

Pharmaceutical Industry Interview Talk

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The goal of this talk should be to show listeners how you think through a process, overcome obstacles and if you can see your work the larger context of clinically relevant therapeutics and human health. They are also assessing how well you communicate and how you field questions.

- 1) Be sure you know who is expected in your audience. Ask the hiring manager or the HR person you are working with who will be there. Is it experts in the area you are speaking about? Will there be people other than scientists there? What are their areas of interest? Adjust accordingly to make sure you speak at the correct level of detail, can point out places of intersection with their interests, and you can anticipate their questions.
- 2) Try to frame your work in terms pharma values and can relate to: Could your work contribute to an unmet medical need? What therapeutic areas might this support (even if your work is very basic- be sure to have thought this through)?
- 3) The talk's basic structure should be similar to a typical conference talk or dissertation, but you may want to spend a slide or two at the beginning introducing yourself. Also, if you are being interviewed for a position that will draw on a particular area of expertise or technique you are knowledgeable about, you may want to spend a bit more time describing that part.
 - Introduce yourself highlighting any background and interests that make you a good fit for the position (you don't need to tell them explicitly that this is why you are a good fit, but show them and let them make the connections as you describe your experiences and passions)
 - Lay out the problem or challenge in a way that indicates any therapeutic or clinical impacts- even if much further out
 - Describe the work you did and your results, including methods and tools used, obstacles encountered and how you solved them
 - Explain the outcome and significance/impact
 - Share some ideas about where this work might head in the future
- 4) Don't ever exhibit overconfidence or arrogance. Be humble, appreciative of suggestions and curious.
- 5) Because interviewers are often looking for how well you might work in a team, it might be good to identify any collaborations and give credit to those who helped with experiments or where you worked as a team to achieve the findings you are presenting. In some ways, they assume you are working all alone in academia and they are skeptical that you will be "team-oriented" and willing to share credit. Help them see past this. That being said, you definitely need to balance this with showing that you can think of ideas, dig in to solve problems, and work independently. Do make it clear what your role was in the different parts of the project (too much "we" may cause them to wonder who was doing the work, even though that is often how we are taught to present in academia)
- 6) Practice- a lot. Make sure timing is good, invite colleagues who are at different stages of their careers and have different backgrounds to listen and give you feedback
- 7) Do you know anyone from your lab, department, graduate training program etc.. who has moved into industry? Talk to them about what they did or what they see that works and doesn't work in their company when others interview
- 8) Keep in mind how you can convince them that you have good "people skills" throughout your presentation, as conveyed through body language (relaxed, comfortable, confident), facial expressions (making eye contact, smiling) and your voice (clear, strong, enunciate, vary your intonation)