



# Virginia Tech Postdoc Essential Skills Series

Networking & Interviewing

Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 12-1 PM



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
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# What is networking?

## **Networking should be conversational NOT transactional**

The goal of networking may vary based on your particular situation and the event you are attending...

A few main “goals” from networking:

- Meet people and learn about career options in an area (thematic or geographic)

  - Good opening question: “Are you working on anything exciting at the moment?”

- Understand individuals’ backgrounds through conversation.

- Understand organizational cultures and values (ie, would you “fit in” at different employers?)

## **Networking is a process**

- From talking with one individual you can ultimately be connected with others

  - Ask them who else they recommend you talk with

Networking & relationship building make job searches more effective

Most jobs (~70-85%) are never advertised



# Informational Interviews & Career Exploration

## Someone is out there living your future...

By talking with people in careers of potential interest to you, you get a window into a potential future for you.

**Informational interviews** allow you to, in a way, have a conversation with a future version of you.

- You can ask questions that matter to you about a career path and focus on your key values and interests.
  - Good work-life balance?
  - High level of autonomy?
  - Work from home?
  - Ability to grow and advance at the organization?

[Learn more about career exploration](#)

# What is an informational interview?

**A chance to speak with a professional in a career that interests you to learn more about:**

- **How they made a career transition**
- **A typical “day in the life” in their career**
- **The work environment and culture of their employer**
- **Key skills and abilities required to excel in the role**

**Your Goal: Learn more about a career, its pros/cons, how to transition.**

**Don't ask for a job!!! This is a fact-finding mission.**

**Info interviews can work for faculty jobs as well!**

**See example outreach text and other resources from a prior workshop on informational interviewing: [bit.ly/vt-info-interview-slides](https://bit.ly/vt-info-interview-slides)**



# Job Interviewing

# What is the purpose of a job interview?

First, by the time you are interviewing for a position, your base skills have been vetted.

An interview is a mechanism for potential employers *AND YOU* to determine “fit” and for your personality and demeanor to be evaluated.

What makes a “good” interview is far more than the content details of your responses.

An Interview Should Be a Venue for YOU To Tell YOUR Story

YOUR GOAL for an interview is to tell an employer the story(s) YOU WANT to tell.

What do you want them to know about you that can't easily be conveyed in a CV/resume or cover letter?

This will allow you to respond effectively to behavior-based interview questions.

# Behavioral-based Interview Questions

These questions require candidates to share examples of specific situations they've been in where they had to use certain skills and can be broadly categorized as questions focused on:

## **Teamwork**

Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?

## **Communication**

Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.

## **Adaptability**

Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with the situation?

## **Your Motivation & Values**

## **Time Management Skills**

## **List of Behavioral Interview Questions:**

[bit.ly/vt-interview-questions](https://bit.ly/vt-interview-questions)

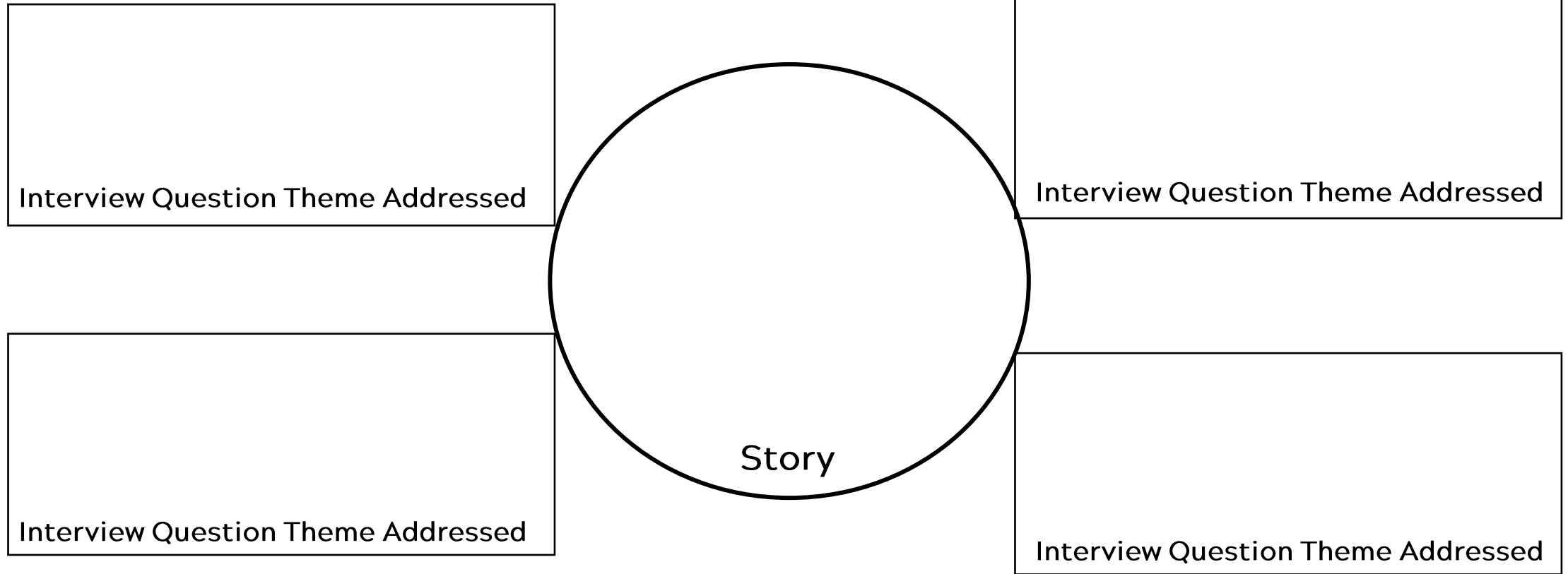


# STAR or SHARE Methods to Craft Interview Responses

**Situation**  
**Task**  
**Action**  
**Result**

**Situation**  
**Hindrances**  
**Action**  
**Result**  
**Evaluation**

# Interview Story Circle Activity



Key points/details

# Behavior-based Interview Question Themes

**Leadership**

**Teamwork**

**Communication**

**Adaptability**

**Problem Solving**

**Productivity/Accomplishments**

**(getting things done)**

**Conflict Resolution**

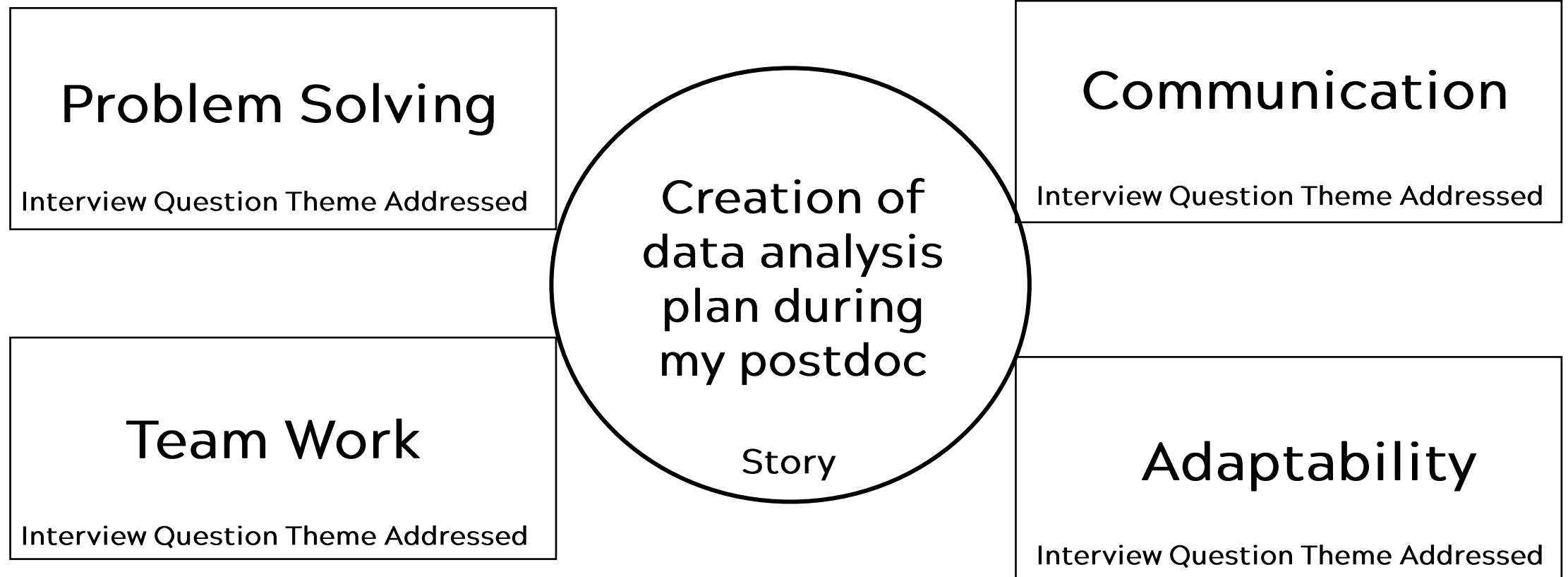
**Work Ethic**

**Your Motivation & Values**

**Time Management Skills**

**Intercultural Fluency**

# Interview Story Circle Activity - Example



## Key points/details

**Situation:** Unclear communication led me to miss a few key data preparation steps that another postdoc in the lab showed me during my first year as a postdoc.

**Task:** Needed to re-process the data, taking careful notes of the various steps.

**Action:** Decided to create a data preparation guide to help myself remember the various steps and eventually teach others.

**Result:** The data analysis plan and guide I created allowed others on the team to assist in data preparation in a standardized way & increased efficiency and consistency in our methods

**TAKEAWAY:** *Turned a communication breakdown that led to improper data preparation into a process to make data analysis plan clearer*

# Story Circle Activity

- Think of a story you can tell that hits on a variety of themes interviewers want to hear about.

Leadership  
Teamwork  
Communication  
Adaptability  
Problem Solving  
Productivity/Accomplishments  
(getting things done)

Conflict Resolution  
Work Ethic  
Your Motivation & Values  
Time Management Skills  
Intercultural Fluency

- Use the Story Circle Worksheet to fill in the details of your story that demonstrates at least four themes.

**[bit.ly/story-circle-worksheet](https://bit.ly/story-circle-worksheet)**

Fill out worksheet: ~10 minutes on your own

Breakout Rooms: ~10 minutes to share with your group

If time permits (or as homework), what behavior-based interview questions could you use the story you chose to answer?

**List of Behavioral Interview Questions: [bit.ly/vt-interview-questions](https://bit.ly/vt-interview-questions)**

# Do You Have Any Questions for Us?

When the interviewer(s) asks: Do you have any questions for me?...you better!

- A job interview *should* be a two-way dialogue between you and a potential employer.
- You want understand if this employer works for you.
  - Potential for growth in the organization?
  - Ability to seek out career/professional development opportunities?
  - Company culture: work/life balance, remote work possible, vacation time, etc...
  - What does the future of the company look like? How does it see itself growing and evolving in the next few years?

List of potential questions for you to ask at your interview.



# Additional Readings & Resources

- [Explore past Essential Skills Series content](#)
- **ImaginePhD Worksheets on:**
  - [Informational Interviewing](#)
  - [Interviewing](#)
- [How to Prepare For Upcoming Interviews](#)  
(video from [Penn Career Services YouTube library](#))
- **How to Answer Difficult Interview Questions**
  - [“Tell Me About Yourself”](#)
  - [“Tell Me About a Time When...”](#)
  - [“Tell Me About a Time When Things Went Wrong”](#)



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