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HOW TO CONQUER THE MOST INTIMIDATING JOB INTERVIEW MISTAKES

These interview tips will help you avoid frightful missteps.

The thought hits you hard: "I think I messed up my interview." Oh no. You've been fielding interview questions from a hiring manager, and you suddenly realize you flubbed an answer. The interviewer knows that everyone is human—so you can just move on and pretend you didn't just accidentally bomb on one of the most common interview questions, right?

Wrong. It's better to acknowledge when your interview skills fall flat and address it somehow, "If you catch yourself in a misstep or you get tongue-tied, it may sound cliché, but honesty is the best policy. Start over and explain."

Countless things can go wrong in a job interview, no matter how much time you spend in preparation, so be ready to address these four common mistakes with our strategic interventions.

You're running late

You realize that being late to an interview can leave a negative first impression, so you should plan your travel route in advance and leave extra time. But sometimes unpredictable traffic or personal emergencies can't be avoided, and you find that you are going to be late for the interview.

What should you do?

Call to let the interviewer know. NEVER wait until you are there and make excuses. Your smartphone is your best friend for such occasions.

If you fear you're not going to make it within a reasonable timeframe—generally 30 minutes after your scheduled meeting—it's best to call ahead and find out if you can reschedule or push the interview later. Don't leave them waiting and wondering if you will show.

You're stumped by a question

Interview questions and answers are the nuts and bolts of the screening process. Suddenly, the interviewer asks something you're not prepared for, and your brain begins to stumble as you try to think of what to say. The absolute worst thing to say at that point is, "Gee I really don't know", but the words uncontrollably come out of your mouth. Immediately after the words leave your mouth, new words enter your brain: "I think I just tanked my interview."

What do you do?

"A candidate should be prepared with names, dates, and quantifiable metrics concerning his/her past history, as well as the track record of accomplishments. Preparation and rehearsal will not only help prevent some slip-ups but also help you recover more quickly. If you catch yourself saying "I don't know," remember your preparation and search through your mental files for an effective answer or explanation.

If you're not thinking quickly enough, and the interviewer has moved on, don't be afraid to return to the point later in the conversation.

If you're quick enough to recognize your error during the interview, it's absolutely appropriate to bring it up before the end of the conversation. Request the opportunity to come back to that point. Explain that you want to clarify your response, and that you'd like to share another example."

Your smart phone buzzes, beeps or rings loudly

You always turn your cell phone off during a movie and you scold your friends when their phones ring during dinner, but you forgot to turn yours off for that all-important interview. Suddenly, emerging from your coat pocket, is the theme song from *your favorite TV show*—and then the room falls silent.

What do you do?

Apologize, make light of the situation if appropriate, and move on.

“If you don’t address it, it becomes the elephant in the room and overshadows all of what you did right during the interview.”

You’re afraid that you gave a “wrong” answer

You leave the interview and then realize that you “may have made a mistake”, or were somehow misunderstood. You ask yourself over and over again, “Did it sound like I was badmouthing my co-workers?” “Did I give the impression that I wasn’t excited about this position?” You know that tonight will be a sleepless one while you agonize over what you might have said wrong.

What do you do?

First, assess whether or not you even made a mistake. Almost no one can answer every question perfectly. If you were direct and got your main points across then following up might seem like overkill.

But, ... if you decide you need to clarify something, you can use your post-interview letter as an opportunity to explain anything you think may have been misunderstood. Mark Berkowitz of **CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES** offers this advice: “*In your thank you note you can rectify the problem by saying something along the lines of ... When were discussing (topic), while my answer of ... was adequate at the time; with further reflection, I can assure you that the following is much more indicative of how I handle this type of situation.*” If a candidate feels like they were bashing their previous employer or was nervous, they can often follow up and just say thank you for the interview and apologize for the *faux pas*. That’s always appreciated.

Additionally, if you think you didn’t show your true interest in the job, you can ask a respected colleague or client to send a letter of endorsement on your behalf. It may be an added boost to your thank-you letter explaining that this is the job you are most interested in.

Conquer your fears

Having the dreaded ‘*I think I sabotaged my interview*’ feeling can leave you stressed-out. The good news: Nobody is perfect. Hiring managers know this. So, while there are plenty of ways you can de-rail your interview; there are just as many ways you can effectively repair your mistake. You’ll have an easier time if you feel properly prepared for the interview.

If you feel that you’re *not* up to the task, we have a proven track record in providing interview insights, career advice, and other proven, effective job search strategies. You’ll learn what to message and how to phrase it—as well as what *not* to say. So, see how Career Development Resources can put our expertise and 35+ years of experience to the task of helping you interview more effectively and turbocharge your career advancement campaign by contacting us at: cardevres1@gmail.com or calling us at: (914) 962-1548 and lay your job interview nightmares to rest.

