# Career Paths

## Explaining Anthropology to People in Your Life

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AAN | EASA APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY NETWORK

aCRN anthropology
CAREER READINESS NETWORK

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# Anthropology Career Readiness Network (ACRN)

## Our Mission

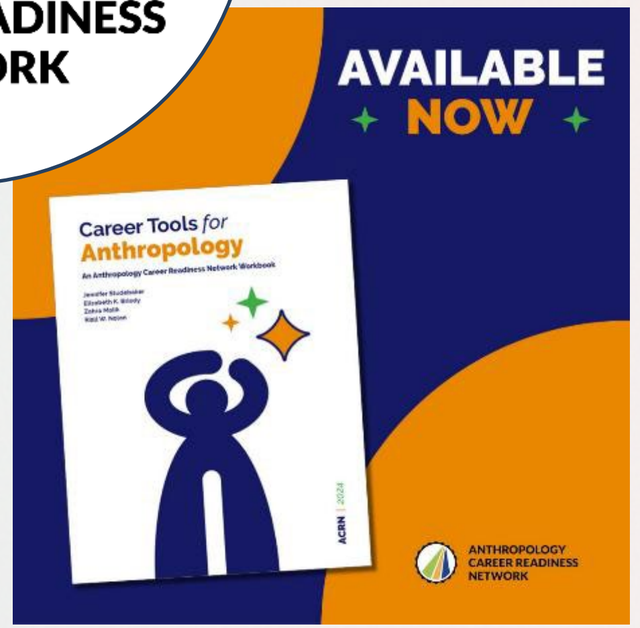
**Helping to prepare the next generation of anthropologists to meet tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.**

## Our Resources

- "How-to" Tools for Job Seekers and Instructors including our 2024 Workbook: *Career Tools for Anthropology*
- Speaker's Bureau
- World of Work Blog
- Client-based Class Projects
- Departmental Advisory Initiative

and more!

ANTHROPOLOGY CAREER READINESS NETWORK




anthrocareerready.net

# AGENDA

01 Introduction: Why Explain?

02 How to Explain: Context and Narrative

03 How Practitioners Explain Themselves

04 How Will YOU Explain Yourself?

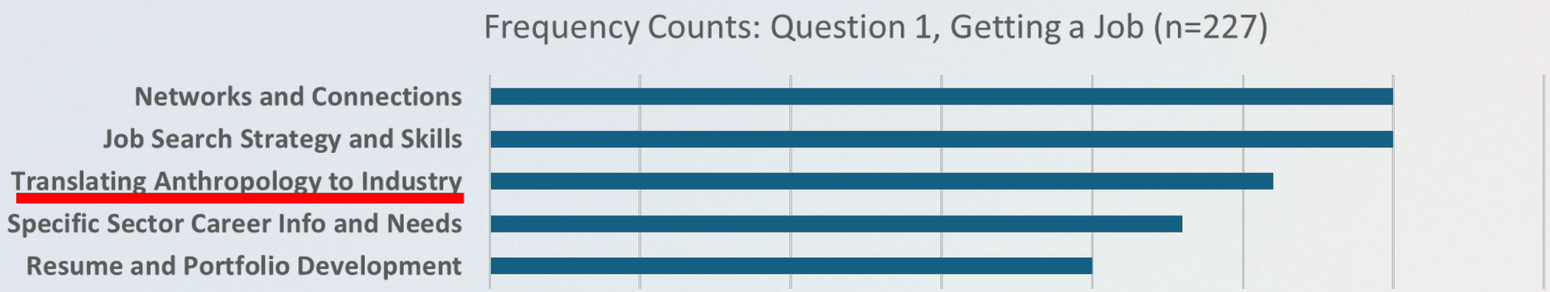
05 Discussion

06 closing

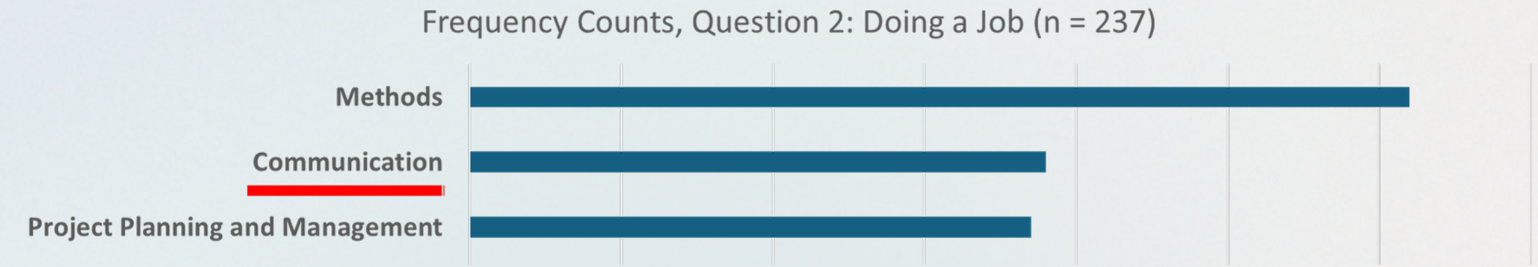
# Why Explain?

Students listed “communication with others” as one of their main training deficits.

## Practitioner Responses: Getting a Job




## Practitioner Responses: Doing a Job



Other survey results: Hiring managers were not so interested in anthropology but in how anthropology could help them in their work.

*“For magicians, achieving expertise is not in learning to perform a trick. Developing the technical skills to pull off illusions is only the very start of the journey of a professional magician. The real work of magic comes in developing the ability to perform illusions with an audience and then have that audience respond in ways that make them, and others want to pay money to see the show.*

*Learning to be a magician is different than learning to perform magic. In the same way, learning to thrive in a profession differs from learning to perform the discrete skills that professionals in the field must master. The real work of the expert is everything that happens around the skills.”*

A basic model for explaining ourselves to others takes ***context*** and ***narrative*** into account.

**Context** includes people like these:

- **Employers:** The folks who are going to make decisions about hiring you.
- **Clients:** People who have a lot of control over what you work on, how you work, and whether or not you get paid.
- **The general public:** People out beyond the clients. If you have things to say, how do they know you have any claim to expertise?

**Narratives** are stories which vary in length and content depending on the context.

- Successful narratives tend to be those which create a connection between you and your listener.
- Most listeners in the workplace are involved in some form of problem-solving.
- When creating a narrative:
  - Demonstrate your ability to solve problems.
  - Provide an example from your own experience or from the literature of practice.
  - Frame this example using the STAR method.

**STAR** = **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esults

Don't use ***anthro-babble***:

*"Although phrases such as 'cultural integration, cultural dynamics, [and] socio-cultural systems in contact' may roll off the tongue in a graduate seminar, this may come across as meaningless jargon to most project administrators unless such statements are explicitly connected with some recommended course of action."*

# Different contexts require different narratives:

**1. The Clueless Recruiter:** This person is vetting folks at a job fair, and passing along the better prospects to his boss for possible phone interviews. The recruiters aren't spending much time with each person (they're set up behind a booth, talking to whoever stops by for maybe 5-10 minutes tops), but they'll take your résumé and listen to your pitch.

They scan the top of the résumé , look up at you, and say: *"Huh. Anthropology. That's dinosaurs, right?"*

**2. The Harried Phone Interviewer:** You're on the phone with another recruiter, this time for a twenty-minute vetting call. They've identified you as a possible prospect, and now they're asking specific questions to establish what you know, and how you might be able to help them.

They say something like this: *"We sell [medical devices, airplanes, school supplies, paint and hardware] all over the Northeast. I took an anthropology course in college, so I know a little about your specialty. What I don't understand, frankly, is how someone with an anthropology degree can help us in our business."*

**3. The Group Interview:** You're talking to a small group of people now, maybe six to eight of them, none of whom you know. You're not even sure what they do, or what their individual expertise is. You might be in a conference room somewhere, or you might be on a video call. You'll be with them for up to an hour.

One of them says: *"As I'm sure you know, we're a non-profit involved in working with small business development. We also do a lot of retraining of people who've recently lost their jobs in the downturn."* She glances down at the papers in her hand. *"It says here you wrote your PhD thesis on how Vietnamese rice farmers make decisions about how to irrigate their fields."* She looks up. *"Maybe you could explain to us how all that relates to what we do here?"*

**4. The One-on-One with the Boss:** You've got the job. You were hired by a project manager, but now you're meeting the CEO for the first time. She says something like this: *"Shirley thought you'd be good for this position, and I've learned to trust Shirley. We're a pretty lean organization here, and to make it work, we all have to work together. Everybody's valuable, and everybody contributes. We've never hired an anthropologist before, so I have to ask you: what's the value-added that you're going to bring to Shirley's team?"*

**5. Meeting Your Work Team:** Now you're in the lunchroom with the rest of Shirley's team. The team is getting ready to bid on a training contract from the state government, and they're glad to have another body to help with the work. They're thinking of how to approach the training of recently unemployed men and women in the community. One of the team is an economist, one is a training specialist, one is a sociologist with expertise in surveys and data analysis. Over coffee and sandwiches, the team leader asks: *"How would you approach the question of training needs? What should we put in the proposal?"*

**6. Making Your Case to the Skeptics:** It's fifteen minutes later. You've been explaining the need for qualitative data on the target population and their needs, and arguing that the best way to begin is with a series of open-ended interviews and focused groups, coupled with on-site observation.

The sociologist and the economist don't agree. *"We've already got state unemployment statistics,"* the economist says. The sociologist chimes in. *"And if there are gaps in the data, we can do a sample survey, by phone or mail. What you're proposing will take too long, and all we'll get are a bunch of stories. Anecdotes, really – that's not real data. How's this going to help us?"*

The rest of the team is looking at you. What do you say?

**7. Convincing a Client:** It's one month later. Your team has made the short list for the state's training contract, and you've been sent down to the capital to meet with the contract officers to negotiate a "best and final." There are three of them sitting across the table from you, each with a copy of the proposal in hand.

The head of contracting speaks: *"We like this proposal quite a lot,"* he begins. *"But I'll be frank, it's more expensive than the other bids we got, mainly on account of all the interviewing and talking and such. We want to recommend that you guys get given the contract, but we also know that sooner or later, we're gonna get audited, and somebody's going to have to explain why we thought it was a good idea to conduct so many interviews, spend so much time talking to people in the community. Help us out here, if you can – help us justify the expense of this thing."*

**8. Presenting to an Audience:** A year later, you're in front of a group of townspeople in the auditorium of the municipal building. The training project has been a huge success – more than 85% of the program participants managed to get jobs, most of them at or above their previous wage levels. You've prepared a short speech for them about the training program and why it was successful. You want to explain, in other words, that it was the approach your team used that was one of the main reasons for the program's success. And the reason you want to explain this to people is so that they can do this again, in the future, for other similar community issues.

With all that in mind, you've planned on speaking for no more than ten minutes. What do you say to them?

# Explaining Anthropology to Others: Exercise

You will be practicing in small groups. We will be placing you into breakout rooms.

1. Take **5 minutes** to decide which of the eight scenarios you want to practice and to formulate a response. Jot down notes to help you if you want.

2. When you're done, each take a turn to try the response. Take no more than **2 minutes each** to deliver your response.

3. Take **6 minutes** to discuss your responses and give each other feedback.
(What worked? Where is there room for improvement?)

1. **The Clueless Recruiter**
2. **The Harried Phone Interviewer**
3. **The Group Interview**
4. **The One-on-One with the Boss**
5. **Meeting Your Work Team**
6. **Making Your Case to the Skeptics**
7. **Convincing a Client**
8. **Presenting to an Audience**

# DISCUSSION

Raise hand, ask in chat, or
use Q&A feature.

# FEEDBACK

Share your thoughts!

https://tinyurl.com/CP180625

**Submit a topic**:
www.padlet.com/careerpaths/aan

**Watch the recordings**:
www.tinyurl.com/AANCPYT

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# Career Paths

## Anthropology Beyond Academia

*An event series by the*

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