



NOT ANOTHER INTERVIEW!

Insights I
gained
through
preparing
for a
simulated
interview.



INTRODUCTION

C'mon, Let's face it, no-one likes being interviewed.

It is a very tedious, stressful and highly uncomfortable experience. Which usually include going to a place you've never visited before, to sit and answer unusual questions from people you've never met. All this bother for a job that you may or may not receive at the end of the day, which will lead to awkward conversations like:

"Nah ma, I didn't quite get that job at 'Laura Ashley,' but now some random person from their HR department knows that my 'supposed' biggest weakness is that 'I work too hard' and gave a very audible groan at my lame answer. Now, I'll be unable to sleep at night because their grumbling will haunt me to the day I die."

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦
(I'm totally not melodramatic.) ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

In the past I've interviewed for part-time and volunteer jobs like most people, nothing too crazy. Now that I'm graduating shortly and searching for "big girl jobs," I've realised interviews have become a lot more challenging. Thankfully, my work-based placement module included a simulated interview to help me practise. I was interviewed for "Mary's Meals" Media and Content Officer and I will reflect on this experience utilising the "Gibbs Reflective Cycle."







DESCRIPTION



THE JOB DESCRIPTION

MEDIA AND CONTENT OFFICER FOR



mary's
meals

Mission Statement

"Our mission is to enable people to offer their money, goods, skills, time, or prayer, and through this involvement, provide the most effective help to those suffering the effects of extreme poverty in the world's poorest communities."

Our vision | Mary's Meals (marysmeals.org)

With the team, developing and implementing creative communications activities that increase awareness of Mary's Meals.

- Building relationships with journalists across UK media, including regular 'horizon scanning' to identify new opportunities.
- Utilising a range of platforms to engage UK supporters, including direct mail and email marketing.
 - Developing valuable relationships with celebrities and their agents.
- Ensuring that all communications protect the reputation of Mary's Meals and promote our brand values, style and key messages.
- Monitoring and evaluating media coverage, preparing updates to the wider team and evaluation reports detailing achieved coverage delivered against targets and objectives. Qualifications, experience and skills:
 - Degree level education in a relevant discipline or equivalent professional experience in a communications or journalism role.
 - Creative thinker.
 - Outstanding written and verbal skills.
 - Great eye for a story.
 - Experience of creating inspiring content for digital channels.
 - Ability to work to brand guidelines.
 - Ability to work to deadlines.
 - IT skills and experience of Microsoft Office suite. If you are passionate about using your communications skills to make a real difference to the world's poorest children.

Media and Content Officer job with MARY'S MEALS | 8467804 (theguardian.com)



In my simulated interview, I chose the role of a Media and Content Officer for 'Mary's Meals.' This position appealed to me because it would allow me to combine two of my interests—helping others and putting my English degree abilities in communication and creative writing—into practise.

I was interviewed by a panel of my AEL Work Based Module peers. I was asked four questions:

1. What is your greatest achievement?
2. Tell me a time you were creative.
3. How confident do you feel working with social media content?
4. What inspired you to make media content?



There was three aspects of my interview technique I was being marked on



CONTENT



REFLECTION



PRESENTATION

I was then given a summary statement, in which I was told two positive aspects of my interview and then two aspects which could be improved.

FEELINGS





BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Before the simulated interview, I was quite nervous! Yes, I knew I would be questioned by my peers at a place I often visit. I also took comfort in knowing it wasn't...y'know... real, but the worst part was knowing I was going to get immediate feedback on my interview abilities. The best thing about interviews is that you don't receive feedback! You're blissfully unaware and don't dwell on that one trait the interviewers hated. I felt stressed as I was more worried about receiving honest feedback than answering an unknown series of mundane questions about myself.



DURING THE INTERVIEW

I was very stressed during the interview but when I was asked difficult questions, I stayed focused. I took a big breath and attempted to recall all the interview advice I've learnt. For instance, S.T.A.R.

Situation - the situation you had to deal with
Task - the task you were given to do
Action - the action you took
Result - what happened as a result of your action and what you learned from the experience.

(The S.T.A.R technique as described by the National Careers Service.)

The S.T.A.R strategy works well for difficult questions that leave you blank, saving you from panicking. By using the S.T.A.R strategy to organise my answer, I was able to emphasise my charitable work and creative media skills. Hence, when I answered my questions using this method, I felt more confident and calm.



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

I was thrilled after the interview. Occasionally, I stumbled and repeated myself. Yet, I answered every question in detail, providing the panel with my vast expertise working with charitable organisations and creatively leveraging media. So, I felt very confident in my interview abilities and feel that this experience taught me a lot about how to deliver a great impression at an interview.





EVALUATION



What Went Well

This experience showed me my strengths as a job applicant. I used to volunteer for charities, but I never mentioned it in interviews because I believed they were unimportant since most retail jobs want you to respond from retail experience and most academic interviews require you to answer from an educational perspective. In my feedback, I was informed that my history in volunteer work was a unique selling point and that my answer to question 1, "What is your greatest achievement," was well responded. I explained how I organised and performed at a concert to raise £6,000 for an all-girls secondary school in South Sudan to construct new classrooms. My event management and charitable enthusiasm impressed the panel. Which are great skills for a "Mary's Meals" media and content officer.



What Went Wrong

I was initially dreading the feedback part of the interview, but I now appreciate it. The feedback section included a part where the panel may propose ways to improve. My sole criticism was that I "talked with my hands" throughout the interview. After being conscious of it, I've caught myself doing it frequently and realised how annoying it must be to the people I am conversing with. Excessive gesticulation and fidgeting are bad body language. I don't want to flail my arms and terrify my interviewer! I now know to save my jazz hands for the stage after this interview.





Analysis





I was told I talked passionately and confidently in this interview. Confident? I'm the complete opposite! Being from Tyrone and having the "culchie" trait of talking at 90 miles per hour makes me suffer in interviews since the interviewer needs to halt and rapidly decipher my panicked diatribe to extract any sense. Yet being informed that I answered the questions calmly and collectively shows that how we perceive ourselves is not necessarily how others see us. This experience taught me not to be so harsh on myself and that I have the skills and aptitude to be a great employee—I just have to believe in myself and put myself out there!



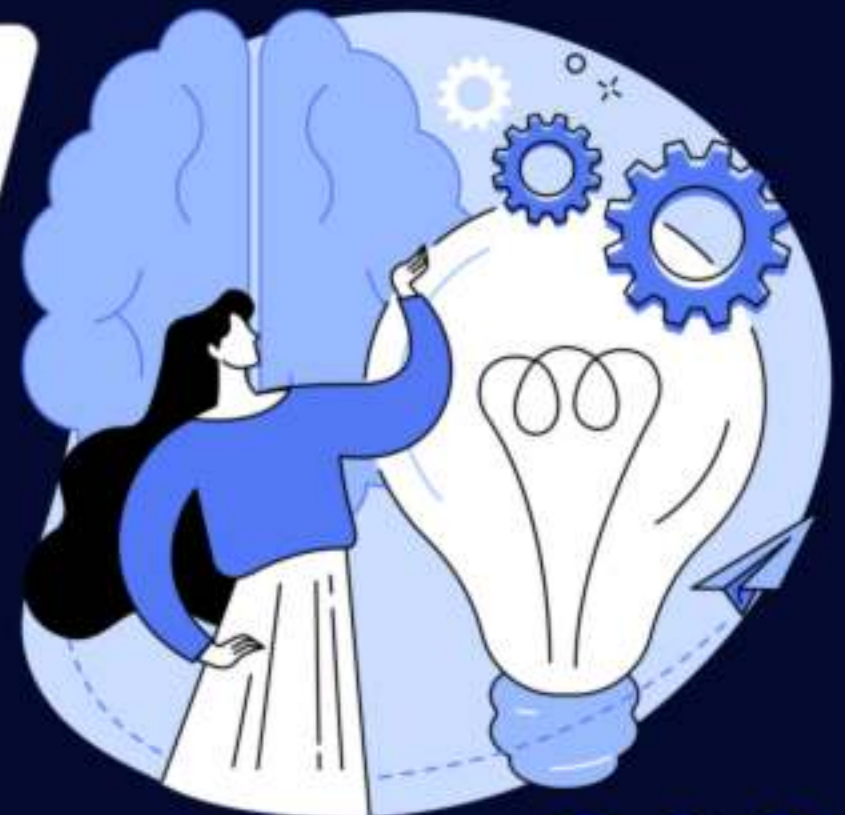
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CONCLUSION

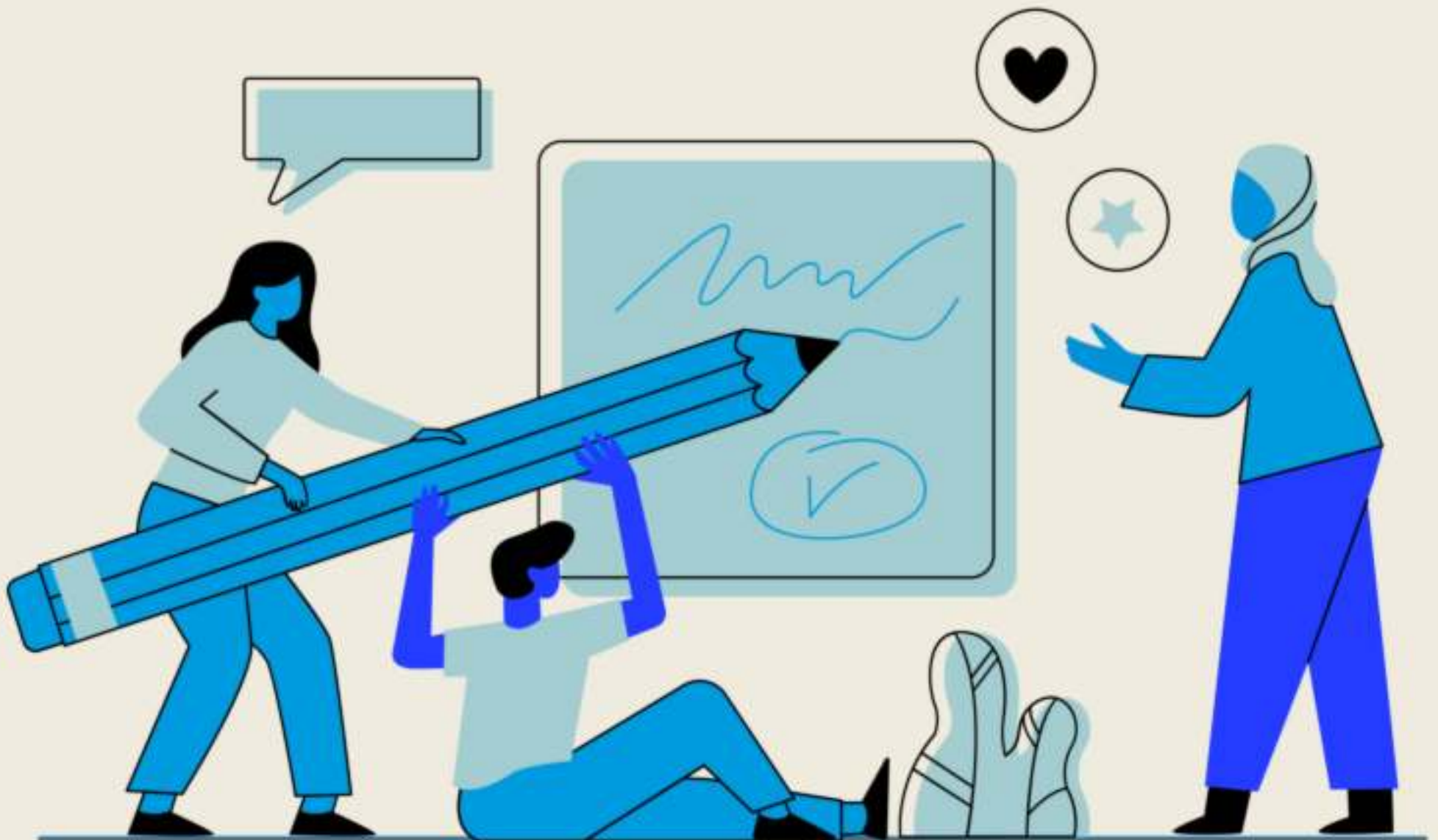




To conclude, this interview showed me that in-depth responses are essential to impressing future employers. S.T.A.R. helped me construct my responses despite my nerves. I was able to exude self-confidence as I answered questions with emotive and thorough responses, giving the panel a rich window into my personality and capacity to succeed in a role. I need to learn resilience and stop focusing on my flaws to improve my interview abilities.



ACTION PLAN





I must analyse my strengths to succeed in future interviews. Employers will interview an average of 6 candidates for every job vacancy they advertise (Standout.co.uk.) So, what can I give the interviewer that the other five people waiting outside cannot? What is my USP? What is my *je ne sais quoi*? It's strange how the question, "What is your greatest achievement?" made me realise that my lengthy volunteer experience would show a prospective employer that I'm a devoted worker who wants to assist others and that I should emphasise it more in interviews. Consequently, I must identify my strengths and highlight them in my interview. Secondly, that confidence is not something that is natural. We do not emerge from the womb blazing with confidence; rather, we winge and scream out for attention. So, Self-confidence can be taught. I need to be aware of and accepting of my own strengths and weaknesses, and have faith in my own abilities and skills. As Arthur Ashe once said, "One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."

Inspiring videos with great tips on confidence that I will implement into my action plan:



<https://youtu.be/b5ZESpOAoIU>



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