

How to Impress Hiring Managers – Tip 4

Attending an interview with the intent to impress the hiring manager is a misplaced objective. That is not to say that you don't want to impress an interviewer but there are right and wrong ways to go about it. Here are some common mistakes people make, along with ways to avoid them and leave a positive impression.

Understand that the interview is NOT just about you

One of the most common mistakes people make is monopolizing the conversation. In an effort to "get their message across", they give long-winded responses and focus on how they can enhance their skills and expand their experience.

You want a balanced interview with you talking no more than 60% of the time. Keep in mind that the interview is at their request and they are not interested in you enhancing your skills or broadening your experience. They will be trying to assess whether you already possess the skills and experience to do what they want and how well they think you can fit into their organizational culture. When responding to questions, limit your responses to two minutes. If they want more information or want you to give an example, they'll ask.

Translate your skills and experience

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

If you are interviewing for a position that uses some technical acronyms or terms, do not assume the interviewer will understand what you are saying. The initial interviewer may not be familiar with the terms you use and, hence, may not think you communicate well to non-technical people. If you describe your industry experience using language that is different from the industry where you are interviewing, don't expect them to translate your experience to their industry. That will be your task. You need to use words or analogous descriptions they will understand in their industry.

Be prepared

Another of the most common mistakes people make is to go to an interview without adequate preparation. Interviewers may not be prepared and that is unfortunate but you not being prepared will be unforgiving!

The obvious preparation for you is to do research about the company – on the Internet, in the news, talking to someone who has some inside knowledge about the company, and checking out annual and quarterly reports filed with the SEC, if they are a publicly-held

company. The not-so-obvious preparation is to anticipate the questions they will be asking you, such as what are your strengths and weaknesses, why were you let go at your last company, why did you choose your career path, and many other behavioral-type questions where they'll be asking you to share your positive and negative work experiences.

Be candid

You can't think of any personal weaknesses, you've overcome your weaknesses, or 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 their career without making mistakes and learning from them. 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.

Ask thoughtful questions

The interview is coming to a close and the interviewer asks you if 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 visited their website or knew anything about their company or their industry. Unless you were the only qualified candidate, your job prospects with this company probably just ended.

Interviews are two-sided events. The employer wants to know whether you are the right person for them and you need to know if the employer is the right one for you. Always take a notepad with you when you go for an interview. Prepare your questions and write them on your notepad. You want the interviewer to see that you have questions.

Keep in mind there are only three things interviewers really want to know about you:

1. Do you have the right skills and experience to do the job we think we want done?
2. Do you have the personal characteristics that will fit in with our organization's culture?
3. From what I hear you say, do I believe you are telling me the truth?

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