

# **How NOT to Act in an Oral Interview**

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## **The Trauma of the Interview**

- ◆ Sitting in front of one or more people
- ◆ Answering questions spontaneously and articulately
- ◆ All the while looking cool, calm and collected?
- ◆ I can't do that!

## **My Experience**

- ◆ I have been both the interviewer and the interviewee
- ◆ As an interviewer, I am discouraged by the lack of interviewing skills
- ◆ It is not based on any scientific studies or academic research
- ◆ It is practical advice for you to use right away

## **Don't Just Show Up!**

- ◆ Put together a list of commonly asked questions
  - There are many web sites that have sample questions
  - Ask your co-workers if they can remember questions they have been asked

## **Don't Just Show Up!**

- ◆ Why do you want this job?
  - Avoid the common platitudes: "I want to serve the public." or "People are comfortable talking to me."
- ◆ Why do you want to work for that agency in particular?
- ◆ Why do you like dispatching?

## **Do You Know What the Job is?**

- ◆ Surf the Internet
  - Web Site
  - News articles
  - Minutes from Board Meetings
- ◆ Ask people who might know something about the agency
- ◆ Call the agency and ask to speak to someone
- ◆ Visit the agency before your interview

## **Don't Just Throw Something On!**

- ◆ Business attire is most appropriate
- ◆ Don't try to dress better than the interviewers
- ◆ Never think that the casual look is "in"
- ◆ Look at yourself in a mirror before your interview - front and back
- ◆ Try not to bring a briefcase or purse
- ◆ Put your car keys in a pocket or leave them with the receptionist
- ◆ Leave your sunglasses in the car
- ◆ Minimal cologne or perfume
- ◆ No gum, candy, or cigarettes
- ◆ Do your best to hide visible body piercings (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.) or tats
- ◆ If you are still not sure how to dress for the interview, call and ask!
- ◆ Call Human Resources
- ◆ You run the risk of someone in HR thinking you are a social imbecile
- ◆ A lot better than having the Hiring Manager distracted by inappropriate interview dress
- ◆ Give the same time and attention to your shoes
- ◆ Those who pay attention to details like shoes are also likely to be diligent in their work life

## **Food and Interviews Don't Go Together!**

- ◆ Try not to "grab something to eat" before the interview
- ◆ You will end up wearing it to the interview.

## **Being Late is not the Way to Start an Interview!**

- ◆ Waiting is OK
  - Gives you time to mentally prepare
- ◆ Plan for the worst case
- ◆ Traffic, minor car trouble, wardrobe malfunctions, parking challenges, location challenges (getting lost), etc.
- ◆ If you know you are going to be late
- ◆ Call ahead and tell them what has happened
- ◆ They may or may not allow you to interview
- ◆ But they will always appreciate that you called

## **If you change your mind...**

- ◆ Call them to cancel as far in advance as possible

- ◆ No-shows rarely ever get a second chance
- ◆ Do not go down the hiring or testing road to where the agency is spending money
- ◆ Drop out before that, or don't get started
- ◆ You won't get a second chance at a job if they have spent money on your interview

### **The Interview!**

- ◆ Your Entrance
  - Make eye contact with each interviewer
  - Shake their hand
  - Repeat their name
  - Don't ask their name if it is not offered
  - Even if they give you their first name, don't use it
  - If you address them, use a formal form - "Mr." or "Ms." or their rank
- ◆ Wait for them to invite you to sit
- ◆ Don't lean back
- ◆ Sit up straight
- ◆ If there is a table
  - fold your hands on the table
  - isn't a table, fold your hands in your lap
- ◆ Even if the interviewers tell you to relax - don't!

### **When Questions are Asked**

- ◆ Look the speaker in the eye
- ◆ When you answer, scan the whole interview panel
- ◆ Speak clearly and with confidence in your answer
- ◆ You can think about a question before answering
  - don't wait too long
  - interviewers are often on a tight interview schedule
- ◆ Answer should never be one word - "yes" or "no"
  - Elaborate on your answer
  - Why did you say yes or no?
  - Balance a single word answer with a 5 minute ramble
- ◆ Interviewers want to know more about you
  - What you think
  - How you think
  - How you present yourself
- ◆ Give them examples from your experience
- ◆ If you can't think of an answer

- Try to answer it by relating similar experiences
- ◆ Never say "I don't know."

### **You Walk a Fine Line...**

- ◆ You want to sound confident, but not overconfident or cocky
- ◆ Your goal is to convey that you want this job
- ◆ But you have to balance this with the fact that you are satisfied with your current position
  - in other words you aren't a disgruntled employee

### **Uh, You Aren't Working Right Now...**

- ◆ Be up front with the panel
  - Why you left your last job
  - Why you aren't working right now
- ◆ Doesn't do any good to sugar coat the truth
- ◆ They will find out at some point

### **Involuntarily Separated from Your Last Job?**

- ◆ Interviewers are going to question why you left that last job
- ◆ Especially if it is the same kind of job that you are now applying for
- ◆ Be up front about it
- ◆ Need to be honest about what happened
- ◆ It will be a part of your background check
- ◆ Making up a story will not bode well for you
- ◆ Talk about the circumstances of your separation without whining
- ◆ Don't pass the blame onto others
- ◆ Accept the fact that you were not able to fit into that position or organization
- ◆ Talk about the lessons learned from the experience
- ◆ They will accept honesty about what happened

### **Looking for Alternate Work Schedules?**

- ◆ Only want to work part time
- ◆ A particular shift
- ◆ You need to present yourself as being totally committed to this new job
- ◆ Negotiate the other things once you have a job offer

### **Don't Burn Bridges!**

- ◆ Public safety communications family tends to be small

- ◆ Managers know other managers
- ◆ Keep it politically correct
- ◆ If you have a problem with how your center is managed
- ◆ say something like “We’ve been working hard on some issues...”
- ◆ Or “While I don’t always agree with management, I understand where they are coming from...”
- ◆ Slamming will reflect badly on you
  - interviewers will assume that you will come to work for them and do the same thing

### **The “Is there anything else you would like to add?” question...**

- ◆ Emphasize that you want to work for them
- ◆ You are good at what you do
- ◆ You are a great employee

### **“Do you have any questions of us?”**

- ◆ Have something planned
  - Salary
  - Benefits
  - Future of the center

### **After the Interview...**

- ◆ Sit down and do a self evaluation
- ◆ Write down the questions that you had trouble answering
- ◆ Write down your responses that you thought were very good
- ◆ review this list before your next interview

### **After you find out how you did on the interview**

- ◆ Contact someone on the panel and ask how you did
- ◆ or how you can improve on your interviewing skills
- ◆ They may or may not be willing to answer you directly, but it never hurts to ask
- ◆ Often they are willing to talk about your interviewing skills
- ◆ But not about “how you did” in the interview
- ◆ Sending thank you cards or a thank you e-mail afterwards is up to the individual
- ◆ It most likely isn’t going to earn you any points in the process, but if it makes you feel good, do it.

### **Get experience in Interviewing**

Nothing beats experience

- ◆ You run the risk of finding the perfect job!
- ◆ You can also take a self-esteem beating
- ◆ It is all part of your professional life experience, make it a positive one!

**Questions?**

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