

Have You Tried These Interview Tips?

Real job seekers share what works

By Rachel Zupek, CareerBuilder.com writer



"Dress professionally."

"Make eye contact."

"Research the company."

"Have a firm handshake."

Any of these pointers sound familiar? They should, because you've heard them thousands of times. While the above suggestions are great (and valid), the truth is that this kind of advice can get a bit generic.

We decided to turn the tables and make you -- the job seeker -- the expert. After all, you're the ones out there interviewing, so really, it's not too much of a stretch. We asked you to share what you've found to be successful during your interviews.

Check out these interview tips from real job seekers around the country. Have you tried any of them yet?

Ask the important questions

"One thing I always ask at the end of the interview is, 'Have I said anything that would lead you to believe I'm not the best person for this position?' This gives me an opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings and it also gives me a chance to redeem myself or explain where I am coming from on something. It also shows that if there's a problem, I am capable of fixing it." - *Brooke Kelley, magazine editor*

"During an interview, you are always told to have a set of questions to ask. A question that is helpful, that they do not expect -- 'I know you are interviewing a lot of candidates for this position and I'd like to leave this interview feeling like I've done my absolute best.

Where do I stand in comparison to the other candidates so far?' – shows boldness and that you are aggressive in your job search." - *Jeannie Lee, PR manager*

It's not all about you

"The interview is not about the candidate, it's about the job. No matter how great you are as a person or employee, the interviewer is trying to fill a position. Hence, talk about the job as much as possible. Ask what a perfect candidate would be like. Only occasionally talk about yourself and only to show how you suit their requirements." - *Dave Field*

Research the company -- and the interviewer

"Find out some information about your interviewer(s). See if you share anything in common and understand that they're a person, too, with interests, background and hobbies. Whether or not you know who will interview you, you'd better make sure you know as much as possible about the company and don't be afraid to let them know what you know." - *Josh Bob, regional manager*

Can you take the heat?

"I've found that saying that I can take constructive criticism has a big impact on employers. They need to know that you are not going to fold under scrutiny. Especially with the younger generation, where we have been coddled quite a bit with excessive praise and self-esteem boosters, you need to show you are resilient." - *Liz Cauley, teacher*

Make a list

List five things you've accomplished during your previous job and concentrate on those items during your interview. "Each time I prepared for an interview, I was reminded of five things that I had accomplished under my last employer. That gave me a boost of confidence when going to the interview. It helped me to decide how I wanted to frame the answers that I gave to the interviewer." - *Sue Chehrenegar*

Make it personal

"One thing that I do that has gotten positive feedback is I send a handwritten thank-you note. I have had numerous people comment and thank me for doing this." - *Danny Kofke, teacher*

Show your research

"Print out a couple pages of the Web site from the company you're interviewing with and bring it with you to the interview. Keep it on top of your résumé ... when you open up your notebook or binder to take notes or pull out your résumé, the interviewer will see the printed company materials and assume you've done your research. Of course, ideally you have actually researched the company ... in which case you're showcasing that fact." - *Katherine Opie, senior executive recruiter*

Know the job description

"Reviewing the job description will help you customize your answers by addressing the specific needs of the organization and requirements of the position to your skill set. Many

people have no idea what the job entails or how their skill set makes them better qualified."
- *Cristina Castro, director of marketing and communications*

Keep your answers to questions short and to the point

"Don't volunteer extra information. In my case, I talked about my children. We discussed that I had been a stay-at-home mom. Even though I had impressive writing credentials, he told me that I wasn't a 'corporate person.' (His exact words.) Of course, I never learned if this was why a job offer wasn't forthcoming but I'm 99.9 percent sure I said too much." - *Marilyn Pincus, author and ghostwriter*

Be gracious

"Be polite to absolutely everybody. If someone gets you a cup of coffee, thank them; hold the door for someone else -- that kind of thing. Give the receptionist or the last person you see a cheery goodbye. You want to leave a good impression." - *Phyllis Harber-Murphy, virtual assistant*

Speak as if you have the job

"Steal a page from the presidential candidates and talk if as if you already have the job. Say 'I will,' not 'I would.' 'I can,' not 'I could.' This will remove doubt instead of inject it. Bosses like someone confident and proactive." - *Joel Schwartzberg, director of new media*

Use social networks

"I get a lot of my job interviews through social networks. I get recommended through others and it is significantly better than applying and actually interviewing. They basically feel like they interviewed you already!" - *Albert Ko, business owner*

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