

Solve Anything with Dr. Mark

Career Advice
for the
Working Class

How to turn on and not turn off your interviewer

Q: As much as I want to believe that I will get hired based on my qualifications for a job, I am beginning to agree with something my friends have been telling me for months. They say, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” How much you turn on or turn off the job interviewer can have a lot to do with whether you make it to the next step in getting hired. What are some of the positive things to think about and the negative things that can turn off interviewers?



Q & A

It may not automatically hurt you if you haven't thought of and answered those questions ahead of time, but if you have, it is a great way to come off as prepared in ways that other candidates may not.

What caught my attention will regard to your question were Bence's job-seeking turn offs that can ruin a good first impression.

Bence calls the following her Top 20 Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters. She separates these “no-no's” into five categories: Actions, Reactions, Look, Sounds, Thoughts.

Actions

1. Lying on your resume or during an interview
2. Asking questions about pay and benefits during an initial interview.
3. Not performing a trial run to find out how long it takes to get from home to the interview site.
4. Not sending an immediate follow-up thank you to your interviewer.

Reactions

5. Not listening to the question and veering off into an unrelated topic.
6. Answering a question without taking the time to think or before fully understanding the question.
7. Letting a trick question fluster you.
8. Taking too long to accept an offer.

Look

9. Appearing tense and tight during an interview.
10. Not visiting the restroom prior to your interview.
11. Only looking at one interviewer when there are two or more interviewers present.
12. Not paying attention to your identity on the internet.

Sound

13. Talking only about what you want out of the job and not what the company needs or wants.
14. Not being prepared with good, thoughtful questions to ask at the end of the interview.
15. Not asking questions that help you sell yourself.
16. Speaking negatively about your current or former employer.

Thoughts

17. Beating yourself up if you don't do well in an interview or if you don't get the job.
18. Thinking of yourself as inferior to the interviewer.
19. Not staying optimistic.
20. Thinking that you can wing it when it comes to preparing for an interview.

A: “How YOU Are Like Shampoo for Job Seekers” (Global Insight Communications, \$19.95) is one of the most comprehensive books on succeeding at job interviews that I have read in a long time. In her book, branding expert and executive coach Brenda Bence says that you're more often likely to be selected for a job based on the connection you make with your interviewer than on your qualifications. Qualifications may get you in the door, but unless you make a positive impression and guard against making a negative one, you're not going to make it any further.

Brenda provides six questions to think about to prepare and position yourself in an interview as if you were a product in the market place.

1. Who is your audience? Don't just think of the company but also about the person interviewing you.

2. What does your audience need? The company is looking for someone to help them solve a problem. Your interviewer is looking for someone that will cause them to look good to their boss if they say “Yes” to you.

3. What does your competition look like? Think of all your competitors as having the same qualifications as you (even if they don't). What are they bringing to the table that you need to match?

4. What are your unique strengths? Think of what you are bringing to the table your competition isn't. This answers the question, “Why you and not them?”

5. How credible are you? People care less about what you know or even can do, than they do about what you have already done in a position similar to the one you are applying for at a company similar to this one.

6. Will your personality fit the company's culture? They're wondering if you will get along vs. making waves. Will people be happy and look forward to working with you? If so, why? If not, fix it.

Ask Mark ● Mark Goulston is a Santa Monica-based management adviser, executive coach and author of “Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolute Anyone.” Ask him questions at mgoulston@markgoulston.com.