

Top 5 Interview Mistakes

Being told that you were unsuccessful in interview is a brutal blow but it is important to view each interview as a learning experience, quickly identify where you fell down and make the necessary changes to ensure that next time round you get over the line. To help you critically assess your performance, I have outlined below the five most common interview mistakes.

Not getting specific

Talking in generalities is the death knell of any interview. To get the interest of your future employer, you will need to give strong, concrete examples of your strengths, highlighting your achievements in quantifiable terms. For example- if you are outlining you change management skills – back it up with an example of where you reorganised the work flow of a team and by what percentage this increased productivity/ quality/ efficiencies. Once an employer can visualise your contribution, you will capture their undivided attention!

Thinking it is all about you

In a recessionary environment, employers take a risk adverse approach to recruitment and need to be reassured that you tick all their boxes. So when asked the question “Why did you apply for this position?” instead of focusing on how the role would enhance your skill set and how you would love the opportunity to work in a multinational company; you should focus on how closely your experience and skill set matches their requirements and how you could quickly hit the ground running.

Discussing Salary

Avoid the salary issue, particularly in first interview. Your goal at this stage is to convince the employer that you are the ideal candidate – once they have bought into you, then salary can be broached. If you are asked the direct question – “what are your salary expectations?”, subtly side step the issue by highlighting this is an important career move for you and that money is not your main driver.

Not researching the company

Why is this important? Let's face it, we all have egos – even large corporations. Showing you have taken the time to research an organisation not only is very flattering, it also shows that you have a genuine interest in them and have invested time in getting background information in them, their competitors and the industry sector. It helps position you in a more strategic, commercial light which will prove that not only are you good for the immediate role but that you could be groomed for future development in the company.

Know Thy Self

When we have been in a job for a number of years, we learn from our vast experience, react intuitively to situations and instinctively know the correct action to take. However, for the purposes of an interview we need to reflect on our behaviour, break down what processes we followed and examine the reasons why we pursued a particular course of action. It is only by reflecting on and understanding our own behaviour that we will be able to convince an employer that we have the required skill sets for a job. For example, if

asked to describe a situation where you worked under significant pressure – the employer is not simply interested in the situation and outcome – instead they will be focusing on the tools you used to effectively manage this pressure (prioritising, organisational skills, delegation, keeping a calm head etc).

Conclusion:

Interviewing is an acquired skill and it takes time and effort to perfect your technique. By being open to constructive feedback and ready to learn from your mistakes, success will soon follow.

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of *Interview Techniques*, a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with *Irish Jobs* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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