

HOW TO MESS UP AN INTERVIEW.....

Hear the one about the job candidate who brushed her hair during an interview? Or the man who sniffed his armpits on the way into the interview room?

They may sound like jokes but these are two of the top 10 gaffes to feature in an annual survey of the most outrageous interview mistakes by candidates compiled by AN online job site.

The list, based on a survey of 3 061 US hiring managers and human resources professionals by a research company, found the top 10 most outrageous mistakes were:

- Candidate answered cellphone and asked the interviewer to leave her own office because it was a "private" conversation.
- Candidate told the interviewer he wouldn't be able to stay with the job long because he thought he might get an inheritance if his uncle died - and his uncle wasn't "looking too good".
- Candidate asked the interviewer for a ride home after the interview.
- Candidate smelled his armpits on the way to the interview room.
- Candidate said she could not provide a writing sample because all of her writing had been for the CIA and it was "classified".
- Candidate told the interviewer he was fired for beating up his last boss.
- When an applicant was offered food before the interview, he declined saying he didn't want to line his stomach with grease before going out drinking.
- A candidate for an accounting position said she was a "people person" not a "numbers person".
- Candidate flushed the toilet while talking to interviewer during phone interview.
- Candidate took out a hair brush and brushed her hair.

As well as asking about the most unusual blunders, employers were also asked about the most common and detrimental mistakes candidates made during an interview.

More than half said dressing inappropriately was the biggest mistake a candidate could make in an interview.

Talking negatively about a current or previous employer came in second at 49 percent and third in the list at 48 percent was appearing disinterested.

Other mistakes included appearing arrogant, not providing specific answers, and not asking good questions.

"If a candidate is overly negative, plays the blame game, is easily frazzled or doesn't come prepared, it usually sends up a red flag for employers, " said CareerBuilder.com spokesperson

PREPARING FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH....

Creating your CV

- Keep in mind that CV's are typically reviewed in 2 minutes.
- Your CV is a marketing tool, the purpose of which is to generate enough interest in you to have an employer WANT set up an interview for you.
- Determine your career objective. Your CV will come across focussed if the content is structured around your career objective.
- Use short bulleted sentences rather than lengthy paragraphs so that the reader can quickly scan through your resume and still absorb it.
- Begin each bulleted sentence with an action word or verb like prepared, developed and presented.
- Look at the advertised position that interests you and use the key words listed in the ads in your CV.
- Determine your strengths that support your job and search objectives and put them at the top of the list where they are more likely to be read.
- Sell yourself clearly and concisely through your CV.
- Use buzzwords/jargon that show you have competence in your field.
- Put the focus of your career history on the duties that support your objective. Do not add negative or irrelevant personal information.
- Make sure that you provide details of all activities since leaving school, without leaving any periods unaccounted for. Add dates
- Do not limit the length of your CV, but rather structure your CV to help the reader to scan through your CV efficiently and effectively.
- Collect professional references, and you may want to get alternate contact information in case they too have a change of position. If possible, collect letters of recommendation as well.
- Information such as religion, affiliations (other than those of a professional nature) or any other personal information, unless it relates specifically to the job you are seeking, should be excluded.
- Use a font size of 10 points or bigger and use 100% page size.
- Never type your CV in all uppercase. It is very difficult to read it.
- Use professional language and make sure that your grammar and spelling is correct.
- Answer the Basic Profile clearly that you will find on the website or that was sent to you when you initially applied and answer ALL the questions. This is sent to the client. Do not forget to state which position you are applying for or to rate yourself to the job spec and to give a detailed skills matrix

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Diarise the location and time of the interview, the interviewer's full name and designation.
- Research the company and their website.
- Prepare the questions you want to ask.
- Refresh your memory about your previous employment and your work history.
- Think carefully about your achievements and how to describe them.
- Practice your interviewing skills with a friend, relative, or co-worker a day or two before the interview to sharpen your communication skills.
- Familiarise yourself with the job spec

Typical questions you could prepare:

- A detailed description of the position.
- Why the position is available.
- What is the culture of the company?
- Anticipated induction and training programmes.
- Company growth plans.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Before going to an interview, you need to know as much as possible about the company. You'll need to know:

- Where the company's offices are.
- What their products or services are.
- The growth rate of the company.
- What the potential is for future growth.
- How secure is the company?
- Does the company have a good business model?
- *The Culture* - Environments vary from company to company. Know what kind of environment you are looking for. A start-up will have a very different feel from a large, established, corporate company. There are generally longer hours in a start-up and a lot more pressure as well as a 'fly by the seat of the pants' feel to it. While in a larger corporation there are more procedures and red tape but the 'feel' is more secure.
- *Never* phone the company directly. Call your consultant with any questions that you might have.

Where to look for company information:

- *The Company's Website* - You will feel more confident going into the interview if you have thoroughly researched their company's website, how their company works, and the management. Most companies have an 'about us' section where they list management personnel as well as press releases. This is a good way to get the company's history.

TYPICAL QUESTION ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW

- What kind of job are you looking for?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you know about the company?
- What are your qualifications?
- Why are you leaving your present employer?
- What would your current company have to offer you to stay?
- Describe your most recent job performance evaluation.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
- Describe your ideal position.
- Describe a situation where you were under pressure and how you responded to it.
- What do you think your referees would say about you?
- What motivates you?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- Describe a situation where you felt really happy?
- Describe a situation at work where you had to really apply your integrity?
- What is your ideal working environment?

WHAT NOT TO DO IN AN INTERVIEW

- Don't arrive late or too early.
- Don't arrive flustered and unkempt.
- Don't be poorly prepared for the interview.
- Don't chew gum, fidget in your chair, pick at your cuticles, hum, tap your foot, avoid eye contact or enter the interview smelling of cigarettes (or alcohol).
- Don't do anything that might give the impression that you are a nervous, neurotic mess.
- Don't sit down until you are offered a chair.
- Don't be overly friendly or too familiar with the interviewee.
- Don't talk too much about personal circumstances.
- Don't swear or use other inappropriate language.

- Don't make derogatory remarks about your present or past employers.
- Don't answer questions with a simple yes or no. Explain yourself further as much as possible.
- Don't answer a question without thinking about it. It is okay to sit and consider an answer.
- Don't rattle on for hours.
- Don't lie. Answer as truthfully and fully as possible.
- Don't inquire about salary, holidays, bonuses, office size, social nights, or retirement in the initial interview. These questions should be kept for later. An interview is not the appropriate place to haggle over money.
- Don't indulge in small talk at the end of the interview unless the interviewer initiates it.
- At the end of the interview thank the interviewer for their time and firmly shake their hand remember to use the person's name when saying goodbye and look them in the eyes.
- Don't be discouraged if you're not offered the job at the end of the interview, this seldom happens and you will usually be called in for a number of follow up interviews

WHAT TO DO IN AN INTERVIEW

- Go into the interview with the aim of getting an offer - you can always think it over and turn it down later.
- Feel confident about yourself and be prepared for your interview, this will help you to answer questions in a concise and relevant way, and will enable you to demonstrate your knowledge of the company and a real interest in the position.
- Double-check the address and time. Notify your agent if you are going to be late.
- Dress in an appropriate manner. A neat, professional, tidy outfit that you feel comfortable wearing is always apropos for a job interview. It is usually wise to err on the conservative side, however if you're applying for a fashion and design job, you could show a visual flair. Don't be afraid to show a touch of originality, but don't dress out of character.
- Bring a pen and paper and your portfolio or examples of work done (if applicable) to the interview. Your recruitment consultant would have provided the interviewer with your CV.
- Arrive early for the interview, giving yourself plenty of time to find parking and get into the building without rushing.
- Be professional and polite with everyone. When you arrive, state clearly who you are and who you are there to see.
- Smile - it will relax you and make others receptive to what you have to say.
- Greet the interviewers as Mr and Mrs or Ms (listen out for the title) and their surname. Only call them by their first names if they tell you to do so.
- Present a firm handshake to the interviewer, but without breaking their fingers.
- Wait until you are offered a seat before sitting.

- Sit upright in your chair, and look enthusiastic and interested throughout.
- Be a good listener as well as a good talker.
- Remember to always smile.
- Look the interviewer in the eye while talking. Eye contact will make you appear confident and will help your interviewer to feel comfortable with you.
- Avoid the temptation to be too informal, even if your interviewer has a relaxed and friendly style.
- Be positive and polite about any delays during interview.
- Follow the interviewer's leads but try to obtain a full description of the position and duties expected, so that you can relay your appropriate background and skills.
- Convey your good points to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner.
- Keep in mind that only you can sell yourself and make the interviewer aware of the potential benefits that you can offer the organisation.
- Answer questions truthfully and clearly.
- If the interviewer asks an open-ended question, try to narrow down the focus by asking a more specific question in return so that you can answer his question more appropriately.
- Don't be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to consult with colleagues first or interview other candidates before making a decision.
- If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show.
- When the job interview is concluded, thank the interviewer for the time, stand up and extend your hand.

SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

- Try and avoid discussing salary in the first interview, first let the interviewer get a taste of what you are about. The main thing is to first get a foot in the door before you even start negotiating.
- If the interviewer insists on bringing it up, be honest and truthful about your current package as pay slips are required for proof of current earnings.
- When asked what you require, mention that you would like between a 10-20% increase on your current package.
- Try and talk in 'cost to company' amounts so that the interviewer is able to compare apples to apples. Cost to Company refers to your basic plus all your benefits, which includes the company's contributions to pension, medical aid and group life cover.
- Be realistic about what you ask for. While greed is an unattractive trait, don't sell yourself short either.
- If you are going through an agency it is definitely preferable to get the agency to negotiate on your behalf.

THE FUNCTION OF A RECRUITER

There are a number of reasons why a company would use a recruiter to source candidates:

- Often the human resources department is too small to handle the entire HR function so they prefer to outsource the job search. Recruitment consultancies will concentrate solely on the job search and thus deliver qualified candidates faster.
- Recruiters have more experience in advertising and picking candidates from CVs. Because this is their sole responsibility they are able to spend more time interviewing candidates and picking the right person for the right job.
- They can offer objective opinions on the industry for any job opening. Recruiters easily obtain salary information for positions.
- Companies can depend on a recruiter's expertise to qualify the proper candidates for specialized positions. This is helpful when no one internally knows what they're looking for in candidates.
- If the human resources department is in a different location to where the hiring is needed, a recruiter close by will assist with the hiring requirements.
- When a firm needs to replace a person, recruiters keep this information confidential from other employees within the company.
- The most important thing for a company is to hire the right person for the job. Hiring the wrong person, especially at an executive level, can be extremely expensive to rectify.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- The consultant will contact the company to ascertain the required skills for the position, requesting a written job spec. Usually the consultant will also go and visit the offices of the client so he/she can understand the corporate culture.
- The consultant will then work quickly and collect resumes by placing an ad or contacting candidates on the database and then will interview the candidates that have not already been screened.
- A shortlist of potential candidates is then drawn up and their CV' s are emailed to the client.
- The client then interviews the candidates. More often than not there are at least two interviews before an offer is made.
- Once the candidate is placed the consultant will follow-up with the candidate and the company to ensure they are working well together.