



HOW TO SELL YOUR SOUTHWESTERN ADVANTAGE EXPERIENCE (IN AN INTERVIEW)

While your Southwestern Advantage experience looks great on a resume, it is important to realize that not everyone will have heard of Southwestern. It is up to you to explain the program in a way that highlights your experience, what you've learned, and what you can bring to table. The following information will help you better explain your skills, abilities, and experience throughout the course of an interview.

IN A NUTSHELL

Always give a quick synopsis of the company before launching in to an explanation of your experience.

Example: *"Southwestern Advantage is a 160 year old company based in Nashville, TN that provides a summer sales program for college students. Each summer, approximately 1000 students participate from campuses all over the world—they relocate to various communities across the US and Canada to sell educational products in a direct, face-to-face sales process. Each student works as an **independent contractor** and will call on over 3000 families each summer. The average student makes about \$8,000 gross profit while essentially running their own business during the summertime."*

DO'S & DON'TS

DO: Make sure that you have done research on the company you are interviewing with to understand what they are looking for in a candidate. This will help you tailor your description of your experience to meet their desires and/or requirements.

DO: Give a brief explanation of the program, a 1-2 minute explanation/summary on the company and the job

DO: Describe the job from a birds-eye-view (big picture vs. detailed, literal explanations)

DO: Discuss sales revenue in relation to the amount of time conducting business—it's a summer program...

DON'T talk about the process, **DO** talk about what you *learned* through the process instead

DON'T talk about your check or your units (these metrics are irrelevant to non-SW people) No need to explain

DON'T tell “war stories” or use negative experiences on the bookfield as an example of how the job was challenging

DON'T discount your accomplishments in the program—compared to other students, you may feel you didn't do as well; but compared to other applicants as a whole, you have some of the best experience out there.

DON'T use “bookfield” jargon! **Follow the following key for “corporate speak”:**

- **Pre-Approach** = lead generation, referrals
- **Demos** = sales presentations, product demonstration
- **Intro** = finding-a-need, consultative approach
- **Sales Talk** = pitch, script, sales process
- **HQ** = home office
- **Bookfield** = sales field, field
- **OL/Student Manager** = manager or sales manager
- **Deliveries** = product fulfillment
- **Mrs. Jones** = prospect
- **Customer(s)** = client
- **Residuals** = recurring revenue/continuity
- **Website Subscriptions** = online component
- **Sales School** = sales training
- **Following** = field training/shadowing
- **PC** = weekly performance reviews
- **Sunday Meeting** = weekly sales meetings
- **Big Brick** = High-level clientele
- **Dealer** = Sales Representative
- **First Year** = associate, entry-level rep
- **Stat Calls** = daily activity reporting
- **Stats** = activity metrics
- **Sizzler Trip** = PC Trip, President's Club trip
- **Retail Sales** = sales revenue

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Marketable job skills can be divided into four basic categories, or “skill sets,” that job-seekers need to demonstrate in job interviews. Below are the *Transferable Skills* that can be learned throughout a Southwestern Advantage summer. The following skills can all be learned in 2 or more summers:

Communication: The skillful expression, transmission, and interpretation of knowledge and ideas.

- **Verbal** – Over the course of the summer a student dealer will do 1000+, 20 minute sales presentations.
- **Listening attentively** – Asking questions in a sales presentation will help determine a need; you must first listen to understand.
- **Expressing ideas** – Not only selling a product, but selling the idea behind the product... how the product can help their situation.
- **Facilitating group discussion** – Students often get a chance to share sales techniques and ideas at weekly group sales training meetings.
- **Providing appropriate feedback** – Handling/Covering objections!
- **Negotiating** – During the delivery period: a student will assess, understand, and ‘work out a way’ in a variety of customer situations.
- **Perceiving nonverbal messages** – Learning how to read body language (i.e. arms crossed during a presentation, distractedly nodding along, reaching for wallet or pocket book, etc.)
- **Persuading** – Selling a product they never heard of, to someone you’ve never met.
- **Describing feelings** – Students often experience an “emotional roller-coaster,” and receive coaching via nightly phone calls and a one-on-one personal conferences during weekly meetings.
- **Interviewing** – Successful salespeople learn how to ask effective questions to elicit appropriate responses.
- **Implementing creative ideas** – Students are essentially running their own business, so will often develop their own style/way of doing things.
- **Gathering information** – Prospecting/Pre-approach!
- **Problem solving** – Learning to think on your feet and take action despite setbacks.
- **Setting goals** – Starting on the second day interview, students are taught how to set goals: life goals, career goals, financial goals, summer goals, weekly goals, etc. *Goal Periods* during the summer (daily goals) are also a form of advanced goal setting (“crystallized goals”).
- **Extracting important information** – Learning important information about territory (i.e. names of schools, mascot, teacher names, churches, graduation requirements, etc.)
- **Defining needs** – Everyone has a need, it is the salesperson’s job to discover and illustrate it

Human Relations: The use of interpersonal skills for resolving conflict, relating to and helping people.

- **Developing rapport** – Getting people to like and trust you in a short amount of time; you achieved this every time you signed up a customer.
- **Demonstrating sensitivity** – Understanding what is important to others, and sympathize with their feelings.
- **Conveying emotion** – The best Southwestern salespeople learn how to sell on both logic *and* emotion.
- **Providing emotional support** – The impact of being a positive roommate, making daily pump-up calls, and engaging in camaraderie during Sunday meetings, can tremendously help someone’s mental state.
- **Cooperation** – Learning how to work with a team and cooperate with people with various backgrounds and personalities.
- **Professionalism** – Not only representing yourself, but representing your hometown, your school, and The Southwestern Company. Providing ethical and favorable interactions with everyone you meet.
- **Assertiveness** – Being “pleasantly persistent” vs. aggressive
- **Teaching** – Even first years will have the opportunity to teach at Sunday meetings; the teacher often learns more than the student!
- **Delegation** – (2nd summer and beyond) Through delegating tasks, you teach others how to lead.
- **Motivating** – (2nd summer and beyond) You learn self-motivation in your 1st summer, and learn how to motivate others when you become a manager.
- **Leadership** – (2nd summer and beyond) You learn to lead by example, and do what you have asked others to do. Success is contagious.
- **Coaching** – (2nd summer and beyond) Student Managers have a vested interest in seeing their recruits succeed, this goes beyond technical coaching into emotional and mental coaching.
- **Counseling** – (2nd summer and beyond) Student Managers can also be a type of “life coach,” a summer selling books is often tied to personal goals and challenges.
- **Collaboration** – (2nd summer and beyond) Brainstorming with other Student Managers on decisions that affect the whole organization.
- **Conflict Management** – (2nd summer and beyond) Various circumstances can arise during the school year and summer that can affect students. Learning to work around and deescalate situations are imperative to success in the program.

Business Acumen: The applicable knowledge and understanding of a successful business practice.

- **Reporting information** – Students will verbally report their sales stats nightly to a manager, and fill out a weekly business report of sales made, monies collected, and work activity.
- **Planning and Research** – Searching for specific information with the ability to conceptualize future needs and solutions.
- **Initiating new business practices** – (2nd summer and beyond) Generating new methods, new processes, or new materials for selling and/or recruiting. Again, you are essentially running a personal business... make it unique
- **Organizational Leadership** – (2nd summer and beyond) Setting up HQs, coordinating commute to Nashville for sales school and commute to territory, follow schedules, coaching call schedules, and Sunday meetings
- **Sales Management** – (FSL or DSM only) Sales managers are responsible for the details of every student and student manager in each org (i.e. statistics, trends, remittances, etc.) They develop the ability to supervise, direct, and guide individuals and groups in the completion of tasks and fulfillment of goals.

Work Survival: The day-to-day skills that assist in promoting effective production and work satisfaction.

- Decision-making
- Abiding by rules and regulations
- Time Management
- Attention to detail
- Goal Achievement
- Enlisting help or assistance
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting and meeting deadlines
- Organization
- Cooperation
- Punctuality

NUMBERS

When you are applying for jobs, hiring managers aren't just looking for someone who checks the boxes next to their list of qualifications—they are looking for someone that can *show* them why they are a valuable hire. It's the numbers, results, recognition, and accomplishments are proof of your experience. Below is a list of some things to include on your resume (and in your interview) on why you are the best person for the job.

- **\$X#** in sales production in **X#** week-long sales period
- Ranked **X#** out over 1500 salespeople, companywide
- 100+ hours of training each year (beyond a 1st summer)
- Recruited and managed **X#** salespeople that produced **\$X#** in sales revenue (beyond a 1st summer)
- Conducted over **X#** presentations and **X#** one-on-one interviews on various college campuses (corporate recruiter)
- Worked 75+ hours per week all summer – **“Gold Seal Gold Award”**
- Prospected and approached over 3,000 families each summer while doing 180 sales presentations each week – **“Superstar Sample Case”**
- Net savings from a summer more than \$5,000 [or \$10,000 for 2nd summer and beyond] – **“Big Check Award”**
- Earned an all-inclusive incentive trip awarded to top producers – **“Sizzler Trip”**
- Awarded for finishing the summer with best weeks in final two weeks – **“I Wanna Win”**
- Personal (recruited) team production **X#** out **X#** teams companywide – **“Top Student Manager Award”**
- Accomplished achievement-levels in personal weekly sales production – **President's Club, Chairman's Club, Mort Utley Club**
- Lifetime production achievement award at different levels (ask your Career Counselor for qualification levels) – **“Southwestern Certified in Sales”**
- Lifetime production achievement award at different levels (ask your Career Counselor for qualification levels) – **“Southwestern Certified in Recruiting”**

NOTE: Considering that every single individual has different production, numbers are subjective/tailored to each individual. It is recommended that you talk with your career counselor on how to properly discuss your personal numbers to a prospective employer.