

CD/UMP Newsletter

Career Development/Upward Mobility Program



December 2015

Training Opportunities

- Technical Writing for Non-Scientific Staff

February 24-25 (Sacramento)

Search for and enroll in more upcoming classes on [the OTD Intranet site](#).

eLearning is available department-wide at no cost to your program. You have 24-hour access to the eLearning site and can learn at your own pace. For more info, visit [the eLearning website](#) or contact Jason Cooley, eLearning Program Coordinator:

Jason.Cooley@wildlife.ca.gov

916-928-8328

Microsoft Lync Guides

Did you know that you have Microsoft Lync? The Data and Technology Division (DTD) has rolled out Lync (a.k.a. Skype for Business) to all CDFW computers. Lync can be a great tool to connect with fellow CDFW staff via Instant Message or, if you have a webcam, video conferencing. If you are new to Lync, here are some handy PDF guides provided by DTD to help get you started!

- [Microsoft Lync Quick Start](#)
Initial settings to connect with Lync
- [Microsoft Lync Reference Guide](#)
How-to: Navigation, Chat, Contacts
- [Conference Room Video Conference Guide](#)
How to use Smart board-equipped conference rooms

The Interview: CD/UMP Webinar Recap

Jeremy Kauffman, CD/UMP Coordinator

On November 17, OTD presented a program specially designed for the Career Development/Upward Mobility Program to help our participants improve their experiences when they go on job interviews.

In addition to tips on how to prepare, what you might encounter during the interview, and how to follow up, we were joined by CDFW managers Jennifer Nguyen (Region 2, Habitat Conservation Program) and Carol Smith (Office of Training and Development) for a discussion panel. Jennifer and Carol gave us some great perspective and advice from the hiring managers' side of the table. OTD has heard that some of you even used what you learned right away.

Before the Interview: Getting Prepared

You'll want to do some homework to prepare for an interview. Be sure to research the organization. What are their mission, values, and goals? Who would you be working for? Research the position. You hopefully started this when you applied, but now you can dig in. Review the announcement and duty statement. How would you perform the job functions?

It's a good idea to consider common interview questions and think about your answers in advance. (You can see several common questions in the sidebar on [page 2](#) of this newsletter.)

Figure out how you'll get to your interview. Finally, make sure you get some sleep and breakfast or lunch before you head in.

The Interview

On the day of the interview, what should you do? Be sure to arrive 10-15 minutes before your interview time, and remember to turn off your phone.

You may be given the questions in advance; make quick bullet points to guide your re-

sponses. Bring any materials they requested (like your references).

Once you're in the room, just be yourself! Provide concrete examples and emphasize positive aspects of your responses—what you learned, how you improved, etc. Managers know that interviewees are nervous, and that's okay. The interviewers actually hope you do well, as they're looking for strong candidates, and they don't enjoy seeing people squirm.

After the Interview: The Follow-up

At the end of the interview, don't forget to thank your interviewers for their time. A lot of interview tips articles emphasize sending a "thank you" the next day. It is also true, though, that many managers don't think that's important. If you do choose to send a note, be appreciative but keep it brief.

Managers' Panel

Following the "formal" presentation, Jennifer and Carol discussed a number of interview-related questions, including several that had been submitted by CD/UMP participants. Responding to a question about common mistakes made by interviewees, Jennifer noted things such as going off-topic or not fully answering a question, or forgetting to bring requested documents. They described positive attributes they see in strong interviewees, like being able to tell if someone has researched the position. We also discussed how to answer behavior-based questions (see the article on [page 2](#)).

Carol described the "hire hard, manage easy" hiring philosophy, which means that many managers have a fairly rigorous hiring process to determine the right fit for their vacancy. For candidates, that means you really need to do your homework and prepare thoroughly for the interview so you can be confident and present yourself as well as possible.

If you missed the webinar or experienced technical difficulties, we're planning to offer it again soon. Stay tuned!

Answering Behavioral Interview Questions Regarding High-Stress Situations

(Adapted from [Peggy McKee](#) – “Answering Behavioral Interview Questions...”)

Have you ever had an extra-heavy workload? Of course. We all have—and we will again. That’s why interviewers want to know how we handle situations like that.

When we’re asked how we handle extra-heavy, high-stress workloads, a knee-jerk reaction for a lot of us is, “I stayed until the work was done.” You may want to give this answer so you can let them know you’re a hard worker who’s willing to sacrifice when necessary—but this really isn’t the best answer you can give. It’s a good thing for a potential employer to know you work hard, but if you shift your focus just a bit, you can answer this question in a way that shows you can work smart, too.

Behavioral interview questions like this one aren’t really trying to find out about your capacity for endurance and sacrifice. Employers ask questions like these to go deeper into what makes you tick—they want to know how you *react*, how you *think*, and how you *prioritize*. They want you to show them the *process* or the *tools* you would use to handle a stressful situation like an extra-heavy workload. All you have to do is walk them through your process.

One good answer sounds something like,

“We all have times when our workloads become heavier than usual. When I’ve been in that situation before, I have realized that not everything has to be done immediately—so I take a look at everything on my list and prioritize tasks. I decide what tasks are more mission-critical, and do those first. For example...”

Follow this with a short story about a time you prioritized tasks in a high-stress situation.

(**Hint:** Use the STAR technique to tell the story. STAR stands for **S**ituation or **T**ask, **A**ction you took, and **R**esults you got.)

Another good answer sounds something like,

“In those situations, you really have to step back and prioritize. I get input from my supervisor about what he or she thinks is most critical, and then go from there. Feeling stressed about it doesn’t help, but prioritizing and taking action does.”

This is a great lead-in for a story about providing assistance to your boss on a critical task. Again, use the STAR technique to provide structure for your story and ensure you get all the most important pieces included (**S**ituation or **T**ask, **A**ction you took, and most importantly, the **R**esult).

Whatever option you choose, your overall guide to answering this question is this: take them through your thought process of *how you approach a problem, think critically* about it and *make great decisions* that will benefit the company. It will make you stand out from other candidates and be very impressive to your future boss.

Common Interview Questions

In an interview, it is likely you’ll be asked some of these, or similar, common questions. Knowing how you’ll answer in advance can boost your confidence, calm your nerves, and even help you to answer other questions.

- How would you handle a conflict with a coworker?
- You’ve probably had this experience: You worked hard on something, only to be told to change priorities and do it some other way. How did you handle that?
- Describe the procedures you have used to keep track of things that require your attention.
- Describe a situation in which you have made an oral presentation to an individual or a group. What kind of information did you present and how did you organize it into a presentation? Who was the audience?
- Lead me through a decision-making process on a major project you’ve completed.
- Describe a situation in which you assisted a customer or client. What level of contact did you have with them? What specific actions did you take to assist the customer or client? What was the result?
- Describe a situation in which you received incomplete or confusing instructions. What steps did you take to clarify the situation?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Describe a situation in which you had to collect and organize information. What types of information did you collect and how did you organize it?

You can find many other common questions in the “Filling a Vacant Position” section of our [Supervisor’s Toolkit](#) or by searching the Internet for “common interview questions.”

Career Development/Upward Mobility Program Coordinator

Jeremy Kauffman

CA Department of Fish & Wildlife

Office of Training and Development

Jeremy.Kauffman@wildlife.ca.gov

916-928-8336