn and contribute, and they'll admire you for it.

C - CONFIDENCE

We are looking for confident candidates.

This doesn't mean over-confidence, false confidence, or cockiness. That's actually a negative thing; we're not looking for that.

What we are looking for are candidates who are confident about the work they are going to be doing and are confident in communicating

that. Confident candidates have a very healthy sense of self-awareness.

If you don't have a lot of confidence in your own abilities and your own communication skills, then we're likely not going to have the confidence in your ability to add value as an individual contributor.

We're looking for someone who we can send into a room on day 1 to instill confidence in the others who are in the room. Whether the room is full of junior members of the team, a senior Director or Partner, a client, or a supplier – we need to feel confident you are going to be able to take the meeting where it needs to go.

We want to hear confidence in your voice. We want to see you tell stories and examples of driving change in an organization and instilling confidence in your team.

We want to see confidence in your body language and we want to see it in the way you communicate. If we don't sense that you bring that air of confidence into the room when you walk in, we're likely going to test you on that confidence through the evaluation tools available.

Testing your confidence can include asking you questions such as:

- *Tell me about a time when you had to work with difficult people.*
- *Give me some examples of where you were able to convince people to adopt your point of view.*
- *Tell me about a time when you had to discuss a topic that wasn't very popular.*

This type of influence/confidence questions will allow us to understand your ability to influence people for beneficial purposes.

This kind of influence requires leveraging your soft skills and emotional intelligence, and may not come naturally to many people.

Nevertheless, it is something that can be learned and practiced, so that you can walk into the interview with confidence. Even if you might

be naturally more introverted, or if you're an international student who is not familiar with American culture and customs, you can learn and practice confidence.

So how can you gain confidence? Follow these steps I use with my coaching clients and individuals who attend my workshops:

1. Take the self-assessment I provide later in this book to become more self-aware of your strengths and weaknesses as perceived by a Recruiter/Interviewer
2. Do your research to understand what the employer you are interviewing with is looking for in a candidate (note: this research should go beyond a web-search online. Talk to people from that company or industry to understand it better).
3. Develop a compelling story around why you are a good fit for the company. *This is important.* Practicing this on your own will give you the clear confidence you need to convey when sharing the story in an interview.
4. Get any self-doubt out of your system; don't go in there a nervous wreck. Interviewers will sense that right away and it will impede their ability to trust you. You've done a self-assessment, determined fit, and developing a compelling narrative to convey in the interview... you are in a very good position to be successful!
5. Practice, practice, practice. Banish your fears and walk in with an air of confidence, not cockiness. Practice interviewing with people who are going to test you and challenge you – this is the best way to avoid being “thrown off” in an interview and losing your edge. Practicing will help you gain confidence about the process and reduce any anxiety that might hinder you.

It all comes down to whether your confidence makes us confident that you can do the job when we hire you.

I – INTENTIONAL

What we are really looking for here are candidates who have good intentions. Intentionality spans two areas:

1. What are your intentions for actually being here today; why are you in the room interviewing?
2. Can I trust your intentions to consistently do the right thing if I hire you?

Let's talk about these areas.

WHY ARE YOU IN THE ROOM?

It is very common for MBA students to take on interviews and use them as "practice interviews" with no actual intentions of accepting the offer.

There are pros and cons to this method. There are some positive connotations for the student who "collects" interviews as "practice." This student benefits by having the ability to:

- A. Practice interviewing and enhance their confidence
- B. Learn about different organizations and make a different decision or an optimal decision
- C. Network with all of these companies and potentially build strong relationships

On the other hand, there are negative aspects to this "practice," as well.

First of all, for every interview spot that you take, one of your classmates is not getting it. If you build a reputation for being the student who goes around collecting interviews but doesn't really care about them or take them seriously, there's a good chance you'll become pretty unpopular among your fellow students.

Part of the MBA experience is networking with your classmates. Your relationships with them can last a lifetime. If you cultivate them, they will constantly lead you to more and more opportunities throughout your entire career.

You want to be able to balance that ability to serve yourself and also serve others, especially when they are your classmates.

Secondly, collecting interviews negatively impacts your school, because if you go into the interview and you're not taking it seriously, that feedback will go directly to your school.

Many times, I have seen recruiters and interviews give feedback to schools that's along these lines: "The student just didn't seem interested and couldn't articulate why they were intending to receive a job offer from us."

That kind of feedback can be very dangerous, and can lead to the type of scenario that I talked about earlier. Don't be the reason that your school is removed from a company's recruiting list!

Finally, accepting too many interviews without any intention of accepting offers can negatively impact you personally. If you try to prepare for too many interviews, you are going to be spreading yourself (and your mindshare) across different companies (perhaps even different industries).

It's imperative that you are consistently practicing and preparing for each of your interviews, which takes a lot of time and effort.

**YOUR REPUTATION IS ON THE LINE,
SO DON'T SPREAD YOURSELF TOO THIN.**

A lot of the interviewers you'll interact with will likely be alumni from your school. They've kept in touch; they know each other. If your name starts coming up in conversation, and it looks like you're a candidate that is just "shopping around," it can back-fire, because those alumni will begin to understand that you're just shopping around.

Even though you've never told them you're interviewing with different companies, they might be able to find that out just through conversation. *It will not be viewed very positively in your candidacy.*

Think: what are your real intentions to enter the interview room?

It makes perfect sense to have a primary and secondary list of interview options, but if you don't have any certain interest in a company and you don't expect to accept an offer even if you pass the interview, we can tell that right away.

We've been doing this for a long time, and students have been pulling this stunt for years.

It really has an impact on our view of you and your school's program.

We will be testing your intention of why you are here.

WE ALSO WANT TO BE ABLE TO TRUST YOUR INTENTIONS OF WHO YOU ARE AS A PERSON.

We want to know that we can trust you as a *person*. We want to know that we can trust you to do that right thing.

This goes into a little bit of an assessment of your ethics and your integrity, as well as the ideals that you hold to be valuable.

There are certain questions we'll be asking to ascertain what you do in certain situations and why you do it. We want to learn about you as an individual and what kind of intention you bring to the table.

If you are going to be in a situation where you cannot contact other members of the organization and the need to make a quick, ethical

choice... will you make the right decision?

- *Are your intentions correct?*
- *Will you be serving your clients?*
- *Will you be serving your suppliers?*
- *Will you be serving your junior members of the team?*
- *Will you be serving your senior members of the team?*
- *Will you be serving the mission of the company?*

It all comes down to your intentions and how you will make decisions. We're going to be accessing your intentions to see if they fit our company or not. We do this because we want to work with people that we trust; people who have the right intentions in mind.

In order to make your intentions clear to us, tell us the intentions that have driven your career forward thus far, and why an MBA and our firm help you advance in that intention. We explore ways to establish your intentions at the beginning of the interview in the following chapter.

N – NOTEWORTHY

And finally, we want to look for candidates who are noteworthy.

Keep in mind that we will likely be conducting 8 - 10 interviews in a day. We will likely be advancing 2 – 5 of those candidates to a further round, or perhaps making offers to those students.

It becomes very difficult for a student to stand out. At the end of the day, we will advance the individuals who are *very* noteworthy. Noteworthy candidates really fall into two categories.

First, **there is something in their story that's quite notable.** Here are some examples:

Niti – a student who wants to work in healthcare. She is so excited

to be working in healthcare that she volunteered to go spend six months in a developing country delivering healthcare to those in need. She spent time working for a political think tank advising on healthcare policy, and studied medicine before getting her MBA, or is pursuing a dual-degree.

Nathan – a student who is interested in the energy industry. He’s spent his entire life in energy, and has been around the energy industry since a young age. He’s fascinated with it and has family members who work in it and has spent his own time working in different parts of the industry and really wants to take it to the next level.

Both these students clearly display a lot of passion, a lot of dedication, and are individuals who live and breathe their industry.

It doesn’t matter if Niti is switching from policy to consulting, or if Nathan is switching from operations to investment banking; both know that industry really well and clearly have been dedicated to it.

If she can crack the case interview, and if he can answer technical questions convincing the interviewer of his finance prowess, both will likely advance to additional interview rounds or receive an offer, because their stories will stand out at the end of the day.

However, many MBA students are not only career changers, but also industry changers. You don’t have to have a notable story like Niti or Nathan, and you don’t have to be a person who has been consistently passionate about a certain industry or function. If you’ve been a career changer and you don’t have a notable story in your background that builds your credibility and notoriety, then you can still be noteworthy in other ways.

That brings us to the second way of being noteworthy: **by creating a great experience for the interviewer.** That includes doing really well on the ICE part of the NICE Model. Getting the interviewer to:

- Like your Enthusiasm
- Know your Confidence

- Trust your Intentions

If you score high on the Like-Know-Trust factor, the interviewer will say, “wow that person just hit it on every dimension!” This is why the NICE model is so important and so impactful... it makes you notable, it gets you advanced in the interview rounds, and *it lands you the offer.*

So it doesn’t matter whether or not you volunteered in a developing country...whether or not you’ve been in energy all of your life...or whether that sort of thing fits your story at all.

If you’re someone who stands out and has done your homework (to understand what kind of candidates we want), you are one of those candidates.

You will be noteworthy.

And at the end of the day, that notability is going to be the deciding factor in whether you are advanced or not, and whether you land the offer or not.

THE NICE FACTOR

We want to hire candidates that can perform well in the job. But almost any MBA student we interview can do that.

More importantly, we want to hire candidates we like, know, and trust. We want to hire candidates who stand out as having the best potential to become thriving members of our organization.

If you’re able to show your enthusiasm, convey your confidence, and demonstrate that your intentions are in alignment with those of our company, then you’re going to stand out from the crowd and be noteworthy in our minds.

Let’s go back to the story I started in Chapter 1.

To refresh your memory: my interview partner & I interviewed ten

candidates in one day, all of them were “yes” candidates, and five of them were absolute “Rockstars”...but we could only advance three of them to the next round of interviews.

Needless to say, it was a really tough decision. How did we make that decision?

We chose the ones that were most notable.

Two of the students we advanced had done a really great job networking with different individuals within the company. They talked about how much they had invested into the company through the year and how much they learned about it. They were very clear about what they wanted to achieve by working in our firm. Their enthusiasm and intentions were clear, and they had the confidence to boot.

The third student that advanced had just the warmest presence that we saw all day. She showed the right amount of enthusiasm and confidence that would work for any client. We felt comfortable putting her in front of a client day one of her internship and we knew she would represent the company with the right intention.

When it comes to making a decision, it's not always a skillset problem that will not get you to the next round of interviews or actual offer to internship or full-time position. **It's actually a mindset problem.**

Are you able to influence the interviewer's mindset and talk about your skillsets in an interview?

Because when we are making decisions, yes, we want to know if you have the right skillsets to be successful.

But we also want to know if you have the right mindset to be successful in our organization. Will you be a thriving member of our organization? If you're able to articulate and convey that to us, then you're going to do really well in the interview and change our mindset.

This kind of Rockstar articulation is all about owning the tone of the interview, which we'll discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5:

HOW TO OWN THE TONE OF THE INTERVIEW

There are three fundamental questions that every interviewer is going to ask you.

They are asking you these three questions to determine if you are a NICE candidate. And your answers will set the tone of the entire interview.

If your answers to these three questions effectively show that you have the right skillset and the right mindset to be a thriving member of their organization, you are going to **own the tone of that interview.**

By owning the tone, here's what I mean: after the first three questions (in the first five minutes), the rest of the interview is either going to be an enjoyable, back-and-forth conversation where the interviewer can relate to you, or it's going to be a high-pressure “sweat interview” where the interviewer is digging to understand something about you.

That tone is going to be selected according to how well you do with the first three questions. If you establish your NICE candidacy, you're in the clear.

I can't overemphasize how important it is to answer these three questions and own the tone of the interview.

Wouldn't you love to leave the interview knowing that you set a tone

that highlighted your notability, intentionality, confidence, and enthusiasm?

Set this tone in that first five minutes, so it continues throughout the rest of the interview, and so that the interviewer is convinced that you are the ideal candidate.

SO WHAT ARE THE THREE QUESTIONS?

In essence, those three questions are:

1. Tell me about yourself. (Walk me through your resume.)
2. Why are you interested in this industry?
3. Why are you interested in this company?

As an interviewer, once we ask those three questions, we have made approximately 85% – 95% of our decision about whether you are a NICE candidate or not.

The rest of the time will really be spent either reinforcing and ensuring that our first impression of you is correct (that you are a NICE candidate) or it's going to be proving or disproving gaps that we see in your NICE candidacy.

The latter situation is when the interview can become a little more of a “sweat interview,” or an unpleasant experience where you don't feel comfortable or in charge.

This is why you've likely spent some time attending workshops through your career center on how answer these questions, which is extremely valuable. I want to give you a different perspective: from the other side of the interview table.

Let's talk a little bit about how to answer these questions in a way that's going to show that you are NICE. Reminder: NICE stands for noteworthy, intentional, confident, and enthusiastic.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

So many times, I have seen interview candidates answer this question simply by giving me a linear story of what they have done over the last few years.

A typical answer will go like this: *Well, I graduated from ABC Undergrad and I took a job working for Company A, where I did activity B. Then I moved on to Company C for these reasons where I did activity D, and I really enjoyed it. But I felt something was missing and so I decided to get my MBA so I could enhance my skills and knowledge to work in your industry and so I could learn more about business in general to become a better-rounded person.*

And that's a fine answer if I had asked you to tell me what you've done.

But I have your resume in front of me to see what you've done. I'm really asking you to **tell me who you are.**

A key differentiator in telling me who you are versus what you've done is telling me *why you've been doing whatever you've been doing.* That “why behind the what” is equivalent to the enthusiasm, the confidence, and the intentionality for which I'm looking.

If you're not able to communicate in this way, then you will likely not be notable in those first few minutes.

Focus on your intentions, and articulate them with confidence and enthusiasm.

If you went to ABC Undergrad, worked at Company A and Company B, and then came to business school... what has been your driving force for doing those things? What were your intentions when you did them?

Here are some questions to help you get thinking. Also, the self-assessment in the next chapter will likely help you look inward to find your motivation. To identify your intentions and to articulate who you are ask yourself:

1. What have I always been interested in?
2. When I make big life decisions (like going to Business School), what criteria do I include in my decision-making process?
3. What do I value most?
4. What types of things am I doing when I'm "in the zone"?
5. What are the key descriptors of my ideal work environment?

If I can understand the intentions behind your actions to date, then I can understand your intentions for being at my company and making it the next step in your path.

Thus I'll also be able to understand your intentions for being here in the room with me, and I'll trust that they're genuine.

WHY THIS INDUSTRY/FUNCTION?

Many MBA students are career switchers shifting between industries and/or functions. They might be going from healthcare to energy. They might be going from consumer packaged goods into consulting. They might be going from sales into investment banking. If you have interviewed before, you know that one of the hurdles in career switching is proving you are capable without work experience in the specific industry you are looking to transition into.

How can you overcome this without turning back time and having that actual industry experience on your resume?

Have the interviewer understand your intention for being in the interview.

Why are you driven to work in investment banking? Why are you driven to work in consulting? Why are you driven to work in healthcare? Why are you driven to work in energy? Why do you want to be a marketer? Why do you want to be a brand manager? Why do you want to work in operations?

Once again, what I'm trying to do is understand your intention for

being in the interview. Here are some questions to ask yourself to better understand and articulate this intention:

1. What makes me know I'll be really good at my future career?
2. A year from now, what will my manager write in my assessment?
3. What is the impact I want to make, and how is this industry relevant to that type of work?

I'm going to be assessing the confidence and enthusiasm with which you provide an answer.

At the same time, of course, you also need to convey to me you have the right skillset, background, interest, and abilities to be a contributing member of that industry/function.

WHY THIS COMPANY?

This is the question where your answer can really make you noteworthy, so read carefully.

If I can trust your intentions and believe that you have a confident, enthusiastic demeanor, then this is what it really comes down to: do I trust that you can make the impact you desire via my company?

As I mentioned before, I want to be shown evidence why you think my company is going to be the best partner for you to make this impact.

I want to know...

- A. That you actually had a chance to get to know what the company is about. Not that you read our mission statement on a website somewhere, not because it has prestige, but because you've actually done your research by going online, because you've talked to different people, and because you can tell me

about conversations that convinced you that the company is a good fit for you. And here's the kicker: this "company fit" needs to tie back to the intentions behind what you've been doing so far in your life, so it fits your story and not one that's made up.

- B. What you can do for this company. I want to know the exact reasons why you think you'll thrive as a member of this organization. I want candidates who will allow for a symbiotic relationship between company and member, where both parties benefit hugely from working together.

So, once you answer those three questions, I'm going to really understand your intentions around what you want to do and whether this company is going to be your path to getting there.

I am going to be assessing your confidence as you tell me these things. And I'm going to be assessing your enthusiasm, as well as how real I believe your intentions are.

All of a sudden, you become noteworthy. I feel like I know you, I feel like I like you, and I feel like I trust you.

And once you are able to establish that trust in the first five minutes of the interview, you will set the tone of the interview for the rest of the interview.

And if you don't, the interviewer will be constantly testing you because there is something they don't like about you. They want to get into that and understand that. There's something they don't trust and want to understand better.

Make it your primary intention to follow this advice at the beginning of your interviews, so that the rest of the interview isn't a proving ground but rather an opportunity to connect and re-establish your NICE candidacy.

So how do you articulate the story of who you are after the very first question is asked? In The Rockstar Approach, I outline the answer to this question in four parts:

1. Who you are
2. What you've done
3. Where you are going
4. Why you deserve it.

If you are able to convey these things in the first five minutes of the interview to the interviewer in a very effective way, then you're going to be able to do a great job of establishing your candidacy and owning the tone of the interview.

SOME FINAL TIPS ON OWNING THE TONE

Convey that you are self-aware. Not many MBA students walk in the interview room aware of their strengths and limitations. If you're not, we'll find out very quickly.

Convey that you can communicate confidently. As I said before, this is just a matter of practice. Be confident in your ability to tell me about your candidacy.

Convey that you have the right skillset to match. Most students try to do this first, which is a mistake. Only try to make your case after you show me you're self-aware and confident. The skillset means little without the mindset.

So, I can summarize this whole chapter by saying: *tell me who you are, not just what you've done.*

But that is easier said than done. Follow the guidance in this chapter and ask yourself the test questions provided to really stand out from the crowd and rock the interview!

The following chapter provides a self-assessment to further build your self-awareness and confidence to help you be successful in the interview.

ROCKSTAR ATTRIBUTES: A CONFIDENCE & SELF AWARENESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

So, the first few minutes will set the tone of the interview... what do you talk about for the rest of the interview?

Well, depending on how the first five minutes go, I have a certain set of attributes that I am going to be looking for in a Rockstar candidate. I ask a different series of questions for each of these attributes.

The table on the following pages outlines the 11 attributes of a Rockstar candidate that interviewers may ask you about in order to ascertain your strengths or weaknesses.

As we discussed at length in the previous chapter, enthusiasm, intentionality, and confidence are at the core of a Rockstar candidacy. Enthusiasm should be naturally displayed through your demeanor, your networking efforts, and your research. Intentions should be reflected upon, shared, and practiced so you can communicate them clearly.

But confidence is a more complicated matter. It really requires self-awareness.

I originally developed this extremely important confidence and self-awareness self-assessment in my first book, *The MBA Guide to Networking Like a Rockstar*.

The following pages outline the eleven attributes we are looking for in a Rockstar candidate, as well as strong and weak candidate examples I have seen in my time as an MBA recruiter and interviewer.

Assess yourself, and if you notice weaknesses, be prepared to address them in the interview with confidence.

ATTRIBUTES INTERVIEWERS ARE REALLY LOOKING FOR IN A ROCKSTAR CANDIDATE

Interviewers will want to feel confident that you are a Rockstar... not just a “yes” or a “maybe”.

They will try to understand your performance against 3 areas which are outlined in the table on the following pages:

1. Skill Sets/Experiences
2. Educational Benchmarks
3. Work History Characteristics

The majority of the interview will likely be focused on understanding your skills sets and experiences you’ve had thus far in your career.

The most important attribute that interviewers typically look for in a Rockstar candidate are strong skill sets that are relevant to the position. Some of the questions they might ask themselves include:

- What leadership skills has the candidate demonstrated?
- Does the candidate have analytical/modeling experience?
- Has the candidate demonstrated innovative thinking?
- Does the candidate have experience communicating with a range of audiences, including senior executives?
- Has the candidate successfully worked with a team to

accomplish a goal?

- What activities has the candidate participated in outside of work and what skills were learned or demonstrated?

When it comes to your performance against educational benchmarks, interviewers will notice strong numbers, including your GPA and your performance on standardized tests, such as the GMAT.

Additionally, they will look for your involvement in clubs and activities available at your business school that is relevant to the position for which you have applied.

The characteristics of your work history will give interviewers the best understanding of your story, and the most clarity into your NICE candidacy.

They will look for a logical progression and examples of advancement/promotions. They will look for how lengthy and varied your work history is. Important: This work history needs to align with your stated intentions.

In addition, they will look to see if you have worked with a recognizable company or brand name which lends credibility to your experience, giving interviewers a better sense of your story.

Interviewers will look at your story not in pieces but as a sum of its parts.

You do not necessarily need to demonstrate strengths in all relevant skill sets, surpass all educational benchmarks, and display amazing work history characteristics. Even though you may not have strengths in every one of these attributes (especially on paper), you can still be a Rockstar by establishing your NICE candidacy in the interview.

ASSESS HOW STRONG/WEAK YOU ARE ACROSS THIS LIST OF ROCKSTAR ATTRIBUTES

The first thing to keep in mind when self-assessing across this list of attributes is that there is no one profile for a Rockstar. Various combinations of strengths and weaknesses are in high demand and highly respected in the job.

Below are examples of what is typically considered strong and weak across this list of attributes to give you a better sense of how your background stacks up.

There is no official rating, but use these benchmarks as an overall guide. Further, once you complete this confidence and self-awareness self-assessment, it is important to gauge your relative competitiveness against your classmates and MBA students at other programs your dream company will be recruiting at.

ROCKSTAR ATTRIBUTES: A CONFIDENCE & SELF-AWARENESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

SKILL SETS / EXPERIENCES

ATTRIBUTE	EXAMPLE OF STRONG	EXAMPLE OF WEAK
<i>Leadership</i>	Clearly exhibits multiple examples of successfully leading teams and/or projects	Limited or no examples of exhibited leadership
	Recognition/awards for leadership both in and out of the workplace	Examples of leadership that are examples of performing work responsibilities well but are not actually leadership, e.g., auditor states that she worked to resolve a financial gap in a client's account
<i>Analytics /Modeling</i>	Demonstrates mastery of Excel and/or other analytical tools in problem solving	No mention of Excel or other analytical tools on resume
	Has used modeling/ analytics to deliver substantial results/ savings to the company	Limited use of modeling/ analytics to deliver results/savings to the company

SKILL SETS / EXPERIENCES

ATTRIBUTE	EXAMPLE OF STRONG	EXAMPLE OF WEAK
<i>Innovative thinking</i>	Clearly exhibits multiple examples of suggesting innovative ideas that have been adopted by the company Recognition/awards for innovation both in and out of the workplace	Limited or no examples of innovation on resume Examples of innovation that are not truly innovative or are logical conclusions as the result of a study (examples and interpretations can vary)
<i>Experience communicating with a range of audiences, including senior executives</i>	Clearly exhibits multiple examples of communicating with and persuading diverse audiences, including top executives, to adopt an idea or gain buy-in	Limited or no examples of communicating with and persuading diverse audiences, including top executives, to adopt an idea or gain buy-in Examples of communication that are not exemplary/ impressive
<i>Relevant scores / numbers</i>	GPA above 3.5 Graduated in top percentile/with honors (summa cum laude, magna cum laude, cum laude) GMAT in high 700s	GPA below 3.0 Graduated without distinction GMAT below 650

EDUCATIONAL BENCHMARKS

ATTRIBUTE	EXAMPLE OF STRONG	EXAMPLE OF WEAK
<i>Rigor of institution</i>	Attended a top-ranked school with a well-recognized academic history	Attended a lesser-known college or university with limited recognition of strong academic history
<i>Rigor of coursework</i>	Coursework that combines core relevant skills such as math, science and communication, e.g., engineering, marketing analytics, computer science and biology/ chemistry	Coursework that excludes one or more of the core relevant skills, e.g., theater, dance, history/ political science and language arts
<i>Recognition & Involvement in relevant clubs, activities and programs</i>	Scholarships/Fellowships clearly articulated on resume Leadership position or membership in relevant clubs, e.g., interested in consulting and member of consulting club leadership team	No/Non-communicated scholarships/fellowships, e.g., missing from resume Involvement in non-relevant clubs, e.g., interested in consulting, but member of finance club No/Non-communicated involvement in relevant club, e.g., interested in consulting but consulting club not listed on resume

WORK HISTORY CHARACTERISTICS

ATTRIBUTE	EXAMPLE OF STRONG	EXAMPLE OF WEAK
<i>Logical progression / advancement</i>	Started in an entry-level post-undergrad position relevant to coursework and shows evidence of rapid promotion quicker than regular cycle	Started in an entry-level post-undergrad position not relevant to coursework Non-intuitive lateral jumps across non-related industries Little to no evidence of advancement/promotion
<i>Length and variety of work experience</i>	Five or more years of experience with one or more related companies in a certain industry or related industries Evidence of involvement with challenging projects across a variety of roles	Less than one year of experience or internship only experience Little variance in roles and responsibilities
<i>Recognizable brand name</i>	Worked directly or indirectly with a recognizable brand name company or product, e.g., experience with GE, which is consistently named one of the top companies that produces strong leaders	Worked with smaller or lesser-known companies whose development model or culture/expectations are hard to assess

You want to ensure that interviewers are aware of your strengths without coming across as overly confident or deserving. You must be sure not to seem as though you are bragging or name-dropping.

Certain information is best communicated through a resume, not in conversation. An interviewer will typically make a decision based on your whole story, not just because of one name on your resume or because you started a successful non-profit organization.

Attributes vary by firm. Ensure you properly project your fit with the attributes relevant to the firm you are interviewing with.

I'll repeat something we've already gone over in previous chapters: it is very important to do your homework about the firms you are interested in. The interviewers are doing their homework by trying to get to know you better, so it's important you know them better than they know you when you walk into the interview room.

Start by understanding what attributes are valued by the firm, and then you can more masterfully communicate and showcase those traits in your interview. This is a great question to ask during conversations with members of that organization before the interview.

While it is safe to assume that all firms would like to recruit the Rockstar candidate who has all of the attributes listed in the table on the following pages as strengths, the reality is that some of those attributes will not directly relate to the work you will need to do or your ability to become a thriving member of the organization.

For example, if you do not have the best performance against educational benchmarks, but the skillsets you have garnered through your experiences are the perfect match for a firm, then you are more likely to be considered a Rockstar candidate.

Conversely, if you have not garnered all of the skillsets needed for the position through your experience, but the interviewer feels as though they like, know, and trust you to perform well in the position, then you

are likely to be advanced on the fact that you will quickly pick up the necessary skillsets via on-the-job training.

While the entire list of attributes helps paint a full story about a candidate, certain firms will definitely hone in on the aspects they find most important to the work you will be expected to perform.

Marketing firms will typically stress good communication and innovative thinking, while finance firms will stress analytical ability and evidence of ethical decision making.

However, there is no one formula for fit—it truly depends on the industry, the company, the department, and sometimes the office in which you are interested.

Understand the culture of the firm you're interested in. For example, if it's collaborative, highlight examples from your background in conversation to show that you can fit in culturally with the firm of your choice. If it's an analytics-driven firm, then highlight modeling and analytic experience from your background.

Do your homework early by engaging with your dream firm at every opportunity, and you will have a better understanding of which attributes they value.

Some of these attributes may be your strengths while others may be your weaknesses. Still, you can convey a more complete story of your fit with the firm by assessing yourself against these attributes to form your Rockstar story which will set the tone of the interview.

YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR COMPLETE STORY CLEAR TO THE INTERVIEWER.

If interviewers only see one part of your story consistently—even if it's a good part—they won't be able to make a decision based on your other attributes.

Take Alex, for example. He's an MBA student who worked in sales and has a fairly lengthy and varied work experience. He seemed like a great candidate on paper, and Megan the interviewer was looking forward to meeting him in person.

Megan knew Alex's strengths were communication, but wanted to ensure he could also handle the analytical and modeling aspects of the job description. More importantly, Megan wanted to assess Alex's fit with their culture. In conversation, Alex emphasized his strengths, coming across as if he was trying to "sell" Megan.

Alex failed as a candidate to communicate in person his analytical abilities and fit with the firm. Megan only experienced one aspect of his full story and walked away from the interview believing that Alex was not a well-rounded Rockstar.

In this scenario, Alex would have been more successful if he was aware of which strengths had already been communicated through his resume and which weaknesses Megan was going to address through the interview.

By failing to effectively communicate his strengths in various attributes, he did not provide the interviewer with a view of his full story. This is why the self-assessment step is so important.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU FIND ONE OF THESE ATTRIBUTES TO BE A WEAKNESS?

While interviewers will be aware of your strengths either through your resume or through conversing with you, they will also have questions regarding what are perceived to be gaps in your story.

But here's the secret: *limited strengths in the attributes of a Rockstar candidate are only weaknesses if you let them be.*

Sometimes your weaknesses can become your greatest strengths.

Yes, interviewers will be keen to discuss gaps in your story, but the active discussion format of the interview gives you a platform to show how you are improving against those perceived gaps. The following three examples provide a clearer picture of how weaknesses can be leveraged as strengths:

EXAMPLE 1: QUESTIONABLE ANALYTICAL ABILITIES

Susan was an undergrad journalism major who had a strong GPA and performed well on the GMAT. She was pursuing her MBA because she was interested in working for a marketing analytics advisory firm. As a journalist, she clearly had strengths in communication but not many examples of analytics or modeling in her background.

Recognizing this potential gap in her story, Susan selected a business school that was known for a quantitative focus. In the interview, she made it a point to remark that she took a marketing analytics class earlier in the semester that was extremely interesting to her because she had limited exposure to analytical tools before starting her MBA program. She further remarked that she did well in the class and it reinforced her passion about performing such work as a career.

Susan was successful in leveraging a clear gap in her story by highlighting that she was aware of it and actively addressing it. She built trust by addressing her perceived weakness and clarifying her intentions. She gave interviewers a more complete picture of her story and now only needed to ensure she confidently exhibited her newly learned analytical skills during the interview process.

EXAMPLE 2: SHORT/NON-RELEVANT WORK HISTORY

Marc had a double major in biology and math in his undergradu-

ate career. For the last five years, he had been working in research and development for a pharmaceutical company. He now wanted to pursue a career in management consulting. His coursework and academic scores showed he had the analytic abilities to solve difficult problems, but communication skills seemed to form a gap in his story. After completing the self-assessment, Marc became aware that this might be a targeted discussion topic by interviewers, so spent his preparation time thinking of how to address this topic proactively.

During the interview, he made it a point to articulate how similar his experience of pitching to senior executives of his firm for research support was to delivering a final consulting recommendation to senior clients at the end of a project. Even though he didn't propose complicated business strategies to senior execs in his past, he was able to relate to the specific tact, approach and considerations necessary to gain buy-in from senior executives for a data-driven decision.

Marc was able to show his confidence and self-awareness during the interview and succeeded in getting the interviewer to like, know, and trust him. He was advanced to the next round.

The takeaway here is that there are different ways to communicate your story—in an interview, it is critical to show interviewers you are self-aware and address potential gaps in your story proactively to help establish your NICE candidacy.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE INTERVIEW

So far, we've discussed why the interview is important, what you need to know about interviewers, how to leverage the NICE model to stand out from the crowd, and how to perform a self-assessment to articulate a story about who you are (not just what you've done) to set the tone of the interview in your favor.

Let's take a look at how the whole process works. Note: the interview process is unique to each company and they will notify you of exactly what their interview process is when you are selected to interview.

There will be multiple rounds of interviews. Some companies may actually do only one round (this is not typical, but is growing in popularity). It is typical to have multiple rounds, usually two.

Typically, the first round occurs on campus, and is completed by junior managers, who will be directly managing you as a summer intern or as a new recruit into a full-time position.

There will likely be two back-to-back, 45 minute interviews, or you may have a panel interview where you interview with two or more people at once.

In the first round, interviewers are really going to be testing your

NICE factors as well as your abilities, your background, your skillset, and your experiences that bring value to the company. This testing is done predominately through behavioral interview (though in some cases, a series of technical, industry-specific questions are necessary).

The second round is a whole different set of interviewers.

The interviewers in this round are typically individuals who are higher ranked in the company. They could be managing directors of investment firms, partners at consulting firms, or senior directors of large organizations such as banks, healthcare companies, marketing firms, etc.

They're going to be coming in and really making a final decision of how they see you fitting into the company.

Remember, these individuals have been doing this for a long time. They have a lot of experience at their company, and when it comes to making an assessment, they can literally make their assessment in a few moments.

They want to make sure that there is a consistency to the process in terms of what talent is being brought in, not only across schools but over time. They are probably going to compare you to every school with which they have ever interviewed. They can pick up on the little cues, they know what to test, and they are adept at ascertaining how well that interview goes.

In this round, you might be tested on your analytical abilities, for example. Traditionally, these individuals are going to really test you on your ethics and integrity. They're going to be finding out if they have all of the information needed to make a decision about your candidacy.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, they're going to find out whether or not they like you. Are you a person he or she wants to see in the office every day? Are you a person they want to grow and develop on their teams? Are you a person they see long-term potential in? Are you a person who he or she can trust? Can he or she trust you

to do the right thing when it's required, and to be committed to the company's longevity?

If you are able to pass through this gauntlet, you will make a profound impact. I will tell you this, though: there is always the possibility of the sweat interview.

They may try to test your confidence and your tenacity. They are likely going to keep interrupting you, asking you questions, and challenging you.

The interview could be a behavioral format, a technical interview format, or case interview format. They are going to be consistently challenging you, making you sweat, and seeing how you react.

That doesn't necessarily mean you're doing a bad job; it simply just means that it's a test, and that they are just trying to prove something you haven't been able to articulate to them through the rest of the interview.

What you need to think about is that when you walk into an interview, there are going to be different things that are going to be important for the interviewer.

If you are able to connect with those things via the self-assessment in this book, you'll know and understand that there are questions about your candidacy that need to be addressed.

If you are able to handle these issues early on in the interview, you will actually avoid the sweat interview and have a really positive interaction that connects you with the company and leaves a very good impression of you in their minds.

At the end of the interview, you will have the opportunity to ask a few questions. So how do you ask a smart question?

First and foremost, you want to ask a question that's going to be relevant. The best question to ask is one that seeks an understanding of the experience of actually working for the company.

Here are some great questions to ask if you don't have anything else:

Can you tell me about a project you're working on?

What was it that made you choose to work with this company?

How have you found this industry compared to other industries?

It's important to be prepared and have some questions for the end of the interview. Here are the guidelines you need to follow when asking a question:

1. Is it relevant?
2. Is it moving the dialogue forward?
3. Is it going to help you understand more about the company or role you are interviewing for?
4. Is it going to reinforce your NICE candidacy?

Remember, start and finish the interview like a Rockstar!

ADDITIONAL WHAT-TO-DO'S AND WHAT-NOT-TO-DO'S

These are additional to-dos and not-to-dos that will help the entire interview experience go more smoothly from the very beginning of the interview.

Arrive about 20 minutes early for the interview. Doing so will help you get in the right mode. If they are running ahead of schedule or behind schedule, they will be able to communicate this to you.

In most cases, you have the opportunity to go to the desk and find out who your interviewer is. In most cases, you can do a little google search on them and learn a little bit about who they are. See if there is anything to which you can relate that you might want to bring up in the interview.

Secondly, when the interviewer comes out and calls your name, keep the conversation going as you walk from the waiting area to the interview room. You don't want to leave an awkward silence.

You want to seem like you're seeing a co-worker to chat about project work. Check in with them, be friendly, ask how their day is going. This way, you're already establishing your NICE candidacy before the interview has even begun.

If this doesn't come naturally to you, here are some suggestions for dialogue:

- Start with firm handshake and state an enthusiastic salutation:
 - “Hi, it's a pleasure to meet you”
 - “Hello, how are you doing this morning/afternoon?”
- After that, ask an informal question which is easy to answer, but displays emotional intelligence:
 - “How's your day going so far?”
 - “How early did you get in today?”
 - “Where are you coming in from?”
 - “Did you get a chance to eat breakfast/lunch?”
- When entering the room and sitting down, reinforce your excitement and enthusiasm:
 - “Really happy to be here today”
 - “Thank you again for your time, I'm excited to be here”

Think as though you're seeing a co-worker to chat about project work. Check in with them, be friendly, ask how their day is going. Use questions that come naturally to you – don't prepare questions ahead of time, let thing flow naturally and be YOU. This way, you're already establishing your NICE candidacy before the interview has even begun.

Remember that the evaluation begins before the two of you actually sit down in the interviewing room.

Once you're in the room, sit comfortably. The way that you posture yourself will convey your enthusiasm, your confidence, and your intention.

If you're slouched back in the seat, you're intentions will be perceived as weak or ingenuine. If you're sitting uncomfortably or on the edge of your seat, your confidence won't be believed. Find the right balance that

portrays you as a NICE candidate.

Make sure to bring a writing utensil, a copy of your resume, and paper. Typically, people will put these into a little portfolio that they carry with them so they have everything they need.

You want to start and end the interview strong. It's important to smile and be excited. It might be a long interview; you might be tired for a variety of reasons: all night cramming, exam week, travel, back to back interviews, etc. While that is recognized, you'll likely be just as busy when you start working for that company, and you won't be thinking of excuses when you're in a meeting with senior executives, junior team members, suppliers, or clients.

In general, dress well, be on time, smile, and enjoy the process as an opportunity that you've received that gives you credibility.

Use it as an opportunity to reinforce your excitement to work for that company, and convey that your skillsets and your mindset are a match for the company. Make it an enjoyable experience for both you and the interviewer. At the end of the day, you will be the one who advances to the next round or gets the job offer.

CHAPTER 9:

INTERVIEW LIKE A ROCKSTAR WITH A ROCKSTAR MINDSET

Let me impress upon you once more how important it is to have a Rockstar mindset.

If you typically do not do well in interviews, it is likely not a skillset problem, but rather a mindset problem. Convey that you have the right mindset to really think like an individual who can provide value to that company.

Don't be just another MBA student who hasn't prepared thoroughly. Here's how to get the mindset and think like a Rockstar:

Take every action not from where you are, but where you want to be. Do not go into the interview with the mindset of an MBA student who only wants to receive personal gain from the experience. Rather, go in as an expert in your industry who can add a lot of value to the company.

Knowing where you want to be will enhance your NICE candidacy.

There's a saying: "obstacles are the things we see when we take our eyes off of the goal."

Your goal is to be an expert who is thriving in a wonderful company, making an impact in your industry. When you take your eyes off of

your goal, you start to view the interview as an obstacle.

Avoid this kind of negative mindset.

Instead, keep your eye on the goal and understand the interview as an important step towards achieving that goal. Remember: if you perform really well in the interview, you may be offered your dream job.

And finally, keep in mind the following quote: “**how you do anything is how you do everything.**”

If you enter the interview carelessly, or without proper preparation, then to the interviewer, this is going to signify how you do everything.

So take it seriously! Have you ever heard someone say, “oh well, it’s just the interview, obviously when I have the job I’ll take it more seriously.” No! The interview is the logical extension of your job, and if you don’t view it as such, you will not be advanced to the next round.

This is an investment in your future. Not only have you spent a lot of time, money, resources, and energy on your MBA experience; you’ve also spent a lot of time securing this interview.

And those on the other side of the table have invested a lot into your future, as well. You need to own the opportunity that you’ve been given! Own it and take it to the next level. Do whatever it takes to be successful in an interview and land the job of your dreams.

And finally, the most important rule of interviewing: **be authentic.**

Be yourself; don’t try to be someone you think the interviewer wants you to be. Understand who the interviewer wants you to be. See if that fits with you and if it does, convey that.

Convey it with your enthusiasm. Convey your confidence in your ability to be that and to do it well for the next few years. Show that it is your intention to be exactly that for the next few years.

That’s going to get you recognized as a noteworthy person who is excited to be a driving member of an organization.

Each organization has a different idea of what that is. No two

consulting firms are the same, nor are two CPG companies, nor any two banks, etc. It’s important to build relationships and do your research in order to figure out what your dream company is looking for before you interview.

And if what your dream company is looking for is a good match for who you are or who you want to be, then ensure you convey that sentiment with enthusiasm, confidence, and intention, and you will leave that interview as a noteworthy candidate who will advance to the next round and land the offer.

Remember, all MBA students go into the interview with just the candidate perspective. You now know what the person on the other side of the table is thinking. Use this to your advantage: take the self-assessment, develop a NICE articulation of your story, and cultivate the Rockstar mindset outlined in this book to stand out from the crowd, rock the interview, and land your dream job!

I sincerely wish you the best in your endeavors – take the advice in this book to heart and you are bound to be successful.

Rock on!

THE NETWORK *of* ROCKSTARS

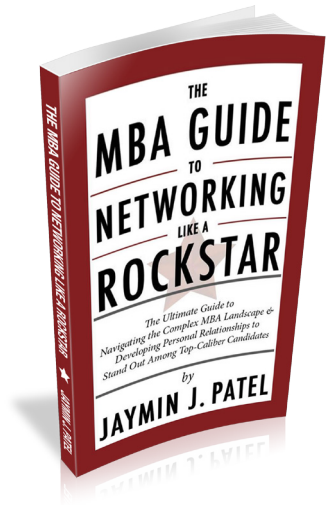


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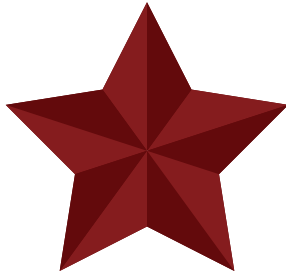
THE MBA GUIDE TO NETWORKING LIKE A ROCKSTAR

In his first book, *The MBA Guide to Networking Like a Rockstar*, author Jaymin J. Patel teaches you how to:

- Build confidence in talking to anyone
- Understand what a Recruiter is really thinking and how they really make decisions
- Clearly articulate your career goals and definition of career success
- Identify the right individuals to network with
- Understand the 11 Attributes of an Rockstar Candidate that firms are looking for
- Self –assess and determine if you are a Rockstar candidate
- Develop lasting personal relationships with influential individuals
- “Work the room” with ease and finesse at networking receptions and Career Fairs (especially in a “circle of death” situation)
- And most importantly... Understand what NOT to do, what to do, and when



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