



## One of the best ways to separate yourself from the competition is to be prepared!

OK, we made it to the interview, now what. First of all, you need to understand what the interview is all about. Your winning CV, and the way Flagship presented your abilities; character and background have gained you entrée into the potential Employer's office. The interviewer has already reviewed your resume in detail with me so they are intimately knowledgeable about the hard facts of your employment history and skills. The actual interview is a subtler, more subjective aspect of the job-hunting process. During the course of each interview each person you meet will be forming an opinion of you and gauging your compatibility with the needs of the organization and more importantly their ability to work with you within that role. Bottom line – You're trying to make a good impression!!

You need to be sincere, polite and enthusiastic about your knowledge of their company and the industry in order to secure the position. Your resume may well have shown examples of your skills as a team player, but now you need to convince them that you fit their team. In order to make the best impression you can you need to be prepared, know what to expect, and how to handle it if things don't go quite as you had planned.

## Preparation

### Research the company:

- Check out the company website. Know about their history and growth over the years.
- Look for relevant press releases in major newspapers or trade publications.
- Read through again any notes you have surrounding the interviewers you will meet. Try to understand their role within the organization and make sure you answer their questions with a bent toward their area of expertise.
- Re-read the job description so you can fit your background most effectively to their needs.
- Be ready with questions for each interviewer but focus on responsibility related issues NOT "what's in it for me" questions.

# Candidate Interview Guide



## General Rules for presenting yourself:

- Arrive early bring extra copies of your CV, references, a notepad & pen. Be sure you know how to pronounce your interviewer's name correctly.
- Be polite to everyone you meet there. They all count.
- Be personable as well as professional.
- Do NOT chew gum, smoke, swear or use slang.
- Assume all questions are asked for a good reason and answer accordingly.
- Do not assume that your interviewer knows how to elicit the information he/she is looking for.
- Feel free to ask for clarification before answering a question.
- Take some time to formulate your answers before you speak.
- Answer all questions honestly, but in the best, most positive light.
- Do NOT badmouth old employers.

## Proper Attire

First Impressions are extremely important. The way you present yourself can be as important as what you say.

The best 'Uniform' for interviews is as follows, apologies if this offends your fashion sensibilities but clothes can evoke strong emotive responses in interviewers and have meant the difference between getting a job and not (hey, we're making first impressions here!):

### For males:

- A conservatively cut dark grey or navy suit (not black it's not a funeral)
- White shirt only
- Dark tie (not black, it's not a funeral)
- Black socks
- Black shoes only

### For females:

- Again conservatively cut suit in the same colours as above
- Conservatively cut blouse
- Heels no higher than 3 inches
- Skirt no higher than 2 inches above the knee.



*These next few pages are some excellent articles to read prior to going on any interview. They were written by EXPERTS so they are very much worth heeding and applying to this interview.*

## A Guide to Behavioural Interviewing (Targeted Selection)

\*\*\*You generally do not need to worry about Behavioural Interviewing as the vast majority or HR staff and hiring managers are NOT professional interviewers, but it's useful to know that these interviewing techniques exists.

***“Tell me about a time when you were on a team,  
and one of the members wasn’t carrying his or her weight.”***

If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioural interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behaviour is to determine past behaviour, this style of interviewing is gaining wide acceptance among recruiters.

Today, more than ever, every hiring decision is critical. Behavioural interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that can affect the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant's actions and behaviours, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

### **Behavioural vs. Traditional Interviews**

If you have training or experience with traditional interviewing techniques, you may find the behavioural interview quite different in several ways. Instead of asking how you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you did behave. Expect the interviewer to question and probe (think of “peeling the layers from an onion”). The interviewer will ask you to provide details, and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about several events.

# Candidate Interview Guide



The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important. You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories. Most interviewers will be taking copious notes throughout the interview. The behavioural interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information, and works from a profile of desired behaviours that are needed for success on the job. Because the behaviours a candidate has demonstrated in previous similar positions are likely to be repeated, you will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviours. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency.

If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviours in situations similar to those of the target position:

***“Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it.”***

***“Give an example of when you had to work with your hands to accomplish a task or project.”***

***“What class did you like the most? What did you like about it?”***

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behaviour in that situation:

***“Can you give me an example?”***

***“What did you do?”***

***“What did you say?”***

***“What were you thinking?”***

***“How did you feel?”***

***What was your role?”***

***“What was the result?”***

You will notice an absence of such questions as;

***“Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”***



## How to Prepare for a Behavioural Interview

Recall recent situations that show favourable behaviours or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.

Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked. Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action, and the outcome or result. Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favourable). Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation. Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

A possible response for the question, "Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn't pulling his or her weight" might go as follows: "I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn't showing up for our lab sessions nor doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team, and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn't passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project on time, and got a 'B' on it."

The interviewer might then probe: "How did you feel when you confronted this person?" "Exactly what was the nature of the project?" "What was his responsibility as a team member?" "What was your role?" "At what point did you take it on yourself to confront him?" You can see it is important that you not make up or "shade" information, and why you should have a clear memory of the entire incident.

## Don't Forget the Basics

Instead of feeling anxious or threatened by the prospect of a behavioural interview, remember the essential difference between the traditional interview and the behavioural interview: The traditional interviewer may allow you to project what you might or should do in a given situation, whereas the behavioural interviewer is looking for past actions only. It will always be important to put your best foot forward and make a good impression on the interviewer with appropriate attire, good grooming, and a firm handshake and direct eye contact. There is no substitute for promptness, courtesy, preparation, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude.





## General Overview

Behavioural Interviewing, also referred to as Structured Behavioural Interviewing, is by design a more systematic and standardized process of evaluating job candidates than is typical of the “traditional” interview process. Its primary intent is to increase the success rate of an organization’s in “good” hires and is, therefore, the form of interview being used more often by a wide variety of recruiting organizations. Behavioural interviewing is based on the “Behavioural Consistency Principle” which essentially states that the best predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar circumstance. Therefore, the questions that are asked of you will tend to focus on behaviour, and attempt to evoke how you responded to a variety of specific personal and interpersonal situations and what results occurred from your actions.

## “How do i know when I’m being given a behavioural interview?”

It is quite possible that the interviewer may make you aware prior to the interview that you should expect a structured or competency-based interview. However, you shouldn’t have much trouble identifying whether or not you’re being given a behavioural interview even without prior information. If you hear questions that are asking you to describe or recount specific situations in which you carried out a job-relevant action, and are then asked to describe the consequence or result of your action, you know you’re being behaviourally interviewed.

Behavioural interviews are designed to assess your “real” ability or skill level in functioning in any number of work related activities by delving into how you functioned in your past jobs or extracurricular activities. As with any sort of interview, there are a number of common behavioural “themes” or “performance dimensions” that most recruiters are likely to be interested in. These include (but are not limited to) leadership, interpersonal, communication, multi- tasking, management and cognitive skills, Transition ability (e.g., personal flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity), motivation, decisiveness and commitment.

# Candidate Interview Guide



The kinds of inquiries you'd hear from a recruiter might resemble the following:

***What do you estimate to be your biggest academic achievement at this point?  
What did you do to contribute to that achievement?***

***Cite an example of when you were faced with an unpleasant task. How did you go about facing it?***

***Give me the most recent example of a conflict you had with a coworker or a supervisor. How did you handle it?***

***Describe a situation in which you had to use your communication skills in order to make an important point.***

***Tell me about a time when you had to use a persuasive argument to help someone see things your way. How did you do it?***

Note that each of the above examples integrates three universal components of a good behavioural inquiry: a particular performance situation or task, an action on your part, and the consequences of your action.

It is highly critical that you first do some preparation. For any given job interview, this should begin with an analysis on your part of what you believe to be the most important skills, abilities, and personal qualities needed to successfully fulfil the various responsibilities of the job.

Once identified, think carefully about any kind of “working” experience that you’ve ever had that required you to use these skills, what courses of action or strategies you used to accomplish the tasks, and what positive results came about from your diligence. It is often the case that an interviewer will seek a relatively high level of detail in your responses (e.g., the conversation you had, the mood of the person you were talking to, your specific thought processes at the time of action, etc.).

The final key is preparation; you don’t want to be trying to think of examples “on-the-spot” during the interview. Review your past and make some notes to help you recall your past successes during the interview. On the next page is a sheet formatted to help you recall and detail those successes.



## Interview Preparation Checklist

*(This is how the interviewers will be preparing for you!)*

1. Review application materials, including resume (curriculum vitae) and any application forms.
2. Prepare to conduct the Key Background Review, if included.
  - *Note any jobs/experiences on which you are unclear or would like more information.*
  - *Note any gaps in employment.*
3. Prepare the Planned Behavioural Questions section.
  - *Review the dimension definitions and key actions.*
  - *Modify questions to better fit the candidate's experience.*
  - *Decide if the order of the questions should be changed; develop additional questions if necessary.*
4. Prepare the Motivational Fit question page(s), if included.
  - *Review the Job Fit definition and significant facets.*
  - *Review the Location Fit definition and characteristics.*
  - *Compare the location characteristics to the candidate's information and mark which ones you will explore during the interview.*
  - *Modify the questions to find out possible matches/mismatches between job facets and location, characteristics and the candidate's preferences.*



# Candidate Interview Guide



5. Estimate the time needed to cover each section of the Interview Guide.

## Outline for Opening the Interview

1. Greet the candidate, giving your name and position.
2. Explain the interview's purpose:
  - *To acquaint interviewer and candidate.*
  - *To learn more about the candidate's background and experience.*
  - *To help the candidate understand the position and organization.*
3. Describe the interview plan:
  - *Briefly review jobs/experiences.*
  - *Ask questions to get specific information about those jobs/experiences.*
  - *Provide information about position and organization.*
  - *Answer candidate's questions about the position and organization.*
  - *Point out that you both will get information needed to make good decisions.*  
*Indicate that you will be taking notes.*
4. Explain the job's essential functions and ask if the candidate can perform the essential functions.
5. Make the transition to the Key Background Review.



Instructions: Interviewers to discuss and select required Frontline Leadership Excellence Competencies and to choose appropriate questions.

## Planned Behavioural Questions

1. By providing examples, demonstrate that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and/or environments.
2. Give an example of when you adopted (or even championed) the use of a new tool, system, process or methodology that was different from what was currently in use in the organization? How was the new tool/system/process/methodology different? What were the challenges you faced in using the new tool? What did you do to address these challenges? What was the result?
3. Tell me about the most challenging change you've faced at work. What did you do? What were the results?
4. What do you do when priorities change quickly? Give me one example of when you had to adapt to priorities that changed quickly. What did you do
5. Describe a time when you persisted in a situation in order to achieve a result. What obstacles were you facing? What did you do?
6. Tell me about a time when your standard approach to problem solving didn't produce the desired solution. What did you do?
7. We often face business/leadership/supervisory situations where there are conflicting demands. Describe a situation where you faced conflicting demands. What were the conflicting demands? What did you have to resolve? What did you do? Help me understand how you arrived at your decision /action? What was the result?
8. There are situations when we find ourselves switching roles from a leader to a follower, or from a follower to a leader. Describe a time when you found yourself in this situation. How easy/ difficult was it for you to switch roles? Why?
9. Projects rarely proceed without obstacles. Tell me about a recent project you worked on when you encountered a major obstacle. What did you do to get around that obstacle?



## Communicates Effectively

### Planned Behavioural Questions

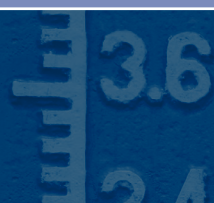
1. Provide an example of a difficult conversation you had with someone at work. What was it about? Why was it difficult? What did you say and how did you respond to him/her? Why do you think your response was effective or ineffective? What could you have done differently?
2. Describe a time when you had to handle a disagreement within your team or between others at work? What was the situation? What did you do to handle the disagreement? What strategy did you use to gain agreement? What was the result?
3. Have you ever had to present negative or damaging information to a department/business unit/organization? How did you go about it?
4. Describe a time when you had to convey bad news to your direct reports. What was the news that had to be conveyed? What did you say? What was the result?
5. Describe a situation when you needed to convey a negative message from top management to your direct reports? What was that situation? What challenges did you face? How did you convey the message? What was the result?
6. Occasionally other people's work priorities conflict with ours. Tell me about a time when this happened to you. What did you do?
7. Can you describe a situation in which you had difficulty getting along with someone at work? How did you handle it?
8. Tell me about a situation when a peer/team member strongly disagreed with your ideas or actions. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?
9. Describe the most difficult conflict you've been involved in. What actions did you take to resolve the conflict? What happened?



## Drives and Manages Change

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. Describe a time when you successfully introduced and led a change initiative in your workplace. What was the situation? What actions did you undertake to introduce the change? What were the stages of the change process? How did you manage each stage? What was the result? What did you do that was effective? Ineffective?
2. What is the biggest organisational change effort in which you've been involved? What was your role? What did you do before and during implementation of the change?
3. Tell me about a situation in which you had to adjust quickly to a significant change in organization, department, or team priorities. How did the change affect you? What did you do?
4. Try to recall a situation when you were asked to implement a change initiative in your workplace for which you did not personally believe or agree. What was the situation? Who mandated the change? Why did you not believe in or agree with the change initiative? What did you do? What was the result?
5. Describe a time and the strategies you have used to facilitate a major change in your group/ team/organization. Which strategies have worked well, and which have not worked as well?
6. Describe the methods you've used to ensure that a change was being implemented as intended. Which methods were effective, and which were not?
7. People often feel threatened by change. Tell me about a specific situation and some actions you took to smooth the process of change for others. Which actions were successful, and which were not?
8. People often are resistant to change. What steps have you taken to overcome resistance to change? Give me an example.
9. Sometimes the support or commitment of one or more key individuals means the difference in the success of important changes or new projects. Give me an example of a time when you identified a key individual, and tell me what you did to ensure that



individual's support.

## Drives to Win

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. Describe a time when your team was able to deliver expected results because you were able to proactively identify and remove barriers to success. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
2. Describe a time when you had to confront one of your subordinates/peers/others for not meeting their commitments. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
3. Can you give me an example of when you provided feedback and assistance to another person about substandard performance? What did you do? How did you do that? What happened next?
4. How have you ensured that you and your work group are working on the most important things? Give a specific example. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
5. How have you developed a sense of urgency among your subordinates or peers? Give a specific example. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
6. Give specific examples of how you have developed your people. How did you go about identifying a subordinate's strengths and development opportunities? What did you say to your subordinate? How did he/she react? What did you do? What was the result?
7. Please give an example of when you helped others drive towards successful outcomes. What was the situation? Did the others come to you for help? What help did you give? What was the result?
8. How have you developed your subordinates'/others' sense of accountability for meeting their commitments? Describe the process that you follow. Give a specific example.
9. Think of a time when you had a major role in developing a team that became very successful. Tell me one or two things you did that contributed to the team's success.





## Focuses Externally

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. How do you keep track of new developments in your external environment (the market in general, customers, internal customers/other work units)? Give a specific example.
2. How have you ensured that your work meets client's/customer's expectations? Give examples. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
3. Give an example of an effective partnership that you have built. Why was it challenging to build such a partnership? Why was it effective? How did you use the partnership to reach your objective?
4. Tell me about a time when you used benchmarking to drive process improvement or to adapt best practices in your work unit. What did you benchmark? With whom? What process did you use to benchmark? How did you use the information you collected? What was the result?
5. Tell me about a time when you achieved outstanding results because you proactively sought information to understand your customer/client needs. What was the situation? Explain why such information is not readily available to you. What did you do to get the information? What was the result?
6. Describe a time when you have obtained input from a customer(s) in order to improve a product or service.
7. Give an example of how you have used your external networks and contacts to help you achieve your work/business goals. What was the situation? How did you use your networks and contacts? What was the result?
8. Give a specific example that demonstrates your ability to integrate efforts across units and functions, even without formal authority over these units and functions. What was the situation? Why was it challenging? What did you do to integrate efforts across units/functions? What was the result?
9. All of us have clients who have complaints - whether unfounded or not. Tell me about a recent client complaint and how you resolved it.



## Focuses on Growth

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. Walk me through the process you followed to develop action plans to execute your strategies and meet your goals this year.
2. Can you think of a time when you identified a market trend that enabled you to enhance your competitive advantage? How did you recognize the trend? What actions did you take? What was the outcome?
3. How have you determined an appropriate course of action for achieving a long-range goal? Give me a specific example. What options did you consider? Were your actions successful?
4. Describe a time when you redirected/refocused the work that you/your work group were doing to ensure that it grew/impacted the business results? What was the situation? Why did you need to redirect or refocus? What did you do? What was the result?
5. What are your goals this year, and what strategies have you developed to meet your goals? How did you go about developing your strategies? What was the involvement of your peers/ subordinates?
6. How have you ensured that your work group's performance is aligned with the company/ business unit strategy? Give a specific example. What was the situation? What did you think? What did you do? What was the result?
7. How have you fostered innovation in your work group? Give a specific example. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
8. Describe the methods you've used to ensure that a strategic plan is accomplishing its intended results.
9. What objectives were you expected to meet this year? What steps did you take to make sure you were making progress on all of them?



## Leads with the Values

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. Describe to me a time when you took advantage of the differences in others' perspectives, culture, or opinions to attain better business results.
2. Thinking back over your past work situations, describe a negative work environment that you experienced either as a leader or a team member. Why was this work situation so negative? How did you handle the negative aspects of this situation? What actions did you take to improve the situation?
3. Describe situations when you went through some personal sacrifices (walked the extra mile, exerted extra effort, etc.) to meet your work commitment (goals, timelines, quantity/quality of work).
4. Tell me about the time when you stood by your convictions and did what you felt was the right or ethical thing to do even though others opposed you. What was the situation and what did you think ought to be done? What did the other people want you to do? What did you end up doing? What was the outcome?
5. There are many ways to show respect to others. What ways work best for you? Give me a specific example.
6. Sometimes we are asked to do something that we don't think is right. Tell me about a time when this happened to you. What did you do? What happened?
7. Describe a time at work when you handled a specific problem that involved others with differing values, ideas and beliefs.
8. Describe the time you were most successful helping a direct report or co-worker improve his or her work performance. What was the situation? What prompted you to intervene? What specifically did you do to coach the individual? What was his/her reaction to your feedback? What made this your most successful example? What was the outcome?
9. There are times when we are faced with honesty / ethical / conflict of interest issues in the workplace, in our role as either employee or as supervisor. Please describe one of those times when you were faced with these issues. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?



## Radiates Confidence

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. Describe the riskiest professional decision you've had to make. How long did it take you to gather the information to make that decision? How long after that to make the decision? What was the result?
2. Tell me about the most critical decision you've made where you were required to make the decision very quickly. What was the situation? What caused you to make the decision so quickly? What did you consider in making your decision? How did the situation turn out?
3. Describe how you have identified and pursued learning opportunities in new areas.
4. What was the most unpopular management decision you've had to make? Why was it unpopular? What did you do?
5. Describe a time when you stuck your neck out for a subordinate (defended a subordinate/took a risk on a subordinate). Describe the risk that you took for the subordinate. Why did you do it? What was the result?
6. How often do you seek and receive feedback from your manager? Give me an example of a time when you asked your supervisor/manager for feedback on your performance. Give me an example of a time when you asked for coaching to develop yourself.
7. How do you inspire others (direct reports) to do their best to achieve the objectives of the organization? Give specific examples of when you actually inspired others.
8. What have you done to foster risk-taking and innovation among your direct reports? Describe one situation in which you were successful doing this and one situation in which you were unsuccessful.
9. What are your strengths and weaknesses? How have you leveraged your strengths? What is your development plan to address your weaknesses?



## Sees the Big Picture

### Planned Behavioural Questions

1. What does “acting as part of a leadership team” mean to you? Describe an example of a situation where you acted as part of leadership team. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
2. What have you done to keep yourself updated about your organization’s business? Provide examples of when you took the initiative and proactively sought information about business developments.
3. What changes in your organization’s vision and values have affected your direct reports? Tell me about a specific action you took to help your direct reports incorporate the change into their day-to-day activities and behaviours.
4. Describe a time when you put the interests of the larger organization ahead of the interests of the smaller unit to which you belonged. What was the situation? What did you do? How did you explain your decision to the members of your workgroup? What was the result?
5. What have you done to help your direct reports understand how their performance impacts the business results? Try to recall a specific example.
6. Give me an example of a situation that demonstrates your understanding of the linkage between your suppliers and your downstream partners. What was the situation? What did you do? How did you communicate this understanding to your subordinates or peers? What was the outcome?
7. Describe a situation when you helped people understand how their projects, activities or tasks were linked to company strategy. How did you go about it? What was the result?
8. Describe a situation when you were the most successful at communicating a clear business vision to direct reports, co-workers, or clients? What situation were you in? What did you do to communicate the vision? How did those around you respond? What impact did your communication have on the business results?
9. What have you done to make your organization’s vision and values meaningful to others? Which strategies have worked, and which have not?



# Candidate Interview Guide



Instructions to close the interview:

## Final Checklist

1. Introduce the (“buy-time”) question.
  - *”I’m going to ask a question that I’d like you to think about for a few minutes before answering. While you are thinking, I’ll review my notes to see if there is other information that I need. The question is:*  
***Why should you be considered for this position?***  
(Opportunity to evaluate the candidate’s selling skills—selling himself or herself.)”
2. Review notes
  - *While the candidate is thinking about the question, review your notes to identify any area where more information is needed, or information needs clarification.*
3. Buy-time answer
  - *Ask for the candidate’s answer to the question.*
4. Additional questions
  - *Ask any additional questions based on the review of your notes.*
5. Simulation (if used)
  - *Introduce simulation.*
  - *”The next part of the interview will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your skills.”*
  - *Give an overview of the simulation process.*
  - *Conduct simulation.*
6. Position/Organization/Location
  - *Provide information on position, organization, or location. If you are the last interviewer, check the candidate’s understanding of these areas. (Note anything that appears to match or conflict with the candidate’s stated motivations and preferences.)*
  - *Give candidate the opportunity to ask questions. (Note the questions asked here.)*
7. End the interview.
  - *Explain next steps in selection process*
  - *Thank the candidate for a productive interview.*



## Six Interview Mistakes

by Michael Neece, founder of Interview Mastery Monster Contributing Writer

It's tough to avoid typical interview traps if you're unsure what they are. Here are a half dozen to watch out for.

### 1. **Confusing an Interview with an Interrogation.**

Most candidates expect to be interrogated. An interrogation occurs when one person asks all the questions and the other gives the answers. An interview is a business conversation in which both people ask and respond to questions. Candidates who expect to be interrogated avoid asking questions, leaving the interviewer in the role of reluctant interrogator.

### 2. **Making a So-Called Weakness Seem Positive.**

Interviewers frequently ask candidates, "What are your weaknesses?" Conventional interview wisdom dictates that you highlight a weakness like "I'm a perfectionist," and turn it into a positive. Interviewers are not impressed, because they've probably heard the same answer a hundred times. If you are asked this question, highlight a skill that you wish to improve upon and describe what you are doing to enhance your skill in this area. Interviewers don't care what your weaknesses are. They want to see how you handle the question and what your answer indicates about you.

### 3. **Failing to Ask Questions.**

Every interview concludes with the interviewer asking if you have any questions. The worst thing to say is that you have no questions. Having no questions prepared indicates you are not interested and not prepared. Interviewers are more impressed by the questions you ask than the selling points you try to make. Before each interview, make a list of five questions you will ask. "I think a good question is, 'Can you tell me about your career?'" says Kent Kirch, director of global recruiting at Deloitte. "Everybody likes to talk about themselves, so you're probably pretty safe asking that question."



#### 4. **Researching the Company But Not Yourself.**

Candidates intellectually prepare by researching the company. Most job seekers do not research themselves by taking inventory of their experience, knowledge and skills. Formulating a talent inventory prepares you to immediately respond to any question about your experience. You must be prepared to discuss any part of your background. Creating your talent inventory refreshes your memory and helps you immediately remember experiences you would otherwise have forgotten during the interview.

#### 5. **Leaving Your Cell Phone On.**

We may live in a wired, always-available society, but a ringing cell phone is not appropriate for an interview. Turn it off before you enter the company.

#### 6. **Waiting for a Call.**

Time is your enemy after the interview. After you send a thank-you email and note to every interviewer, follow up a couple of days later with either a question or additional information. Contact the person who can hire you -- not the HR department. HR is famous for not returning calls. Additional information can be details about your talents, a recent competitor's press release or industry trends. Your intention is to keep everyone's memory of you fresh.



## Interviewers' Pet Peeves

by Carole Martin Monster Contributing Writer

You sit facing the interviewer, feeling like things are moving along nicely when all of a sudden the interview takes a drastic turn for the worse. What just happened? You may have hit one of the interviewer's pet peeves, one of those things that automatically triggers a negative response.

Here are seven of the most common peeves provided by experienced interviewers, along with some tips on how to avoid them:

**1. Smells: too much of a good smell can be bad.**

Pat Riley, author of *Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales*, has a pet peeve story to relate: "Preparing for an interview is not like preparing for a date. I had one interview with a woman who doused herself with perfume (the same perfume my ex-girlfriend used to wear) right before stepping into the small interview booth. The perfume was overpowering and brought back bad memories."

**2. Communication: too little leaves interviewers exasperated.**

"My number one interviewing pet peeve is an applicant who won't talk," says Steve Jones, a manager of client services at a software company in Dallas. "I try to ask open-ended questions and prod them for longer answers, but no luck. I've even mentioned to a few that I need more information so I can get an idea of where they're coming from -- still no luck. I always end the interview saying, 'Now it's your turn to ask questions,' and still no luck; they don't have any. Oh well -- next!". "Help me out here," says Jones. "Come prepared to answer questions and talk about yourself."

**3. Communication: too much can be too much.**

"Candidates who ramble are the ones who get to me," says Dotti Bousquet of Resource Group Staffing in West Hartford, Connecticut. "Last week, I was interviewing a candidate and asked her one question. The candidate talked and talked and talked for 45 minutes straight. I was unable to stop her. I had to say, 'Let's wrap this up,' and I stood up while she continued to talk. I walked to the door of the office and opened it. She left, but continued to talk while walking out the door."

The lesson? "Candidates should stay focused, and answer the question asked -- in less than two to three minutes," advises Bousquet.



**4. Lack of focus: results in losing the interviewer.**

“Typically, candidates are simply too intimidated by the process,” says Mark Fulop, project director for a large nonprofit agency. “Relating the answer given to one question back with another -- and asking clarifying or follow-up questions -- shows me that the candidate is confident and thinking about the whole picture instead of enduring an interrogation.”

**5. Averting your eyes: one way to avert an offer.**

“People who do not make any eye contact during the entire interview” irritate Gwen Sobiech, an agency recruiter in West Hartford, Connecticut. “I realize some people are shy, but to never look at me once -- they look down, around, everywhere, but not at me for the entire interview. I find that extremely annoying. I also tend to distrust someone who will not look at me when I’ve asked a question.”

If you are uncomfortable looking into someone’s eyes, look at his “third eye,” just above and between the person’s two eyes.

**6. Slang and street speak: leave them on the street.**

“Poor communications skills really get to me,” says Robert Fodge of Power Brokers in Dover, Delaware. “What I mean by this is not merely their language fluency, but more about the use of language. Slang words and street speak just don’t have a place in most business environments. Also, candidates who say ‘um,’ ‘like’ and ‘uh’ between every other word lose my attention very quickly.”

**7. Deception: little lies leave a big impression.**

One major complaint among recruiters is when a candidate is not completely truthful; small lies are all too common in the world of recruitment. This includes not being completely forthcoming with relevant information, embellishing accomplishments, hiding jobs or leading the process on with no intention of ever following through. Building trust during the interview is key to getting an offer.





## Questioning the Interviewer

Even if you don't ask any questions during an interview, many interviewers will ask you if you have any questions at the end. How you respond will affect their evaluation of you. So be prepared to ask insightful questions about the organization.

Making a list of any questions you have regarding the company is important (but it should contain only question you weren't able to find out through your own research or through us) this will help you identify if this is the right position for you.

### Good topics to touch on include:

- *The competitive environment in which the organization operates*
- *Executive management styles*
- *What obstacles the organization anticipates in meeting its goals*
- *How the organization's goals have changed over the past 3 years*
- *What obstacles were commonly met in reaching corporate goals*
- *What resource are available from the company and what must be found elsewhere to reach position objectives.*

Generally it is not recommended to ask about compensation or benefits. Questions in this are make you seem more interested in what they can do for you and less enthusiastic about the position. Also, make sure you ask at least some questions so you don't appear to passive in pursuing the opportunity.



## A Few Last Reminders

Line up your references in advance and verify that they will be good ones.

If we at Flagship have redone your resume and you need additional copies just let us know. Follow up immediately with thank you emails to everyone that you interview with. Your ultimate goal should be to go in there and make them want to give you an offer. Remember an interview is not a fishing trip, trying to fish out information. If you go in with that approach often you will discover that you like all you hear about the company and opportunity, yet, you've been so focused on gathering information for yourself you have forgotten to sell your abilities and now it is too late to give them the impression of yourself you wanted.

The company will be anxious to know how you thought the interview went so it is important that we talk as soon as possible so that I can pass along your feedback to them. So call me as quick as you can...and a cell phone in the parking lot is not too soon.

**Good Luck!**

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