

## WHAT TO EXPECT?

Why the interview process? Why do schools go to the extent of meeting each of their candidates? Schools are genuinely interested in each of their candidates.

### **There are three reasons:**

1. Check validity. "Putting a face on your application." Making sure that you are in fact the person who is applying. There have been cases of fraud, so they need to make sure that you are in fact the actual candidate.  
They want to see you; they want to get to know you. It's when they put a face on your application.
2. Check you fit with the school's culture. They want to make sure that you have the best possible fit with the school. You are, in a way, creating a two-year relationship with the school, so they want to make sure you can get along well.
  - a. What kind of values do you hold, what are the pillars that support you and how do they match with the school's beliefs as well.
  - b. How to really find you fit? That is a big question for everyone going through the application process.
3. Can you be successful? "Your success is their success." How well can they provide you with the best MBA experience possible? A Business School is just like any other business. When companies provide their clients or students with the best possible experience of their products or services, brand loyalty is created.

## **TYPES OF INTERVIEWS**

First type of interview: Skype interview. You will have a Skype interview with either an Admissions Officer or with an alumnus. It depends on your location.

How to really do well on a Skype interview?

Benefits: you are at the comfort of your own home or office. You are familiar with the environment.

Disadvantages: you are susceptible to technical difficulties: connection problems, decrease in audio quality, and the biggest disadvantage: creating a connection with your interviewer. It is something hard to do in person; it can be even harder to do through Skype.

So, how to go about Skype?

- Start using Skype to familiarize yourself with the software. That way it is possible for you to troubleshoot in the event of malfunction.
- Make sure your connection is good. A dropped call is fine, the officer or alumnus is aware of that possibility, but you need to have a plan B. Before you set up your Skype conference call, ensure that there is a place near you with free Wi-Fi, such as a coffee shop, and make sure you let them know beforehand.
- Before you actually start, ask the interviewer if they have a direct line of communication or some way for you to contact them directly in case something like a power outage happens.
- Skype call usually last about 45 minutes. Especially so with AdComs, not really with alumnus. Alumni will sometimes stretch their Skype calls to get to know you better.
- Visual impact: the importance of having a good background. It is a tool you can use to your advantage. Practice your Skype call in the location you are actually going to have the interview and pay attention to your surroundings and your background. A good number of visual cues in the background will definitely help you, as long as it isn't blatantly obvious that you placed them there.
- Do not have a plain white background - it just shows the interviewer that you are a plain person.
- Any visual cues that can help to substantiate, differentiate and make your interview memorable will definitely help.

Second type of interview: On campus

On campus interview will again be either with an alumnus, a second-year student or an admissions committee or admissions officer. This actually works to your advantage. It happens when you're either visiting the school or, depending on the school, they'll call you and ask you to conduct an interview on campus. The advantage of that is, because you're present at the school, on campus, you have a series of tools that will help you with your interview process.

You are on campus; thus, you have access to students who are actually attending the school. You can ask them for extra information, you can talk to them; ask them for advice, for deeper understanding of the school's fit. You get to know the campus. You also get to watch a class, which gives you a good sense of what you can expect during the two years of your MBA. During the on-campus interview, it is important to dress accordingly. Doesn't matter how the students are dressed, you are the one going through an interview and presenting yourself, so you should dress accordingly.

Third type of interview: On site interview with an alumnus or an admissions officer.

This is my favorite for a couple of reasons: first, it allows you a better environment for stronger connections, especially with an alumnus. You also have home core advantage: you know the area, and you know the culture. You may have to take a flight to a city near you in order to have this interview – which is fine. Anything you can do to show admissions committee or the alumnus that you are willing to make an extra effort for that interview is always a positive thing.

The on-site interview with an alumnus is actually the most favorable one. The difference between the Admissions Committee interview and Alumni conducted interview is the following: Admissions Officers are trained to do the interviews. They heard many interviews and answers from many different types of candidates, usually they are more neutral, and they will have a more analytical and objective perspective of the things that you are saying. You are, at some point, at disadvantage there. Because they are more neutral, they are able to evaluate you, not just on your performance in the interview, but also on the quality of your answers.

With alumni, it's double edged-sword: there's a little space for human error, you may have an alumnus who really liked you and your profile, with whom you created a connection, and it's going to work in your favor. But, then again, you have the same variable going on the other hand: you are prone to being affected by the humor or the mood of the person interviewing you. It hasn't happened often, but it has happened before.

You are there for the interview process to get in the school of your dreams. Doesn't matter how cool or how neutral or how bad the interviewer is treating you – some interviewers are instructed to put pressure on you – you have to set that aside. You shouldn't let the fact of not getting along with the interviewer become the reason for you to lose your chance at getting into the school. Nothing is ever going to be ease: put your pride aside and focus on your main goal. The interviewer must be able to capture who you are and the essence of the interview to understand the fit and how well can the school provide you with the best experience possible.

### **What are interviewers looking for in their candidates?**

Interviewers have two sets of questions. The first one is a set of questions they are supposed to ask you. The second set of questions is one given to them by the Admissions Committee and they must answer them about you. These are questions such as: "Does the candidate presents himself to be someone who is loyal, someone who does have a passion for the school, does he really want to be there? The other questions are about your fit with your application, if you are in fact the person who applied. And they must answer these questions and provide feedback of your interview to the Admissions Committee. To classify you as: recommend, highly recommend, recommend with reservation or do not recommend is not enough; they also need to provide a feedback. Knowing that they are evaluating you, your interview begins the moment that you walk in the room, not the moment of your first question. Impressions do count – the impression that the interviewer has of you is important. First impressions count so much. You need to make a memorable first impression. Studies show that a person will make a judgment of you within less than three minutes of meeting you, even if you haven't said much or anything at all. So, how does a person make a judgment of you in such a quick way?

1) Appearance: you want to dress for success. This is cliché, but it's true. You don't want to be flashy, this is a serious business interview and you want to be taken seriously by your interviewer. In this situation, you need to dress accordingly. You don't want to wear something that has nothing to do with you, but you don't want your appearance to take away from you being the best candidate possible for the position in the MBA.

2) Body language: before there was formal, written language, how did we communicate successfully with each other? It was through body language. This is very important – I want you to be aware of the way you carry yourself, of your posture. When you are making a first impression, you do not want to have a posture of defeat. You want to have a posture of a top candidate, that it wasn't by chance that you were chosen to be interviewed. Your body language needs to translate the quality that your application shows.

When you meet the interviewer: strong handshake, eye contact – that's one of the best ways to connect with a person. Bear in mind that there is a difference between maintaining eye contact and staring at the interviewer for 45 minutes. Nobody wants to talk to a person who is staring at you. There is a certain amount of eye contact you want to establish during your interview. When you are answering a question, or whenever the interviewer raises his eyes from his notes, you must feel confident and maintain eye contact.

About body language and posture: it is important to sit upright, with shoulders back. It is instinctive of humans to broaden our shoulders to show confidence. There is a fine line between confidence and arrogance – humility always beats arrogance. Be sure of yourself, but be humble. You need to ensure you are stating your strengths and your abilities, but by being humble.

During an interview, interviewers are looking for your ability to adapt. It is essential for you to be up to date with current events in your industry. Schools will match you with someone from your industry, with similar backgrounds to test you about your knowledge of current events.

When you are having your interview on site, on a location you determined, be aware of your surroundings. You want to be able to adapt to any situation possible. Interviewers are looking for that: how well you can adapt to different scenarios, to the different questions they may ask you.

In general, the interviewer is looking to see if you are the type of person they would like to see at an alumni reunion dinner. If you are the type of person they would like to sit at a table with during dinner, they would like to initiate a healthy conversation about the industry. Schools are looking for likeminded people to stimulate a positive, collaborative environment.

Don't take it personally.

How to regain your composure after a misstep on an interview:

1) You are allowed to ask for a minute to think about your answer. You don't need to be able to answer every question immediately and perfectly. When they ask you a tough question, they may not be looking for the correct answer. They are looking to see how do you handle yourself, how do you maintain your composure. By asking for some time to think before you answer, it shows the interviewer your maturity and intellect.

2) The best way to regain your composure after a misstep is to acknowledge it and ask for a second try. Ask the interviewer if you can rephrase your answer or try to answer in a better way – he will appreciate to see how your thought processes works and to see how you handle a misstep.

Don't try to ignore your mistake or pretend it didn't happen. Your interview is not going to be based on how well your answered one question.

## **Finishing strong**

If you want to make a lasting impression, you want to finish strong. You want to be memorable.

Be consistent throughout the entire interview (with your wording, your pacing, your volume...)

By controlling what you say and how you say it while using body language, consistently throughout the entire interview and finishing strong with a firm handshake, with a thank you note or e-mail, 24 hours after the interview.

Tone of voice, speed and volume are different variables you can use throughout your interview to either strengthen or weaken what you are saying.

The most powerful tool you can use in your interview, especially your MBA interview, is not underestimating the power of smiling.

It is the best way to make a great connection with the interviewer.

You need to enjoy the moment – why wouldn't you be smiling?