

Top Ten Interview Mistakes

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Interview Mistakes

I took a poll of several hundred human resource and hiring managers and asked their opinion on what the ten worst interview mistakes were. The following were the answers. I was surprised by a few of them, and some of the ones I would have included didn't make it to this list, but it's a good start. Many of these transgressions are no brainers, and yet, candidates continue to get it wrong. Quite often it costs them the job offer, which ends up going to a person with less qualifications. These are simple things, so take a look and make sure nothing on this list disqualifies you on your next interview.

10. Don't forget to turn off your phone.

I know this should go without saying, but I can't tell you the number of times—still—that I have clients tell me they were in the middle of an interview and the candidate's phone rang. This is an easy one, people. Don't mess it up.

9. Don't Use Offensive Language.

I'm not talking about dropping the "f-bomb" here. I know you're smarter than that. What I'm referring to is making sure you don't use politically or socially insensitive language. And while you're at it, remember you should *never* mention religion. This is one that I wouldn't have thought would be anywhere near the top of the list, and yet here it is at number nine.

8. Don't Let Body Language Rule You Out

I'm one of those people that think judging someone based on body language is ridiculous. But my opinion doesn't matter because I'm not the one hiring you. It's sad, but the vast majority of interview teams base at least part of their assessment on how they interpret a candidate's body language. So make certain you maintain good eye contact, don't slouch, be expressive, and let your interest in the position show.

7. Don't Come To the Interview Without Questions

Common sense will tell you to be prepared for everything. But it's suicide to come without having done some research on the company and coming up with a list of questions to ask. When an interviewer asks you, "Do you have any questions?" You better have a list handy. They aren't usually interested in the actual content of the questions, but they *do* want to see how deep you dug in your preparation. Almost every person I polled had this on their list at one rank or another.

6. Don't Say Anything Negative

It's usually best to keep all conversation on a positive note, but this applies specifically to your former boss, co-workers, company, and anyone else that you did business with. This is one of the deal-killer type offenses. One mess up could ensure another candidate gets the offer.

5. Don't ask about compensation.

When I say this, I don't mean just salary. If this is the first interview, keep the focus on the position and your fit for it. Don't ask about salary, bonuses, stock options, vacation, or anything else related to the compensation package. There will be time enough for that later. When you ask about compensation at this stage, the company thinks that's all you're interested in.

4. Don't Relate Personal Details.

When they ask questions, don't respond with examples from your personal life. If they ask about your greatest accomplishment, don't tell them it's your 2 handicap, or that you run in marathons. Keep it focused on the job and the position they are trying to fill. Despite the fact that the company invited you for an interview, they aren't really interested in hearing about your personal life.

3. Don't Be Late.

Most hiring managers agree that being late is one of the most grievous sins. They have scheduled an entire team around your interview. Most of the people you'll be interviewing with are busy. They can't afford to have their schedule thrown out of whack because you're late. Don't make your plans around "getting there on time." Make plans to get there at least fifteen minutes ahead of time in case something happens. If all goes well you'll be early, and there's nothing wrong with that.

2. Don't Be Perfect.



Angel

One question that almost always gets asked is, "What is your greatest weakness?" Make sure that you answer this honestly, and appropriately. Do not tell them you work too hard, or anything like that. Don't try to cover up by citing a strength as a weakness. I devoted a separate chapter in my book on this topic alone. It's that important.

1. Don't Lie.

This might seem like a strange one for the top of the list, but it is absolutely *dumbfounding* how many people continue to lie on resumes, and in interviews. The worst part of it, is that most of the time the "horrible things" people are trying to cover up aren't that horrible. They are common mistakes or events that happen to millions of people. If handled properly, it would almost always be a nothing for concern. But when people lie about something, and then it's discovered, it turns into a deal killer. In fact, lying on applications and/or resumes has been the grounds for dismissal far too often.

If you remember one thing on this list, remember #1. *Don't lie.*