

Game Plan to Win

Presenter: Michael Pietrack, Owner and Co-Founder of TMAC Direct

Michael Pietrack is the owner and co-founder of a Pharmaceutical Industry search firm called TMAC Direct. Michael is a true market master, only serving one small segment of the Pharmaceutical Industry. Over his 9 year career, Michael has cash-in over \$11.5M, and over the last four years, he has grown his \$1.2M solo practice into a \$2.6M mega desk. As a result of his success, he is a sought after speaker for both the Recruiting and Pharmaceutical industries. Today Michael will share with us what he calls the Four Core Assessment Areas of every final interview, and he will explain how he game plans with his finalists. In this presentation, Michael walks us through his candidate prep and shares concepts that you can quickly implement into your practice.

Meeting: “Game Plan to Win” by Michael Pietrack

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, watch the entire Episode.

(Facilitator): Most meetings, we would break down and discuss each of the elements that Michael provided for an interview prep, covering how to modify and apply them to our industry and style. Instead, we have the entire script that Michael has provided and will go through and discuss what we would like to add or modify, making it much easier to go back and immediately implement what is taught today. Let's review this and the Candidate Pre-Work Guide provided at the end of this Facilitation Guide.

“Charlie, I’ve been a part of thousands of interviews, and over the years, I’ve realized that though interviews are completely unpredictable, they tend to have the same basic elements well you boil it down. Hiring managers, whether they are conscious of it or not, assess candidates in four core areas - They want to make sure the candidate is a Motivational Fit, Functional Fit, Cultural Fit, and Logistical Fit. Let me explain what each of these are.

Motivational Fit is the WHY behind you being in this interview in the first place. They are going to want to know why you’re interviewing today, and they may be curious as to why you chose to make the job changes you have in the past. So, if they ask you to walk them through your resume, they may probe about what motivated you to make the job changes you have in past. That is the first element of Motivation Fit - what has motivated you in the past - because one’s past behavior is a great predictor of future behavior.

Another generally common element to Motivational Fit is that the hiring manager is going to want to know what research you’ve done about the company and how that ties into your interest. Additionally, they are going to want to understand why now is a good time for you to make a job change.

One of the key concepts of Motivational Fit is called Push-Pull. The manager is going to have to understand what is pushing you from your current employer and what is pulling you to them. Now, when you speak about the “push” or why you are looking, it is always a best practice to never malign your current employer, but still you don’t want to be so vague in describing your situation that they can’t understand it or have to infer too much, so I would recommend spending some time thinking about how you’re going to explain why you’re open to considering new opportunities and how a job with them would be a logical next step.

Which brings up another concept within Motivational Fit called Pain-Remedy. When you are planning how to articulate your reason for looking, think of it as “Pain.” Similar to a doctor, the hiring manager is assessing your pain and whether or not the opportunity they have is the remedy.



So, I suggest that when you planning how you are going to describe your pain or motivation to make a job change, do it in such a way that their opportunity becomes the clear and logical remedy.

To boil down Motivational Fit, prepare yourself for two basic questions: Why Us? Why Now? If you can answer those two questions using Push-Pull and Pain-Remedy, they are going to find you to be a Motivation Fit, and you will pass that portion of the assessment.

Okay Charlie, the next core area they will be assessing is your Functional Fit. After all this is a job interview, so you have to explain how you are uniquely qualified. The concept I've found to make the most sense for Functional Fit is called a 4-out-of-4. A 4-out-of-4 Candidate is what every company is looking for when it comes to Functional Fit. Think of these elements as four puzzle pieces that fit together, and when assembled they picture a great hire.

First, Functional Experience. Puzzle piece number one is how much hands-on functional experience you have. Each company is looking for employees who already possess prior experience in the job function they're interviewing for because it equates to quicker productivity. This functional experience is always best coupled with accomplishments or awards that demonstrate that you're not only experienced but also at the top of your field. So, that is puzzle piece #1.

Second, credentialing. The next puzzle piece is a credentialing component, where companies are looking for candidates who have the prerequisite education or certifications to perform the job function.

Third, technical experience - the third puzzle piece adds a technical component. Companies are looking for employees with hands-on technical knowledge with either similar products to what the company makes or a similar program they'll be running while performing the job function. The reason this is valuable is because the ramp up time for this hire is quicker than someone who may have to learn it.

Fourth, locality – this puzzle piece represents an employee who resides in either a commutable location or lives within the assigned territory. Clearly someone in a position to relocate would also be considered a fit here.

That is a 4-out-of-4 candidate, which again every single company in every single industry wants. These four puzzle pieces when placed together picture the ideal functional candidate. Think about it, every company is looking for a person with prior experience in the job itself and at the top of their game, who is adequately educated with hands-on experience with similar products, and who is living within a commutable distance from their offices or within the territory. You, Charlie, are a 4-out-of-4, and so, I'd suggest finding a way to humbly articulate this. Perhaps it comes out over the course of the entire interview or perhaps you explain it if they give you an opportunity to present an overview of your background. If they ask you for an introduction or an overview, I would recommend describing yourself in a way that shows you have each of these four components."

*****If your candidate is a 3 out of 4 candidate:**

"Charlie, as we've discussed, you're a 3-out-of-4 because you have everything except hands-on working knowledge of their products. So, my recommendation is to come to the interview prepared to illustrate times you had to learn new product lines or new technologies and came up to speed quickly. This is more than just telling them, "I'm a quick learner." This is a show don't tell situation. I recommend having well-thought-out and specific examples of times you had to come up to speed quickly on things that were new to you. The more specific the example, the more powerful the illustration will be. Rather than you saying, "I learn things quickly," you want the interviewer to hear your example and think to themselves convincingly, "This guy would come up to speed quickly." If you can do that, Charlie, you are essentially no longer a 3-out-of-4."



“So, Charlie, if we boil down Functional Fit to its most basic parts like we did Motivational Fit, we can prepare for a seemingly simple question: “Why you?” Imagine the CEO of the company barging in on the interview to ask you one simple question: “Why should I hire you?” With all the potential candidates they can select from, why should they be confident in choosing you? I think we have a compelling story, especially if we can focus on the four puzzle pieces that we went over. If we do a good job here, you will pass the Functional Fit portion of the assessment.

Now, Charlie, we are going to spend the most time talking about Cultural Fit because it is the main reason why companies have face-to-face interviews. If Cultural Fit wasn't vitally important, companies wouldn't incur the expense and would just hire people off resumes and phone calls. This section of the assessment is gauging how you potentially would fit in with the company, the manager, and the team. Somehow we have to prepare you to fit in with a company you've never visited, a manager you've never worked for, and a team you've never met. So, clearly this is going to be difficult, but not impossible.

Over the years, I've noticed that there are seven qualities that would make someone a fit for pretty much every organization. Here is a visual for you. Imagine that every interviewer has an invisible antenna up that is tuned in to one of the seven qualities. The game is that we don't know what qualities the antenna is tuned in for...but each person on the interview team is keying in on something, whether it is conscious or not, so I recommend preparing for them all. If you're prepared for all of them, you will appear to be a Cultural Fit, regardless of which quality their antenna is searching for. So, as I go through describing these qualities and as you prepare over the next couple days, begin thinking of specific examples from your work history where you have exhibited these qualities. And think of those examples as a short story you have to tell during the interview...maybe a 1-2 minute short story.

Okay the first quality they're going to be looking for is Intelligence. Now, this isn't book smarts. This isn't about the degrees you hold or the school you went to; intelligence in this context is your ability to learn new things quickly, your preparedness, and your ability to connect the dots even when faced with ambiguity. So, if you have examples of times you learned something very complex in a short amount of time, then that would be a good specific experience to share with them. The best way to show them you have this type of intelligence is to, again, demonstrate that you are extra prepared for the interview. A very prepared, quick learner, who can deal with ambiguity is a cultural fit for every company.

The second quality is Passion for Achievement. This is the part where they want to know about your work ethic and how industrious of a worker you are. They may want you to describe a time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get a project done, or a time when it was your extra effort that led to company success.

I've recently seen companies asking candidates about books they are reading or what they do outside of work. The managers that tend to ask these questions are high-achievers who aim to succeed in every aspect of their lives, and so they look for those qualities in the people they hire. So, if you have recently read a book about self-improvement or if you do anything competitive outside of work, I would be prepared to speak about it because this shows that achievement and growth are intrinsically part of who you are – someone who has a passion for achievement is a cultural fit in any organization.

The next two qualities are similar and so I lump them together. One quality is your ability to Problem Solve and the other quality is Decisiveness. Problem Solving Ability is a very important quality that most companies are looking for in their employees.

Managers want employees who don't simply come to them with problems but come to them with solutions. So, I would be prepared to present examples of times where you were solution-oriented or created a strategy to solve a problem.



Now Decisiveness can be tied to Problem Solving, but it is different. Companies want employees who make sound decisions in a timely way because indecision can enable a small problem to grow into a big problem. A good decision maker saves the company money and embarrassment. Try to think of examples you could share about times you made a great decision in the face of stress...maybe this decision saved the company money...or calmed down an unhappy customer, or something in that vein. Think of times where you had to make a decision before you had 100% of the information. You want them to come away from this meeting with the perception that you are solution-oriented and a sound decision maker and not someone who is afraid to make decisions. The reason I lump Problem Solving and Decision Making together is because no manager wants to solve every problem and make every decision for their employee. On the flip side, you don't want to paint yourself as cavalier or never needing the manager's approval to make a decision. So, picking the right examples to share is critical in this area.

The next quality, Charlie, is also one I see many companies target, it's Adaptability. As the economy continues to fluctuate, as new competitors force companies to change, and with normal rates of attrition, companies want employees who can adapt to change. The company you are about to join may experience dynamic change during your time there. The manager that you are really connecting with may get promoted or leave the company. Your job description may get tweaked. Because there is so much potential for change, they want to ensure that you are someone who can adapt if change comes about. So, be thinking of times where you successfully handled a change in assignment or manager, or had to comply with a new policy or adapted through other really dynamic changes.

Also, if they have you describe why you made job changes in the past, and you say, "Well, this changed, so I left, and at this job, this changed, and so I left," they are going to perceive you to be someone who will leave the second something changes. Knowing that change is inevitable, they might not take a chance on you. So, when you describe your reasons for making the changes you have, try to vary your reasons if at all possible.

Remember, Charlie, we never know really which quality an interviewer will target...what their antenna is searching for, but we can almost be certain that your ability to be a good Teammate will be one of them. And because Teamwork is so important and finding a good fit for the team is so crucial, many cultural fit questions will be targeting your abilities here. So, be prepared to potentially talk about times when you had to resolve a conflict with a co-worker or a manager. Do you have the ability to compromise? Can you present a differing opinion or a counter-argument while maintaining the relationship with your teammates? Part of being a good teammate is taking the lead sometimes and then also pulling your weight when it is someone else's turn to lead. So, they may key in on your leadership skills, and too, your ability to follow. When you get teamwork or questions about dealing with co-workers, this is a time to demonstrate that you have a strong Emotional Intelligence. If an interviewer is keyed in on Emotional Intelligence, they will catch subtle cues like: "I could tell he was having a bad day." Or "I sense that she was very busy or I caught her at a bad time." Or "I noticed her body language really changed." If you sprinkle your responses with these important statements, you'll come across as Emotionally Intelligent.

The best way to demonstrate you're Emotionally Intelligent is to keep your answers relatively concise. Read the person's body language...are they wanting to you to elaborate or bring the answer to a close? Are they pressured for time? Did they understand you answer? Did you understand their question?

Another key quality to being a good teammate and employee is Resiliency. There are so many things that happen within the workplace or within a team environment that tests our resolve, and because of that, companies want to make sure that they hire people who are resilient.



So, be prepared to share specific examples of times when you had to cope with frustration, dealt with tough customers, persevered through a series of tough times, handled criticism, perhaps a time when you dealt with in an unjust or unfair way. Sharing examples where you persevered through those times will give them a sense that you are a resilient person.

These are the seven qualities every company is looking for, because think about it, every company is looking for an employee with intelligence and emotional intelligence who has a passion for achievement, a good problem solver who is decisive, resilient, adaptable, and a good teammate. That profile is a Cultural Fit for any company on this earth. Now the trick is to have multiple and specific experiences ready to share about each one of these areas. You want these to be memories that are fresh in your mind.

Our goal is not to tell them we have these qualities, but to get them to believe you do by the examples you choose to share. I wish it were as simple as walking in there and saying, "Hi I'm Charlie, I'm an intelligent problem solver who is decisive and emotionally intelligent. I have a high passion for achievement coupled with adaptability and resilience. On top of this, I am an amazing teammate. When can I expect my offer?"

The final interview truly is a SHOW DON'T TELL situation. By sharing examples in short impactful stories, we want your future employer to come to the conclusion that you are all those things. The best interviewers are great at telling short yet impactful stories that leave the interviewer with a clear picture of them doing the job.

Okay, now we are onto the fourth and final assessment area, and I call this Logistical Fit. Charlie, the company can find you to be a logical Motivational Fit, a clear Functional Fit, a wonderful Cultural Fit, but if you're not a Logistical Fit, it can derail the whole interview. There are three basic Logistical Fit Questions that I would recommend preparing for: One: What are you currently earning? Two: What are you looking to earn? Three: When can you start?

Let's start with the last one, Charlie, have you given any thought to when would be a good start date? Do you have any vacations coming up?

Great Charlie, so no issues there about when you can start, and you plan on giving a customary two-week notice. There are two compensation questions that you may get from the HR representative you're meeting with. They are likely to ask you about your compensation, which could come in two distinctly different questions. Let's start with the easy one, "What are you currently earning?" This is a question that is seeking facts, and so I would recommend imparting facts about your base salary, variable compensation, and anything else in your employment package that equals you making or saving dollars. Lay it all out, because it is important information as they put together your offer.

The tougher questions is, "What are you looking to make?" The answer to this question is still very subjective at this point. If you choose to name a number in response to this question, just know that you have to live with that number. If it is too high, you might turn them off or price yourself out. If your number is too low, well then you might have left money on the table. I'm not saying that you can't name a number, I'm just cautioning you that whatever you say can and will be held against you. Also, it becomes very hard for me to negotiate for you, when you've named a number.

You want to punt this subjective question back to them with a highly subjective response. After the interview, we'll talk again, and we'll really talk about money because when you give them the subjective response, they will have to rely on me to understand what you are thinking in the way of an offer. And that's what we want. Now, clearly, I am incented to get you the highest offer possible, but at the same time, this is a client I have to work with continually, so I don't want to push so hard that they don't want to hire you or work with me ever again.



Ultimately, I need to know what you would accept and what you would not, because at some point, I need to either recommend they extend you an offer with a guarantee that you'll accept, OR I need to advise them to take your offer to Candidate #2 because you'll turn it down. They expect me to be in your head, and so, after the interview, let's structure what would be a fair and reasonable offer, and I'll do my best to get them there.

So, Charlie, those are the four assessment areas of every interview. Motivational Fit is Why Us? Why Now? Functional Fit is Why You? Cultural Fit is How You? And Logistical Fit is Can You? Can We? If they feel that you are genuinely motivated for the right reasons, can do the job well, would fit in with the team, and would accept an offer can afford to do, and you can start right way...Charlie, you are going to be a tough customer to beat.”

***If you feel the candidate needs it, describe what Michael finds to be the most common interviewing pitfalls:

The Over-Talker: *“Charlie, give them just a basic description of the situation you are in. You want to give the necessary relevant details to set up the situation...I'm talking two to three sentences tops. Then you want to describe the Obstacle you were faced with. Now the situation and the obstacle are likely laid out for you in the question the interviewer asks. So, don't spend too much time on those. The key to telling an impactful story is the A, the Action. They want to know what you did in this situation because they will then predict that you will do this again. Also, the Action is what they can picture in their mind...the goal is to create a positive image of you doing the job, doing an action. Once you are through with the Action, which is the meat and potatoes of the response, wrap it up in a nice bow called Result. What resulted from your action? Maybe saying something like ‘So, what happened was....’ Charlie, think of an NFL quarterback...they drop back to pass, the best ones have an internal clock in their mind that they need to get rid of the ball or they will be sacked. I encourage you to have an internal clock too so that you don't potentially go on too long...once the alarm goes off in your mind, wrap it up... Maybe saying something like ‘So, to make a long story short, what happened was....’ Does that make sense?”*

The Underprepared: *“Charlie, what was the most interesting thing you found when researching the company? Was there anyone on the interview panel that you couldn't find on LinkedIn? What do you find novel about their products? How's your presentation coming?”*

Interview Preparation Worksheet

Motivational Fit:

- Why are you interviewing today, and why did you choose to make job changes in the past?

- What research have you done on the organization? _____

- Why is now a good time for you to make a job change? _____

- What is pushing you from your current organization? _____

Functional Fit:

- What hands-on functional experience do you have related to this role? _____

- What education or certifications do you have that are relevant to this role? _____

- What hands-on technical experience with similar products or programs to what you will be doing in the new organization? _____

- Any issues with location? _____

Cultural Fit: (be prepared to share a quick story for each area)

- Intelligence: _____

- Passion for Achievement: _____

- Problem Solving Ability and Decisiveness: _____

- Adaptability: _____

- Teammate/Teamwork/Emotional Intelligence: _____

- Resiliency: _____

