

Eastern Michigan U - DivComm | Career Corner Podcast - Episode 7

This is Eastern Michigan University's *Career Corner*. Here are your hosts, Brad Minton and Logann Dolan. Welcome back to the *Career Corner* podcast. This is Brad Minton, and once again, I'm here with my co-host, Logann Dolan. And Logann, it's hard to believe, but we have reached the end of our series, *From Class to Career-ready Through COVID-19*.

I agree, and we've had the opportunity to chat with some really awesome people, including two of the UACDC's own academic advisors. We chatted with Kaelyn and Art, Cara from Yeo and Yeo, who's a recruiter, our fellow career coach, April. And I'm super duper excited to finish off this series with another special guest.

It's been quite a journey over these last couple of weeks. Examining the challenges that our students have been facing during this really turbulent time. And compiling all of that into one series. And we've appreciated the incredible insights that we've gained, and today is no exception. Today we're blessed to have John Carlson join us. John is a senior corporate relations manager with Eastern Michigan University. And in addition to this role, John also serves as an adjunct faculty member, where he teaches courses for the School of Technology and Professional Services Management. He has had a 20 plus year career in the fields of employee training, workforce and leadership development, and corporate relations. He's also the current president of the Michigan Career Educators and Employer Alliance, and we're proud to call him a colleague. Welcome, John.

Well, thanks Brad, thanks Logann for having me here today.

You're welcome. Thank you so much for joining us today, John. You've been gracious enough to serve as our special guest host this week and tackle the subject of interviewing. And particularly interviewing in a virtual format. So John, we know that you've participated in interviewing hundreds of people over the years. And regardless of the medium, what are the core ingredients that help someone have a solid interview?

Great question, Logann. So number one is really being grounded in your why. We all care. Research shows that, unless you're a sociopath, you care and you want to help people. So I invite you to dig what's underneath that? What do you care about? Do you care? What do you care about? Or let me actually break down care into three aspects. It's what do you care about, how do you care, and where do you want to care? So really being grounded in about, what is this role, how does this align with who you are? Something that you care deeply about. Something you have passion or juice around.

Now remember, care can come up in different ways. It could be something that just pisses you off, that fire in your belly. It could be a longing, a passion that you've had since you're a child and you have no idea where it comes from. And, like, two of them for me is I've always had this affinity for beautiful, living coral reef systems. And the beauty of flamenco music. I don't know where it comes from. But I just find them to be some of the most beautiful things in the world, which I do both in my life. And so knowing why, and kind of what you care about, and how it aligns with the role that you are interviewing for. So have a sense of what you care deeply about and where you have that juice and how it aligns with your life.

Second point that brings me into is, being prepared. So one of the things I've learned about interviews, and I had this epiphany about three years ago. And what that epiphany was, Logann, was that interviews are not about me at all. So just hang with me on this one. Interviews are all about them. You are literally just a guest in their home. And as I'm kind of laughing here, because you're not even in their home yet. Meaning this could be a phone interview or an asynchronous video interview. So you haven't even been invited in yet.

So it's not about you at all. What it is about, it's all about them. And it's all about how you, who you are, the work that you want to do, the work that you aspire to grow into. And how that all aligns with who they are in the work that they do. And your objective is to make that connection, that alignment. To show that you are one of them. That you're just like them. That you care about some of the same stuff that they do. That you have juice that aligns with their juice. Because they really want you to make it easy for them to say yes to you. So really be thoroughly prepared.

So be prepared in doing your research. Know who they are. What's the work that they do? Where did they come from? Where did they go? I mean their history and their directives. You can even look up their strategic plan, their mission, key, or directives. Yeah, the research. And even doing research on the interviewers in the team. And I'll come back to that in a minute. Well, actually I just acknowledged that now. Because later, well, I'll just move that into the third point. So really just be, I think, Logann, just really be thoroughly prepared.

And the third piece is have questions. You need to have questions. Because at the end they're going to say, do you have any questions for us? And really the most sad response you could ever have, is, no I'm good. Please, just don't do that. Because this is an opportunity to show your interest. This is an opportunity to light up and show your interest, your curiosity. How interested you are in who they are, the work they're doing, where they're going. Because the judgment is, if you're engaged and you're excited. That means there's something that they're doing, that aligns with your excitement.

So I like to have at least three questions. Break down, you know, this is just a guide. You don't have to do, it's not like a mandate, but it's a guide, a good place to start. So I like to have one question for the interviewer or interview panel. Just one high level question about, hey, you know, coming into this role, what's one key attribute or a value that you think is empirical for the individual coming into this role to have?

Have a question about the team. Tell me about the team. You know, the strengths and opportunities or anything you're really proud of this team. That you want to share with me. Because I'd love to hear what I'd be a part of.

And the third is a question about the organization, higher level. Can you tell me any directives? Anything that's coming down, initiatives, maybe it's legislative. Any things that are like audits, something about review councils, kind of. I'm trying to remember the word. There's a word there that has to do with, kind of, auditing or reviewing our business. Or even our programs. But just, you know, is there anything coming down the pipeline that I should need to know about? That I may not have seen on your website.

So have a question about something for the interviewer. Because that puts, kind of, a feather in their cap. It shows you're interested in them. It shows that you're coachable. And it shows that you're recognizing them as someone who can provide mentorship, potentially. The second is have a question for the team, and third a question for the organization.

So, I think, that's just a great place to start. Again, knowing the context. You've done all this work. That this is a time to shine. Take it seriously and show up. Secondly knowing your why. What is it that you have juice around that aligns with the work that they do? Thirdly, be prepared. Know who they are, because you're a guest in their home. And fourth, have your questions. Because it shows engagement and readiness. So I'll stop there, Logann.

So great question. Just some tips and there are many, many more. But those are some things that come to mind. That have been proven to me, and I've seen, and I've grown to appreciate over the years. So great question, Logann.

So, John, we really appreciate that insight there. And what I love about that is that all of those pieces that you talk about really connect together. That find your why piece is so important to demonstrate your enthusiasm. Because you understand what your mission is, and where you're headed in the future. And the stronger that you can communicate that, the more that enthusiasm is going to show

up in the interview.

Absolutely, Brad.

And then you'll be able to direct the right questions. So, yeah, I think you're absolutely on par.

And the piece I appreciate about that, Brad, what you just said. Is because I found out that one of the best interviews is a conversation, just like what we're having right here, right now. It's a conversational interview. It's a back and forth. And so when you're clear and grounded who you are, why you want to do this work? Why do you want to be a part of their organization or their team? An aspiration, high level, of where you're going. And that just lets them know that you aren't planning to leave them in nine to 12 months.

And also just that you're appreciative. That you're full of gratitude. That you're coachable. That you're grateful and appreciative of the opportunity, let alone, that chance to join their team. So you're right, the more grounded that someone is in their why, potentially the clearer they are, moving them toward living life with purpose, let alone their mission. And being able to show up with an exuberance, a clarity, a groundedness, that are the things that, in my judgment, most people, a lot of people, don't deliver on. Because they think that they're just answering 10 questions to, kind of, pass a test. And be seen good enough to be brought into that job. So I love that little piece there, Brad. And so thanks for sharing that.

So, John, let's just talk briefly about COVID 19 and how this has changed the hiring landscape. From what you've been hearing, and your connections with employers, is there a shift to exclusively virtual interviewing? Are they still using phone interviewing, or does it seem to be a combination of both?

So they're using phone. They're using Zoom, or various face to face, synchronous platforms. And, certainly, HireVue, or those asynchronous interviewee-led, timed platforms that allow candidates to answer key questions, that give organizations or employers a chance to review later. To see who they want to move on to the next round. So phone, virtual, and/or two forms of virtual, synchronous and asynchronous. So that's what I'm seeing, Brad. I'm not hearing anything about people coming in and having face to face, as much, you know, with that six foot social distancing guideline. I haven't really heard any of that. So right now, it's all been by a distance.

Now, John, thinking about those virtual interviews specifically. What are some of the best practices that students can take in order to make sure that they get through this medium of interviews effectively? And do you have any good preparation resources you recommend?

So great question, Logann. And so in a time like this, and it's not even in a time like this. But something I'm seeing and, I think, that we're going to see more of, Logann, is more of this asynchronous hire process. And so just a quick review what I'm talking about is. There are different platforms that talent acquisitions and recruiting teams are using to assess, typically, first round candidates. And what these programs are is, you receive an invitation, receive a link. It says you know, or first you'll get a call or an email says, John or Logann, we'd love to interview you Thursday at 2:30 are you available? And you're, like, yes, yes, yes. Lots of enthusiasm, absolutely. And so at Thursday at 2:30 at some point you'll receive a link and you'll click on it. And it will welcome you into a platform, and there's going to be no interviewer there. I repeat, there will be no interviewer there.

It's a platform that invites you in and says, welcome Logann. We have a series of questions. And in each question you'll have roughly two minutes to answer that question. Once the question begins, you will not be able to stop. And at the end of the two minutes your recording will end. You will not be able to redo the answer, only to move on. And you have like 24 or 48 hours, and sometimes 72 hours, to complete this interview process.

So this is completely asynchronous. So it's a different beast. It's asking a different-- you don't get to do retakes. And you're limited in your time. So, I think, great place to start, Logann, is for anyone, again, be grounded and be clear. And ready to answer some of those fundamental first round questions. Because this interview, asynchronous process, is most likely going to be used-- is mostly used in the first round process.

And those questions are a vetting, or a series of vetting questions, such as so tell me something about yourself. Share with me a strength and a weakness, or what are your strengths and what are your weaknesses? Tell me, like, why nursing? Or why your profession? What do you know about our products and services, and who we are? And maybe even getting into a behavioral-based question. So maybe tell me about a time you were a part of the team and things didn't go as planned, how did you handle that. And what was the outcome? So, first, be clear and be grounded and ready. That I think is one.

So then it comes to ambience, or kind of your setting. Because you are on camera. And you need to be aware of what they're seeing. So how are you sitting? Your posture, are you looking at the camera? You know, it's OK, you're going to be nervous, most likely, but the invitation is to be natural as possible. So keep in mind your surrounding. The posters, what are they seeing? Are there dogs barking? You know, is there background noise? So you want a nice, clean professional environment.

And you want to be prepared.

You want to be dressed for an interview. So be professionally dressed. Sit. My tip is to sit on the front half of your chair, with your feet flat on the ground and palms up. This keeps your posture open and you're leaning in a little bit forward. It shows engagement and interest. And it keeps you grounded. So preparation. Look at your surroundings. You may even have a small plant. You may want to add something to soften the ambience. Remember to be dressed professionally. Remember to look at the camera. Try to smile as best as you can. And be ready, because you have timed answers.

So this is just the beginning of this, Logann. And to help you with this, because these are new behaviors, I highly recommend making an appointment. Either with someone like myself, a senior corporate relations manager, a career coach. Make an appointment to come and see someone within the Career Center, University Advising and Career Development Center at Eastern Michigan University to practice, practice, practice. And what we can do is, we can set up a Zoom call. And literally time and practice to get you grounded in those fundamental questions.

So, yeah, this is new territory, Logann. This is new for many of us. But I anticipate we're only going to see more and more of this. Because, you know, the reality is, organizations are using these recorded videos to measure your predictability. That's right, you heard me say that. They're using technology, built into these platforms, to measure your micro expressions. Your eye, are you looking up or are you looking down? So not to overthink it. But what you need to know is, organizations are using these programs to assess your predictability of your behavior, of taking initiative, reliability, willing to trust yourself and others to take chances, the risk. How, kind of, conservative you are in your decision making, et cetera.

So we all have a lot to learn, I think, Logann. And so I think a great place is to practice with someone within your career centers such as you UACDC. And also, I invite you to go onto emich.edu/uacdc. And there's some resources on there as well. So thank you. Thank you, Logann. It's a great question and something we're all learning more about.

Well thank you, John. That was incredibly insightful. As someone with extensive experience in this area, it was so nice for you to share a little bit more about how our students and alumni can perform better to land those next roles.

And as a reminder to all of our listeners. Although the University Advising and Career Development Center is not accepting any face to face appointments, we are here to support you virtually. Whether that be helping you with your resume, or performing a mock interview via zoom. And all of our

students have access to a great platform, called Big Interview, where you can practice your interviewing and get real-time feedback. And even though this is the last episode of this series, the *Career Corner* podcast will be back with another series soon. So stay tuned for that.

So as we close out the series, we want to thank all of you for listening and being part of this amazing university. Additionally, we want to thank John, as well as all of our past guests, for the amazing contributions that they've made to this project. And I want to thank Logann for being an awesome co-host and making this such a cool experience. So as we sign off for now, stay safe, stay healthy, and remember.

We support your goals.

[MUSIC PLAYING]