

Hiring Managers Reveal the Most Memorable Mistakes Candidates Made During Interviews in CareerBuilder.com Survey

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What's the biggest blunder you ever made during a job interview? Fall asleep? Put on makeup? How about try to sell the interviewer your car? In a survey of over 600 hiring managers completed in March 2005, CareerBuilder.com asked respondents to share the most memorable mistakes that caused them to pass on a particular candidate. Richard Castellini, CareerBuilder.com's Senior Career Advisor, offers the following survey highlights and tips:

#1 - There's No Crying in Baseball ... or Interviews

Examples:

"Candidate got so nervous, she cried."

"Candidate argued with the interviewer, got up and left. The best part is he called later to see if he got the job."

Tip: Take a deep breath and keep your emotions in check. While interviews can be nerve-wracking, employers are looking for candidates who show grace under pressure at all times.

#2 - It Doesn't Take a Village

Examples:

"Candidate brought her kids with her."

"Candidate brought his mom."

Tip: An invitation for a job interview never states bring a guest. Having someone tag along for moral support puts your independence into question (even if Mom is your biggest fan). And, if your babysitter cancels on you, reschedule the interview for a day you can arrive alone and focused.

#3 - Curbing Your Enthusiasm

Examples:

"Candidate disclosed she only wanted the job for the employee discount."

"Candidate asked for directions to another interview."

"Candidate removed his hearing aid."

Tip: The answer to "Why do you want to work here?" should always focus on the strengths of the company and the challenge of the position, not the perks. A "take or leave it" attitude about the job will leave the employer feeling the same about you.

#4 - Etiquette Shmetiquette

Examples:

"Candidate forgot what position she was applying for, but wanted to know how soon she could have my office."

"Candidate said you must be busy because your office is really messy."

Tip: Mind your i's -- never insult, interrupt, or irritate the interviewer. Offering up a blank stare when the interviewer asks why you are the right fit for the job will not go over well. Come in prepared to discuss how your qualifications can specifically contribute to the success of the company and always be respectful of the interviewer's time and position.

#5 - Hugh Hefner Called, He Wants His Pants Back

Examples:

"Candidate came in wearing pajama bottoms and flip flops."

"Candidate arrived in a revealing shirt."

Tip: Don't dress for the disco ... or nap time for that matter. You only have one chance to make a first impression. It's always better to err on the conservative with a business suit or, depending on the gig, a pair of khakis and a button-down shirt.

#6 - Did You Hear the One About ... ?

Examples:

"Candidate's opening comment was a dirty joke."

"Candidate sang the national anthem to make himself memorable. Well, he was memorable."

Tip: Know your audience. Opening the conversation with a joke, limerick, song and dance or other antics can put your professionalism into question. Remember, interviews are not only to decide if you're qualified, but if your future co-workers can handle working with you every day.

#7 - Made in the Shade-ee

Examples:

"Candidate inquired about the location of the company's security cameras."

"Candidate admitted she would not pass the mandatory drug test."

Tip: If the employer suspects drug use or that you are more interested in the combination to the company safe than the job, chances are your resume will end up in the "shady file." Be careful of word choice, clean up your act and always present yourself in the best light.

8 - Last Call

Examples:

"Candidate brought wine to the interview and offered me a glass."

"Candidate made a pass at the hiring manager."

Tip: Easy, Casanova. Asking the interviewer personal questions or suggesting that you finish the conversation over a nightcap is a sure-fire short-cut to the exit sign. The word you want is appropriate -- appropriate in words, action and body language.

Survey Methodology

The CareerBuilder.com survey, "Top Interview Mistakes 2005," was conducted from February 24 to March 3, 2005. Methodology used to collect survey responses totaling more than 600 hiring managers for this study involved selecting a random sample of comScore Networks panel members. These Web Panel members were approached via an e-mail invitation, which asked them to participate in a short online survey. The results of this survey are statistically accurate to within +/- 3.89 percentage points (19 times out of 20).

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