

How to Lose the Job in the Interview: Top Five Sins to Commit

1. Be late.

- Failing to arrive on time (or even better, a few minutes early) indicates that you: a) don't appreciate the importance of this opportunity; b) have no respect or consideration for other people's time; c) are disorganized, scattered and ill prepared for a professional meeting.

2. Be focused on compensation.

- If the only reason you're interviewing is to find out how much you'll be paid and what the benefits are, you aren't presenting yourself as a team member. Instead, you're basically telling them that you are self-focused, greedy, and don't recognize that a job is more than the salary. This is an opportunity, not just a way to pay the rent.

3. Be an "A" ... as in arrogant, apathetic, alone

- *Arrogance* is confidence on steroids. You need to highlight your strengths and your achievements, but don't present yourself as better than your interviewer. They have the authority to hire you or not. They are most interested in what you can learn, how quickly you can learn, and how you might fit into the existing team.
- *Apathy* ... Now is the time to drop that attitude. Show passion for the position. No employer wants someone who is flat-lining. If you don't care, why should they?
- *Alone*... unless you are interviewing for a position as a hermit, you will be expected to work—nicely—with others. It's great to be an independent thinker, have the confidence to make your own decisions, but you still have to work on teams, lead others, and report to others regardless of your career path. No one works alone every day.

4. Be unready.

- Why would you walk into an exam without having studied? Similarly, why would you go into an interview not knowing anything about the organization? Do some research: what are the product/service lines; chief competition; trends in the industry; major goals? Knowing all this will separate you from other candidates—who might in fact be better qualified—but because you did the research, you're positioning yourself as someone who already "knows" about the organization.
- Why would you agree to give a presentation but not prepare your speech? Similarly, why would you go into an interview without having thought about the questions you may be asked? Be able to identify the *type* of question being asked, and the key *topic* of the question; then you'll be able to respond appropriately. Employment questions fall into three categories:
 - *Fact checking*: ask you to confirm/clarify some fact you've presented in your application materials. Example: "Your resume indicates that you're fluent in German. Where did you learn this language?"
 - *Situational*: ask you to imagine a situation, and how you'd likely react. These are used to probe your ability to project yourself into a situation... "Let's suppose you are working with a group of children on a concentrated activity, and there's a fire alarm. What would you do?" They will judge you on the specificity of your response, the logic of it and how it blends with what they themselves would do.
 - *Behavioral*: the best type of question, and used by skilled interviewers. Behavioral questions ask you to relate detailed examples of how you acted in specific situations. Then, the interviewer is able to "predict" how you might respond to a similar situation on the job. "Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a goal." "Give me an example of when your leadership style didn't work." "Provide an example of how you multi-task, especially when priorities are shifting."
- Why would you go on a date with someone and not think about what you want to know about them? An interview is a two-way conversation—you need to ask questions to find out if the job, if the place, is right for you. Ask about mentoring, professional development, how you'd be evaluated, or the general daily work environment.

5. Be unprofessional

- Studies show that we judge others based on the first 30 seconds of initial contact... here's what gets judged:
 - *Grooming* (if you look extreme, too trendy, too young, that's a mistake)
 - *Handshake* (if your handshake is limp, sloppy, weak, too strong, two-handed... all are mistakes)
 - *Facial Expression and Eye Contact* (if you fail to smile and look them in the eye, that's a mistake)
 - *Vocal Clarity* (if you are monotone, mumbly, giggly, hesitant, that's a mistake)
 - *Odor* (if you smell—good or bad—that's a mistake)
 - *Opening Statements* (if you fail to say hello, state your name, thank them for the opportunity and express your interest, that's a mistake)