

Self-Reflection & Interviews With Significant Others

Section 1:

Person Interviewed: Cassie Withrow

Relationship: Self

Questions:

1. When you think about my general interpersonal skills, what are some adjectives or phrases that come to mind that are good descriptions?

I believe my ability to listen, analyze and delegate are three skills that cannot be overlooked or undervalued. I have the ability to sit back and listen (really listen) to others and absorb what they are saying. While it may take me a little longer to make sense of what I absorbed and form a plan, I do listen. I think what makes me a great listener is that I am an “active listener”, I take notes, I ask questions when I don’t understand and I can focus on others. Once I get all the information, I am gifted in taking that information/data and analyzing it to find the root of the problem. Sometimes that include just thinking on things for a while until I understand all sides, other times it involves inputting data in spreadsheets or taking notes to see where the problem lies. Once I figure out where that is, I communicate that to my team or superiors to come up with a plan for action. I am great at delegating work, not to be confused with giving away work I don’t want to do. I can see what I have on my plate, what I can handle, and what I should pass off to someone else. I also recognize others skills and strengths, along with my weaknesses, so I know when to delegate to someone else to get the best results. Another adjective that comes to mind is that I am outgoing. My mother has always said I could have a conversation with a wall. I am able to reach out to people and talk to them. I have the ability to make people feel comfortable with my warm demeanor, so they will open and up and talk with me.

2. What do you consider to be my greatest strengths in this regard?

I think my greatest strength is my people skills. I am able to form relationships, actively listen, and communicate effectively with others. I believe a big part of being a leader is having an open communication line with your team. I think my parents instilled the importance of relationships and communication in me, which has lead me to value it highly for myself and my team. I think my listening and critical skills are stemmed from my curiosity. I enjoy learning and I associate with listening to others as an opportunity to learn more. My analyzation and critical thinking skills come from just wanting to solve problems. Even as a child, I loved puzzles, I

wanted to solve them. As I got older I would turn the puzzles upside down (to not see the picture) and try to solve them that way. As a lover of puzzles, I was able to translate this real life puzzles. For instance, our company continues to exceed our budget, why? I would then interview each manager to see what their usual spending is and get with our accountant to see the actual numbers. I would take both of these and compare to try to find where the issue lies. In that way it's a puzzle for me to solve.

3. What do you consider to be my greatest weaknesses or areas for improvement?

I would say my greatest weaknesses would be non verbal communication. I am terrible about crossing my arms or frowning my brow, leading people to believe I am upset or not invested in what they are saying. I have to actively try to seem more open and a pleasant look on my face so I do not discourage those I am working with. Another weakness would be collaboration. While I can delegate work to others, I am not the best at collaborating with someone. I am constantly guilty of "just doing it myself", so I don't have to spend time explaining things to someone or being unhappy that they did not do it my way. On that same note, I have been accused of micromanaging those I do delegate too. I am actively working to adjust them and giving others the space to do their work and reminding myself that 2 brains are better than one.

4. Specific Behavioral Competencies (on a scale of 1 to 10 – 10 being highest):

- a. Ability to listen and convey empathy. Rating: 10 Comments: I think this is one of my strongest attributes.
- b. Demonstrates compassion, consideration and caring for others. Rating: 8 Comments: I want to say that I am a rock star at this, but I know when in high stress situations I can come off cold and uncaring. I focus on the task at hand and forget to first care about the people involved.
- c. Ability to understand and communicate effectively with people who see the world differently. Rating: 8 Comments: I pride myself on being able to communicate with others effectively and see all sides of an issue. I was lucky to be raised and taught to always view everything from every angle. I am able to hear everyone's side and understand to the best of my ability.
- d. Building trust and credibility. Rating: 6 Comments: I have been told my outgoing personality can come across as insincere.

- e. Skill at cultivating relationships. Rating: 8 Comments: I consider this one of my strong suits. With my personality, ability to listen and make others feel comfortable it is relatively easy for me to cultivate relationships.
- f. Demonstrating an awareness of own style and how it affects others, and makes adjustments as necessary. Rating: 6 Comments: I think this is a weakness for me. At times, I dig my heels in the dirt and do not want to make adjustments as I believe my way is the correct way.
- g. Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others. Rating: 8 Comments: I am encouraging and have a positive attitude which reflects itself in my relationships.
- h. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability. Rating: 6 Comments: I am a creature of habit. I love my calendar and things to go as planned. While I can readjust when things change, it takes me a minute to wrap my head around this.
- i. Works to build others' value with positive impact to all. Rating: 7 Comments: I try to build up my team by giving them positive reinforcement as well as making sure our executive team knows what good work they are doing.
- j. Self-knowledge and self-awareness. Rating: 6 Comments: This class is only in its 2nd week and I am realizing I do not have as much self knowledge and awareness as I thought.
- k. Ability to keep an open mind regarding controversial issues. Rating: 5 Comments: It really depends on the topic, but most of the time, I cannot see the other side of things. For instance, for social issues, I am a firm believer in equal rights for all, and I cannot see the other side of this or why I should even try too.
- l. Ability to separate emotions from facts in conflict situations. Rating: 6 Comments: I just attended a training on this as I am emotionally invested in my employees and my work. I am trying to learn how to separate these out.
- m. Resolving differences between people using persuasion, diplomacy and logic. Rating: 6 Comments: I would like to rate myself higher, but because of my leanings in controversial issues I think this is an area I can still grow in.

n. Effectively handles conflict, preserving good relations. Rating: 7 Comments: I can handle conflict well and am able to do so without demoralizing those I am working with.

5. Have you observed any specific instances in which I have effectively adapted my behaviors in order to relate more effectively with others who have different personalities, cultural backgrounds, perspectives or beliefs? Please elaborate.

I have been able to do this in the past, at times it has taken me longer than I would have liked. A specific example that comes to mind happened recently at my job. In my current role I manage the facilities of our building as part of my duties. I work with an individual who lives/eats/breathes work. This is an admirable trait, but not everyone operates this way. He had a complaint that when he sends emails after hours they are not responded too as timely as he would like. I encourage my employees to have a good work/life balance and I do not require them to be glued to their emails after hours. After a discussion and learning that this person is that way, I was able to see why he was frustrated. I came up with a solution that he could CC me on any email and add him to my VIPs so I would see the email come in. I set the expectation that I would try to get back to him as soon as possible and at least acknowledge the email if I do not have the answers. This took my employees out of the “line of fire” and also satisfied him. At the end, I realized he just wanted to know someone was reading the emails and working on addressing any issues. While I want my own work/life balance, I do want to also be readily available and able to help when I can.

6. If you could suggest three things I could do to improve my interpersonal skills, what would they be?

I think the first thing would be to have more patience. In this day and age it is encouraged to move quickly and get things done, and so at times I do not have the patience to handle items that are not moving fast enough for me. This has caused me in the past to make decisions without waiting for all the information needed to make the best choice. The second thing would be handling constructive criticism. Its taken years and I am still actively trying to learn how to handle this and understand it is not a personal attack. We can take these notes from others to better ourselves, our work, and our departments. Finally, the ability to separate emotions from facts in situations. I tend to care deeply about what I am doing and the people who work for me. That can blind me at times. I had an employee that I deeply cared for and had become a friend. She was not turning in her expenses on time. Instead of just owning that and coaching her and coming up with ideas how she could make sure she stayed on top of them, I became upset as I felt like it was an attack on her and that they were doubting her work ethic. I am still actively working on improving this.

7. In considering my human relations abilities, is there anything else you would like to add?

I think the most important thing for me to learn is to keep learning. No one is perfect and that is completely okay. But to step back and self reflect on a regular basis would benefit me greatly. I think I could also take some time to learn negotiation skills. I have taken over roles that involve a good amount of negotiation, and I think I do not stand my ground as much as I should. I know there is an art to it, and I would benefit from taking more trainings or finding a mentor to help me grow in this area.

Section 2:

This exercise was very interesting for me. First, I thought it was interesting that people felt uncomfortable having to tell me strengths and weaknesses. Both people I interviewed were noticeably uncomfortable when it came to telling me what my weaknesses were. For my interview with Jim Meyers, I had to spend a good 3 - 5 minutes coaxing out of him what he thought and telling him that it was okay to tell me. Breaking through to my interviewees was a struggle, but I am glad I stuck with it to really dig in and keep honest feedback.

What did I learn about myself as a result of this process? I learned that I may be more self aware than I had thought. I was surprised to learn that others shared some of the same views as I have of myself. I thought Self - Awareness was one of my greatest weaknesses, after this exercise, I realize I was wrong. I think I was being too hard on myself. I also learned that I have a real problem delegating. I do like to be the leader, and I can make decisions under pressure. While that is something to be admired, I think falter because I do not delegate items to others. Therefore at times, things are not done as well as they could be because I have not released any control. I had to have a hard look at myself and try to see why I do this? After looking at it and discussing it, I think it may stem from not trusting others to execute my vision. There are a few big problems with that, the first is that I want it to be MY vision instead of the team's. One of the benefits of being on a team is that there are multiple people to give ideas towards a common vision. I would benefit from listening and applying their ideas to the goal. I also realized it's not that I don't trust others, but it is more that I do not want to take the time to explain exactly how I want it done. That is a two fold issue, one I should trust my team enough to get things done the way they think is best and I should not try to micromanage them. If I could get past these things, then I would be able to give up control. I wish I could say I would have it done tomorrow now that I recognize the issues, but this will be a constant battle and something I must learn to do.

Were there any surprising results from my interviews? Learning my control issue was definitely a surprise, as well as realizing I may be more self aware than I had initially thought.

More than both of those though, I was surprised and delighted to hear my coworker looked at me as a leader. We work in two different departments but do a similar job, so I wasn't sure what her view point would be. It's interesting that my best friend rated me very high with my ability to separate emotions from facts in conflict situations, but my coworker did not. After talking with each of them more (as more of a followup interview), it seems I actually have a harder time separating these at work. Since Jim never sees me in a professional environment he assumed I just kept things professional. I spoke further to Tristan and she said its almost as if I take criticism of my work personally, not quite as an attack but more as a failure. She said instead of me stepping back and seeing where I could improve or what went wrong, I immediately defend and miss the important points of the conflict. This was very eye opening for me, as I know I do get very invested, but hadn't realized that others see it as well. I do not have a solution yet to fix this problem, but I do know that admitting it is the first step. I will begin looking for tips and tricks to learn to separate my emotions and handle constructive criticism better.

What would I have done differently to obtain even better information regarding my own behavioral tendencies? I think meeting with the people I interviewed first and showing them the assignment and what the end goals were may have been helpful. In my first interview, it took us awhile to get into the swing of things and for me to pull out answers from her. With Jim it would of been helpful to make it clear I wanted honest feedback and some of it would be uncomfortable for him. I mean, who likes telling their best friend what their weaknesses are? But more than all that, I think if I had really focused on the questions in Section 2, and what I was hoping to achieve as a guiding point, I could of gotten more out of my interviewees. I also would be interested in doing this again at the end of this class once I have learned all about the different leadership skills and traits. Having that knowledge would guide me in my interview process to ask the right questions.

How will I think differently, and what will I do differently, as a result of this assignment? I think there are two issues I want to address immediately. The first would be my ability to delegate work instead of taking everything myself and the second would be separating my emotions from facts in conflicts. I am very lucky to work for a company that supports employee development and trainings. I have already looked at a few classes with the American Management Association that deal with developing emotional intelligence and learning tools to help separate emotions. After I complete more research on the courses, I plan to submit to my manager for approval to attend. To learn to delegate work is going to be a process for me, but I made my first steps today. I throw an annual Christmas party for all my friends. In the past I have cooked all the food and hosted, making it not the most enjoyable experience for myself and I stay stressed all day. Yesterday I updated the event to let everyone know I would handle the main course, but they are to bring the sides and to sign up accordingly. I know this doesn't seem

like a big step, but it actually is for me. I think learning to share the responsibility and delegate will be a challenge for me, but I do it one small step at a time, eventually I will get there and be successful. The final thing I will be doing differently is trusting my self reflection. I have a hard time accepting that I am good at some things and I can be overly hard on myself when I fail. I would benefit from having a more realistic view of myself, that way I know where the trouble areas are and can work on improving them.

Section 3:

Interview # 1

Person Interviewed: Tristan Thornhill

Relationship: Co-Worker

Questions:

1. When you think about my general interpersonal skills, what are some adjectives or phrases that come to mind that are good descriptions?

My experience with you has shown me if you have a problem take it to you - You are a problem solver and passionate about helping resolve any type of issue. I admire your work ethic and direct communication because it helps the team stay on tract to get the job done.

2. What do you consider to be my greatest strengths in this regard?

You are such a problem solver. I love that I can come to you with an issue and you bounce around ideas or possible solutions.

- a. What specific actions / behaviors led you to believe work ethic is one of my areas of strength? Can you give me some examples?

You don't stop. You are always striving to improve whatever it is you are working on and you always show up to the plate. For instance, we talked about what we needed in order to improve our recruiting techniques before attend Grace Hopper Celebration. Within a few hours after our meeting, you had found 2 online classes, a TedX talk, and then a day training we could attend. While we all weren't as excited about everything, you did them and brought back knowledge to share with us. When we arrived at GHC we felt prepared and we were able to recruit others!

- b. How specifically would you define _____, and what are the kinds of things you look for to determine if someone is strong at _____?

Work ethic to me is someone who knows no quit. Someone who is accountable, available and willing to work or offer guidance even when not on company time. This literally defines Cassie. She is on call 24/7, and even annoyingly so, she works on PTO. Her work ethic is unmatched, well actually our CEO is the same way.

3. What do you consider to be my greatest weaknesses or areas for improvement?

While I appreciate this about you is your verbal communication. Being direct and a good communicator (which I admire) can sometimes come across a blunt or harsh even when no ill intent is there. You are working on it, I know. But there have been times where I have felt like you were rude or disappointed in me, but later learned neither were true and you were just stating facts.

4. Specific Behavioral Competencies (on a scale of 1 to 10 – 10 being highest):

- a. Ability to listen and convey empathy. Rating: 9 Comments: You always listens fully - and then responds. I really appreciate that about you. I know if I come to you it isn't "going in one ear and out the other"
- b. Demonstrates compassion, consideration and caring for others. Rating: 10 Comments: You are the first person to offer backup help or a meal to someone that is struggling or needing extra help at home.
- c. Ability to understand and communicate effectively with people who see the world differently. Rating: 9 Comments: We have a very diverse work place and you do this seamlessly. I am always impressed to see how you can just be everyones friend immediately.
- d. Building trust and credibility. Rating: 7 Comments: Is it trusting others? I know it takes some people a longer time to gain your trust by proving themselves to be a valuable asset to the team. (I think it's people trusting me Tris) Oh! Haha, yeah you are super trustworthy. I think its because you communicate well.
- e. Skill at cultivating relationships. Rating: 10 Comments: I believe most people trust your intentions and you are word to be true.
- f. Demonstrating an awareness of own style and how it affects others, and makes adjustments as necessary. Rating: 10 Comments: Do they know where you work? (No) Again - diverse work place causes for a lot of different personalities and You are able to adjust to interact with everyone.

- g. Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others. Rating: 10
Comments: You do an excellent job at keeping up / checking in with people on a work and personal level.
 - h. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability. Rating: 10 Comments: Extremely flexible and can easily switch from one task to another without hesitation
 - i. Works to build others' value with positive impact to all. Rating: 10
Comments: You are a team player and wants everyone to succeed... you are kinda annoying about it. Some days there is not enough coffee in the world to combat your positive outlook.
 - j. Self-knowledge and self-awareness. Rating: 10 Comments: You know when you are out or in line. You are very good at communicating and acknowledging when you are wrong or right.
 - k. Ability to keep an open mind regarding controversial issues. Rating: 9
Comments: While having your own opinions and beliefs - you are also willing to hear out the thoughts of someone else.
 - l. Ability to separate emotions from facts in conflict situations. Rating: 6
Comments: This rating is lower simply because while being passionate about something is GREAT it can also be a downfall. You sometimes respond to situations with passion and “emotions” but at the same time have seen you work through/past that and see the facts in the situation. Which then results to proper action/response.
 - m. Resolving differences between people using persuasion, diplomacy and logic. Rating: 9 Comments: You are great at this, I love it when you do it with humor. While we have a great diverse work place, there are times when things get heated because of this. You are so good at coming in and helping them find common ground and work through it.
 - n. Effectively handles conflict, preserving good relations. Rating: 9 Comments: Absolutely. You know how to keep work and personal feelings separate and where there is a conflict with a work related topic it doesn't spoil the working relationship.
5. Have you observed any specific instances in which I have effectively adapted my behaviors in order to relate more effectively with others who have different personalities, cultural backgrounds, perspectives or beliefs? Please elaborate. Again, we work in a very diverse

office and company with people from all over the world with different backgrounds. I have never seen or heard of you treating anyone differently due to personal differences. You are excellent at keeping the two, business and personal, separate.

6. If you could suggest three things I could do to improve my interpersonal skills, what would they be?

I don't have three things. My only suggestion would be to give yourself more credit.

7. In considering my human relations abilities, is there anything else you would like to add? I feel like you are constantly in a state of wanting to better yourself. You are willing to point out your faults and ask for help with them which is admirable. You are a team player, a great communicator and a good friend.

INTERVIEW GUIDE (7 questions)

Interview # 2

Person Interviewed: Jim Meyers

Relationship: Best Friend

Questions:

1. When you think about my general interpersonal skills, what are some adjectives or phrases that come to mind that are good descriptions?
Problem solver, decision maker, assertive, good listener, empathetic, humorous, leader, persuasive.
2. What do you consider to be my greatest strengths in this regard? Decision maker for sure. I am always impressed at your ability to be in a tough situation and be able to make a decision that is best for everyone.
 - a. What specific actions / behaviors led you to believe is one of my areas of strength? Can you give me some examples?

We have a large group of, very opinionated, friends and it can be hard to get anything organized between all of us. You're able to make big and bold decisions for the group, keeping the best interest of the group as a whole in mind. When we took a trip to Tulum you were able to make decisions on flights, accommodations, and activities for 10 people.

- b. How specifically would you define _____, and what are the kinds of things you look for to determine if someone is strong at _____?

To me, a decision maker is someone that will make a call when others are hesitant. I feel that people who believe in themselves are usually confident in their decision making. You have always displayed this ability since high school. I haven't seen it in a work role, but on a personal level you excel.

3. What do you consider to be my greatest weaknesses or areas for improvement?

Giving up control of situations. While it's great to be a decision maker, it's okay to accept help. You can be the one to make the plans, but there is no reason to be stressed out cause you are trying to manage everything. I think if you started trusting people to help, it would make events more fun for you. Like our annual Christmas party, if you allow everyone to bring a dish instead of you having to cook the entire meal - that would make your day less stressful.

4. Specific Behavioral Competencies (on a scale of 1 to 10 – 10 being highest):

- a. Ability to listen and convey empathy. Rating: 9 Comments: You are definitely a good listener, but sometimes jumps the gun on where you think a person is going in the conversation. It would be good to sit back and wait til their done before jumping in.
- b. Demonstrates compassion, consideration and caring for others. Rating: 10 Comments: You're one of the only people I know that is actively invested in a LOT of people's lives and do a great job of checking in or on people. You always do little things to go above and beyond for people.
- c. Ability to understand and communicate effectively with people who see the world differently. Rating: 7 Comments: I'm not often around you while around people that see the world differently, but you do believe firmly in your views and will defend them to the end.
- d. Building trust and credibility. Rating: 9 Comments: You are always very willing to back up whatever you have to say, but the thing that is best is that if you are wrong, you admit it.

- e. Skill at cultivating relationships. Rating: ___9___ Comments: There was a time when we couldn't go anywhere without seeing someone that you were great friends with. You treat every friend as if they're a best friend.
- f. Demonstrating an awareness of own style and how it affects others, and makes adjustments as necessary. Rating: ___8___ Comments: Sort of a weird question since there are so many different scenarios with different outcomes. In a sense, I think it's a strength of yours to not change the type of person you are around others, but I've witnessed you change your behavior just to make someone feel more comfortable in a situation. Usually by finding an outsider and leaving a group to learn more about them.
- g. Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others. Rating: ___9___ Comments: I would rate a 10, but we all lose some relationships over time.
- h. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability. Rating: ___10___ Comments: Going back to Tulum, our flight situation changed pretty suddenly when we weren't going to make it back to the US on the date planned, but you figured it out quickly and efficiently.
- i. Works to build others' value with positive impact to all. Rating: ___8___ Comments: Definitely group minded and works to make a group better. I think as I said earlier, if you were able to step back from the leadership role and let others help, it would make more of a positive impact.
- j. Self-knowledge and self-awareness. Rating: ___9___ Comments: You are very self aware, but I believe there's always more we can learn about ourselves as we have new experiences.
- k. Ability to keep an open mind regarding controversial issues. Rating: ___7___ Comments: This should possibly be higher, but we agree on most issues and don't have much experience seeing the other side. I do know that when you are passionate about things (lately political things), it's hard for you to see the other side or try to understand.
- l. Ability to separate emotions from facts in conflict situations. Rating: ___9___ Comments: I think your current job has been beneficial in developing this skill. You're put in these situations almost every day and handle them well.

m. Resolving differences between people using persuasion, diplomacy and logic. Rating: ___8___ Comments: I think persuasion is one of your strong suits, but r I feel that the persuasion is often towards what you think is best. It would be good to make decisions for the best of everyone at times.

n. Effectively handles conflict, preserving good relations. Rating: ___8___ Comments: You invest a lot into friendships and when people betray those trusts, you can take it pretty hard and sometimes it takes a little time before you're ready to resolve.

5. Have you observed any specific instances in which I have effectively adapted my behaviors in order to relate more effectively with others who have different personalities, cultural backgrounds, perspectives or beliefs? Please elaborate.

Yes. You know a lot about me that I don't really care to share with my family. Not necessarily bad things, but things I feel help define who I am yet have the potential to hurt them. During my wedding, from rehearsal dinner to the speech, you were respectful of the curtain I keep up through your actions and words to everyone around you. You also take those things and support me. For the half marathon I am running you have made signs and reached out to my family and said how important it was for them to be there.

6. If you could suggest three things I could do to improve my interpersonal skills, what would they be?

Well, I would say: give up some control. I have talked about it all through this interview, but I really think it would be good. Get out of your comfort zone more often. You are a creature of habit and like the same things, same places. I think starting school was a good beginning of stepping out of your comfort zone - keep going! Don't let yourself feel defeated if one thing goes wrong. It's just one thing not the entire project. Readapt and keep going!

7. In considering my human relations abilities, is there anything else you would like to add?

You're one of the only people I know that can know so much about a person within 5 minutes of meeting them. I think that is probably your second best skill. You are just able to talk to people and get them to open up to you. It's one of the most impressive things to watch.