

Top 10 Interviewing Tips

(Or why it's not a good idea to hug the hiring manager)

by Kathryn Lorenzen, CBC
Principal, Career Development Coach

AfterSchool Career Workshops
www.succeedafterschool.com

Let's be honest, interviewing for a new job can be a nerve-wracking and intimidating experience. You're nervous, anxious, vulnerable and one step away from running for the door. On the other hand, if you are prepared and confident it can be a positive encounter with a potential new boss or co-worker. These tips can take some of the anxiety out of the interview process and make the experience a bit less painful.

1. Congrats on that third quarter growth!

Know as much as you can about the prospective company, including past work, major awards or recognitions they've won recently. Look at their website, read their annual report or talk to past/present employees. Don't go over the top with the flattery -- no one likes a suck-up. And never, ever mention any bad news you've read. Saying, "I'm sure you'll get out from under those insider trading charges," will not get you asked back.

2. Practice, practice, practice!

Have a session with a coach, recruiter or anyone familiar with hiring prior to the interview to make sure you cover all the bases. Collect a list of key interview questions and determine your answers ahead of time so you feel at ease with them. Make the answers about you and your abilities and not just the answers you think they expect from everyone. If you're tripped up by a question you didn't count on, just be honest and ask for a moment. If you've answered the other questions satisfactorily this won't count against you.

3. Google Maps sent me to a casino!

Know how to get there, where to park, and the telephone number of your interviewer in case you need to call en route. Have change ready if you're at a meter or cash if you're in a parking garage. It never hurts to do a drive-by ahead of time just in case Maple Avenue crosses Maple Way or Maple Drive. Or even worse, if you're at an office complex with five buildings that look exactly alike. Be on time (but no more than ten minutes early). Bring and offer a clean copy of your resume, references and your portfolio, if applicable.

4. Relax. Don't be afraid. But don't picture the hiring manager in his underwear.

Your interviewer wants you to succeed; his job will be easier if you're good. Tip: People who mirror the body language or pace of their interviewer tend to make the best impressions. Never interrupt, keep your answers short and to the point, and avoid waxing on about your personal life.

5. Smile and don't shake hands like a fish would if a fish had hands.

Make eye contact, have a good handshake, and stand/sit with good posture. The "golden moment" of an interview comes not at the end, but at the very beginning when you're introducing yourself. A surprising percentage of the impression made in the first three minutes carries over into the final decision. Always be engaging and an active listener.

6. If you can't say something nice...

Be aware that saying negative things about a former job, co-worker, boss or teacher may cause your interviewer to have concerns about your ability to be a positive team player. No one likes a negative Nancy. Or even worse, the former boss you just called a moron is the brother-in-law of your interviewer. That happens more than you'd think.

7. Yeah, that's great, but how much money do I get?

Don't talk salary until the prospective employer brings it up. Tell the truth about your salary history. Calculate all of your living expenses and decide in advance what you're going to say about your salary needs. Check salary websites, making sure you're looking at the correct part of the country. And be realistic; if you overreach or are inflexible you may harm your chances.

8. Hey toots, can you validate my parking ticket?

Don't think that if you're rude to the receptionist the hiring manager won't hear about it. Many of them make a point of asking the front desk about your demeanor.

9. So, can I call you?

At the end of the interview, ask if there are any next steps that you should take to follow up. If you're asked for any additional material or information make sure you provide it as soon as possible, but also make sure it's presented professionally. Dropping it by in a cardboard box isn't the best idea.

10. Merci, gracias, thanks a million.

Always send a thank-you note or letter. The jury's still out on whether or not email is sufficient. I say, who doesn't like to get mail that doesn't ask for money? You may even consider having a card and envelope in the car so you can write it while the interview is still fresh in your mind. Just make triple-sure it's error-free. Drop it in the mailbox on your way home.

11. And ok, this is eleven but who cares?

Immediately after each interview add your notes to your contact database. (You have a contact database, don't you?) Making note of the informal conversation you had is as important as the job information. It's a great way to re-connect if and when you encounter that person again.

AfterSchool Career Workshops are targeted job search seminars for college seniors and recent graduates. We go beyond the resume and focus on the critical tools and techniques that make the difference between a successful job search and well, one that's not. Visit our website at www.succeedafterschool.com for more information and a schedule of upcoming sessions.

Kathryn Lorenzen, CBC
Principal/Career Development Coach
Kathryn@SucceedAfterSchool.com
816-868-4240

Lisa Correu
Principal/Job Search Advocate
Lisa@SucceedAfterSchool.com
816-510-4188