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Executive Summary – Interview Simulator

Most of the people who go to college have one goal: get a good job. In order to obtain a good job, a student needs work experience, good grades, and extra-curricular activities. However, none of these qualifications are useful if a student cannot communicate well. The ability of an employee to communicate clearly and effectively is invaluable to employers. This skill is primarily assessed and evaluated during the interview process.

In an interview, job candidates are asked varied questions. The recruiter judges the communication skills of a potential employee by how well they respond to these questions. In an effort to assist students in preparing for interviews, I have created an interview simulator. This simulator performs a few key functions to help students prepare for job interviews:

1. Asks a wide variety of questions, covering areas such as job experience, extra-curricular activities, and personal issues
2. Allows someone not trained in interviewing (a friend, spouse, etc.) to help the student prepare for a successful job interview
3. Enables students to save their responses to the questions in order to review and improve their responses
4. Allows students to save questions to a “My Favorites” section. This section can be used for questions with which students struggle, or questions with which students want more practice
5. Questions and answers can be exported to both a spreadsheet and a text file for future use and review

This interview simulator has over 500 questions gathered from a wide variety of sources. Since most companies are moving to a more “behavioral” style of interview, the interviewer has over 300 behavioral interview questions. By using this interview simulator, especially with a friend or relative asking the questions, students will be able to better prepare for interviews, improve their communication skills, and obtain better jobs.

Implementation Documentation

To begin, a student goes to the Ribbon, selects the tab that says “Interview Start”, and then selects the button labeled “Select Interview Type”. The interview simulator then opens a form to ask what type of interview the student would like. The options are:

1. Basic interview – This mode is very basic. It features 10 easy questions which never change
2. Mixed interview – This mode has 15 questions from a mix of behavioral and informational questions

3. Custom interview – This mode allows you to select how many informational questions you would like, and how many behavioral questions you would like
4. Behavioral – This mode only uses behavioral questions, but it allows you to select what category of behavioral question you would like. Examples are leadership, communication skills, and problem solving
5. Favorites – This mode allow users to view questions they have saved, as well as write their own questions

Based on the selected interview type, the interviewer generates questions. For example, if the student selects a behavioral interview, then only behavioral questions are put into the question array.

A new form (Figure 1) then appears which displays the first question and a text box. This textbox can be used to save answers or notes. When the student presses the “Next Question” button, the text currently in the textbox is saved and the next question is shown. This process is continued until all the questions have been answered. When all questions are answered, a message informs the

The screenshot shows a window titled "Interview". At the top, it asks: "What do you think is most important to success in the workplace on this job?". Below the question is a large text input area. A small button labeled "Save This Question to Favorites" is positioned above the input area. The input area contains the text: "I think that the most important skill for any job is time management. The ability to manage your time effectively will decide your overall effectiveness and efficiency, as well as overall output as an employee. If someone can't manage their time well,". At the bottom left, there is a checkbox with the text "Check This Box If You Would Like Your Computer To Speak The Questions". At the bottom right, there is a button labeled "Next Question".

Figure 1

user that the interview is over.

At this point, a new form (Figure 2) appears which allows the student to review the interview questions and the student’s answers. The student is able to change their answer to any question, or to add notes to the question. They can scroll back and forth between all the questions that have been asked. When the previous and next question buttons are pressed, any changes to the answer/notes are saved, and the interviewer displays the previous or next question and

The screenshot shows a window titled "Review". It displays the same question as Figure 1: "What do you think is most important to success in the workplace on this job?". Below the question, it says "Your Response was:" followed by the same sample answer as in Figure 1. To the right of the answer, there are two buttons: "Spreadsheet" and "Text File". At the bottom, there are three buttons: "Previous Question", "Next Question", and "I'm Done".

Figure 2

answer. This form also allows students to export their interview questions and answers so that they can review them.

To export to a spreadsheet, the user clicks the "Spreadsheet" button, and the questions and answers are saved to a new worksheet. To export to a new file, the user clicks the "Text File" button. A file dialog allows the user to specify a name and folder for the file to be saved in. This generates a .txt file with the questions and answers.

Discussion of Learning and Conceptual Difficulties Encountered

Through this project, I became much more familiar with user forms. The interview simulator uses many different user forms, and I learned a lot about how user forms interact with each other and with other parts of Excel. In my prior programming experiences, I always had trouble using a GUI. This project really helped me wrap my head around how to use graphical interfaces to interact with users.

I focused on making sure that I handled all possible errors. I tried to figure out ways to break my program, and then I would fix the problem that was causing the break down. At this point, I believe I have fixed all common problems.

I also feel like I learned a lot about using arrays. I got lots of practice looping through arrays and using correct indices to refer to array locations. In the current version of the interviewer, I use one array for questions and one array for answers, but if I were to rebuild the interviewer, I would practice using multi-dimensional arrays to store this information.

Something that would have made the interview simulator much more useful would have been the addition of voice recording. I spent a few hours trying to get voice recording to work using the `mciSendString` commands, but I was ultimately unsuccessful. The commands appear to work on a 64-bit machine running 64-bit Excel (Professor Allen's computer), but wouldn't work on other environments, including Macs. The current version of the interview simulator should be able to use all functions in all environments, except the ability to export the questions and answers to a text document.

Assistance

The only assistance I received was from Google. Sometimes, I didn't know what a certain property or method did, so I searched Google for the property or method. Also, I got the questions from various online sources. I visited with Professor Allen in hopes of getting the voice recording to work, but we were not successful.