

Outline



GET HIRED | INTERVIEW PREPARATION

DEMO INTERVIEW SCRIPTS

DEMO 1 | CONSULTING | Leadership

Explain a challenging situation you encountered when working with someone with an opposing opinion.

STORY:

Situation: In the first year of my PhD program, I was assigned to lead a newly created workstream on cell-material interactions. I was the only student in the lab with deep cellular expertise, so I took on day-to-day operational responsibilities alongside my core research. The team included researchers from diverse cultural backgrounds and there were other external groups who shared our lab space.

Obstacle: We had an immediate challenge. A student from a collaborating lab ignored critical Standard Operating Procedures, seeing little need or value. This put our project at risk and jeopardized the work of others sharing the lab space. The student also challenged my leadership expressing some views that seem to come from different cultural backgrounds.

I knew I needed to address this and took several steps.

Actions: My first action was to discuss one-on-one, but the student continued to disregard the protocols. However, it gave me a chance to listen and gain greater understanding of the situation.

Then, I evaluated my options. Once I prioritized, my key step was to get stakeholder engagement. I needed to bring the solution to the lab manager to get agreement and support for my approach.

I also engaged the principal investigator of my lab and the collaborating PI to get us all in alignment..

With everyone's support, I went to work to put the solution in place.

I organized a required training session on bio-safety and operational protocols for anyone working with cells. This was eye opening for the team who were unfamiliar with SOPs.

I also implemented a rotational equipment maintenance schedule to foster ownership and accountability across labs and created a mandatory certification process that required formal signoff by me, the lab manager, and the PI before any work could be done in the lab.

Result: With leadership alignment and showing I listened, the resistant student followed the SOPs after attending the workshop and soon became an enthusiastic collaborator, particularly in cell-preservation efforts.

This led to incredible results by the team. We were able to publish 5 peer-reviewed papers which is unheard of by all standards for PhD students.

I was excited I resolved an immediate conflict and also institutionalized best practices that continue to strengthen the lab's collaborative environment today!

DEMO 2 | CONSULTING | Problem-Solving

Talk about a time when you worked to achieve something that was outside of your comfort zone

STORY:

Situation: While networking to explore consulting, I met a Karney partner who highlighted a major pain point for Consumer Packaged Goods clients: identifying reformulation and market differentiation opportunities through performance testing.

Obstacle: These specialized performance tests were costly, exceeding hundreds of thousands of dollars, time-consuming because they could take weeks, and negatively impacting client relationships—since Karney relied on external providers.

As I learned about clients in the CPG industry, it was clear a rapid, cost-effective solution was needed to identify and implement product improvements. The gap for Karney was an in-house methodology to run these tests efficiently, a roadblock for current projects and future proposals.

Actions: I saw a potential opportunity. I spent some time thinking and brought a proposal back to the Karney partner.

I had an idea for a methodology. I was able to apply my scientific and engineering background—where limited funding and complex research drive creative problem-solving—to develop a streamlined, lab-style testing approach for product performance.

It was a risky idea, but my next step was to propose I bring this methodology to Karney through an internship. I presented my plan to the partner, offering both the solution and my involvement to implement it. I was excited this led to an eight-week internship to put my idea to work.

This resulted in the good fortune to test the idea! I built the model, tested, and worked with the partner to validate feasibility.

Result: In the end, after testing, this methodology was launched with 11 projects with Fortune 500 clients, resulting in \$100M in cost savings.

This experience demonstrated my ability to tackle the unknown but apply my training and desire to learn quickly during my work. It also re-enforced the impact of taking a risk to present a new idea.

The added bonus of this project was a great experience that further confirmed my interest to pursue consulting as a career path.