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Interview Mistakes

Avoid These Interview Bloopers

Talking too much: Over-talking takes a couple of forms:

- Taking too long to answer direct questions. The impression: This candidate just can't get to the point.
- Nervous talkers. The impression: This candidate is covering up something or is outright lying.

To avoid either of these forms of over-talking, practice answering questions in a direct manner. Avoid nervous talking by preparing for your interview with role-play

Talking negatively about current or past employers/managers: The fastest way to talk yourself out of a new job is to say negative things, especially about a current or previous employer. Even if your last boss was Attila the Hun, never, never state your ill feelings about him/her. No matter how reasonable your complaints, you will come out the loser if you show that you disrespect your boss because the interviewer will assume that you would similarly trash him or her. When faced with the challenge of talking about former employers, make sure you are prepared with a positive spin on your experiences.

Asking about benefits, vacation time or salary: What if a car salesman asked to see your credit report before allowing you to test drive the cars? That would be ridiculous, and you'd walk away in disgust. The effect is about the same when a job-seeker asks about benefits or other employee perks during the first interview. Wait until you've won the employer over before beginning that discussion.

Not preparing for the interview: Nothing communicates disinterest like a candidate who hasn't bothered to do pre-interview research. On the flip side, the quickest way to a good impression is to demonstrate your interest with a few well thought out questions that reflect your knowledge of their organization

Verbal ticks: An ill-at-ease candidate seldom makes a good impression. The first signs of nervousness are verbal ticks. We all have them from time to time -- "umm," "like," "you know." Ignore the butterflies in your stomach and put up a front of calm confidence by avoiding verbal ticks. You can also sometimes avoid verbal ticks by pausing for a few seconds to gather your thoughts before each response.

One of the best ways to reduce or eliminate them is through role-play. Practice sharing your best success stories ahead of time, and you'll feel more relaxed during the real interview.

Failure to match communication styles: It's almost impossible to make a good first impression if you can't communicate effectively with an interviewer. But you can easily change that situation by mirroring the way the interviewer treats you. For instance:

- If the interviewer seems all business, don't attempt to loosen him/her up with a joke or story. Be succinct and businesslike.
- If the interviewer is personable, try discussing his/her interests.
- If asked a direct question, answer directly. Then follow up by asking if more information is needed.

Allowing the interviewer to set the tone of conversation can vastly improve your chances of making a favorable impression. You can put the interviewer at ease -- and make yourself seem more like him or her -- by mirroring his or her communication style.