

Five Deadly Interview Mistakes – Tip 11

If you are getting interviews but not getting the job, you may be making one or more common interview mistakes. Here are the top five that interviewers say causes them to screen candidates out.

1. Thinking the interview is about you.

In an effort to make sure they get their message across, some interviewees monopolize the conversation with long-winded responses, focusing on how they can enhance their skills and expand their experience. What you really want is a balanced interview with you talking no more than 60% of the time.

Keep in mind that the interviewers are not interested in enhancing your skills or broadening your experiences. They will be trying to assess whether you already possess the know-how they need and how well you might fit into the company's organizational culture. When you answer a question, limit your responses to two minutes. If they want you to give an example or provide other information, they'll ask for it.

2. Failing to translate your skills and experience.

You use words and examples that are common to your function or industry and assume interviewers will understand them or be able to translate them to applications in their industry.

Initial interviewers may not be familiar with the acronyms and terms specific to your previous jobs and, as a result, they might assume you communicate poorly with non-technical people. Don't expect your interviewers to translate your experience to apply to their industry. That will be your task. You need to use terms and analogous descriptions they will understand in the context of their industry or type of work.

3. Being unprepared.

True, sometimes interviewers aren't prepared themselves, but that doesn't mean they'll forgive you for the same mistake.

The obvious preparation is researching the company on the Internet and in the news and talking to someone who has some inside knowledge about the company. If it's a publicly-held company, check out annual and quarterly reports filed with the SEC. The not-so-obvious preparation is to anticipate what they'll be asking you about: your strengths and weaknesses, why you left your last company, why you chose your career path, and what your positive and negative work experiences have been.

4. Lacking candor.

When they ask about your weaknesses, you can't think of any or you try to describe how you overcame them. Worse still, you say you haven't given it a lot of thought. Mistakes? Not you. You rose through the ranks and never made mistakes.

No one progresses in a career without having some weaknesses and learning from their mistakes. Trained interviewers will be looking to see if you readily acknowledge and admit your weaknesses and can describe mistakes you've made and what you learned from them. Adding a humorous story about a mistake you made, how others may have chided you about it afterward, and what you took away from the experience can endear you to an interviewer. When confronted with a tough interview question about your past, don't give a measured response that sugarcoats reality, as interviewers will quickly see it as disingenuous.

5. Not asking any questions.

The interview is coming to a close and the interviewer inquires as to whether you have any questions. You reply that you don't, or you ask a few insignificant questions that you could have easily answered if you'd visited the company's website or knew anything about the company or its industry. Unless you're the only qualified candidate, your job prospects with this company are probably small.

Interviews are two-sided events. The employer wants to determine whether you're the right person for the business, and you need to know if the employer is the right one for you. Always take a note pad with you when you go for an interview.

Prepare your questions and write them on your note pad. You want the interviewer to see that you have prepared questions. Keep in mind there are only three things interviewers are trying to assess about you:

- Do you have the right skills and experience to do the job we want done?
- Do you have the personal characteristics that will fit in with our organization's culture?
- Do I believe that you have been candid with me and that what you are telling me is the truth?

The above mistakes are not listed in order but are all equally critical to an interviewer forming an opinion about your suitability for them.

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