

CareerBuilder.com Survey Reveals Top Ten Wackiest Mistakes Candidates Made in Job Interviews

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What's the most unusual thing a candidate did in a job interview? Fall asleep? Disappear? Bring his/her mom? CareerBuilder.com released its annual survey of the most outrageous interview mistakes candidates have made, according to over 3,000 hiring managers and HR professionals nationwide. This year's Top Ten list includes:

- Candidate answered cell phone and asked the interviewer to leave her own office because it was a "private" conversation.
- Candidate told the interviewer he wouldn't be able to stay with the job long because he thought he might get an inheritance if his uncle died -- and his uncle wasn't "looking too good."
- Candidate asked the interviewer for a ride home after the interview.
- Candidate smelled his armpits on the way to the interview room.
- Candidate said she could not provide a writing sample because all of her writing had been for the CIA and it was "classified."
- Candidate told the interviewer he was fired for beating up his last boss.
- When applicant was offered food before the interview, he declined saying he didn't want to line his stomach with grease before going out drinking.
- A candidate for an accounting position said she was a "people person" not a "numbers person."
- Candidate flushed the toilet while talking to interviewer during phone interview.
- Candidate took out a hair brush and brushed her hair.

In addition to the most unusual blunders, employers were also asked about the most common and detrimental mistakes candidates have made during an interview. More than half (51 percent) of hiring managers cited dressing inappropriately as the most detrimental mistake a candidate can make in an interview. Speaking negatively about a current or previous employer came in second at 49 percent and appearing disinterested ranked third at 48 percent. Other mistakes included appearing arrogant (44 percent), not providing specific answers (30 percent) and not asking good questions (29 percent).

"Interviews give employers a window into what it's really like to work with a candidate -- how they react under pressure, what motivates them and how they interact with others," said Rosemary Haefner, vice-president of Human Resources for CareerBuilder.com. "If a candidate is overly negative, plays the blame game, is easily frazzled or doesn't come prepared, it usually sends up a red flag for employers. Be knowledgeable about the company, rehearse answers to potential questions and always maintain a professional manner."

Haefner offers the following tips for successful interviews:

- Do your homework: Nothing says "I'm not that interested in this job" like someone who has done no research and knows little about a company. It's easier than ever to find information about a company and its activities -- candidates who don't could be perceived as lazy, unmotivated or disinterested.
- Don't get too personal: The last thing an employer wants to do is to hire someone who brings all their personal drama to the office. Even if the interview seems casual, always keep it professional and avoid sharing unnecessary personal information.
- Be honest: Interviewers don't expect you to have all the answers. Often they are testing your reaction to "tough questions" to see how you respond under pressure. It's much worse to get caught in a lie than admit you don't know something. If you are unsure of an answer, it's ok to say you don't know but then outline the steps you would take

- to find out -- this will demonstrate you're a problem solver.
- Prepare for these common open-ended questions: "Tell me about yourself?" "Why do you want to work here?" "What motivates you?" These questions may seem easy, but because they are so broad, candidates can get tripped up by them if they don't know where to start or when to end.
 - Don't go negative: No matter how tempting it is to share woes from prior jobs or how much an interviewer is pushing you to do so, it's never a good idea to say negative things about a previous employer. The interviewer will assume you will also be likely to bad mouth their company in the future.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 3,016, hiring managers and human resource professionals (employed full-time; not self-employed; with at least significant involvement in hiring decisions); ages 18 and over between November 13 and December 3, 2007. With a pure probability sample of 3,016, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.8 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies. A full methodology is available upon request.

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