

The Top 10 Interview Mistakes From Both Sides of the Desk

Someday one of those HR software behemoths will crank out a program that lets you hire the absolute correct candidate through a simple eye scan or mouth swab. Until then, we have job interviews.

The interview room is an imperfect place and—despite the mountains of advice you'll find online—it typically results in disastrous mistakes on both sides of the desk.

Interviewee mistakes

When employees mess up, it's pretty obvious right away. Nearly half (49%) of employers say they know within the first five minutes of an interview whether the candidate is a good or bad fit, according to a new [CareerBuilder survey](#). And 87% know within the first 15 minutes. That survey said employers find these mistakes to be the 10 most detrimental blunders (in order) to candidates' job prospects:



1. Appearing disinterested
2. Dressing inappropriately
3. Appearing arrogant
4. Talking negatively about current or previous employers
5. Answering a cell phone or texting during the interview
6. Appearing uninformed about the company or role
7. Not providing specific examples
8. Not asking good questions
9. Providing too much personal information
10. Asking the hiring manager personal questions

Personally, I think the answering-the-cell-phone thing would be the #1 job killer ... but they didn't ask me.

When it comes to unspoken mistakes, employers say these are the worst body language blunders by interviewees: Failure to make eye contact, failure to smile, bad posture and fidgeting too much in the seat.

Interviewer mistakes ... and advice

Conducting job interviews requires a tricky balance between politeness and assertive evaluation. One wrong word or action can drive an applicant away—or even trigger a lawsuit. Here are the top 10 mistakes by HR and

hiring managers, according to TheHRSpecialist.com:

1. Talking too much. Don't deliver monologues about the job. Aim for an 85/15 split, with 85% of your time spent listening. Don't rush to break a silence.

2. Failing to prepare. Take time to review the résumé beforehand and think about what you want in a new employee.



3. Asking questions off the cuff. A loose approach can be uninformative and, at worst, legally dangerous. Prepare a list of questions and stick to them.

4. Not knowing your legal limits. Interviews are a legal minefield. Make sure everyone involved in the interview process, including employees you bring in to meet the applicant, understand what they can and can't ask legally. And make sure they know the [25 Off-Limits Interview Questions](#).

5. Not being straightforward. Provide a realistic overview of the position, including its less appealing facets. This allows candidates who are hired to make a decision without later feeling they were duped.

6. Overselling the position. During the first interview, find out as much as possible about the applicant, rather than exhaustively detailing the open position. As mentioned earlier, listen more than you talk.

7. Becoming blinded by personal preferences. Are you both baseball fans? Do you have kids at the same school? Avoid letting a common interest you have with the applicant bias your feelings favorably.

8. Being impolite. Don't start interviews late or end them abruptly without an explanation. Don't cancel at the last second. Candidates who value politeness may wonder whether they will receive it on the job.

9. Not making top candidates feel wanted. The best applicants know their value. They have options and desire to go where they are wanted. Don't fawn over interviewees. But let top applicants know that they have valuable skills and will be considered highly.

10. Making snap judgments. Quick, negative judgments based on first impressions and "instinct" are often wrong. Such reactions are subtly communicated and may turn off a top candidate. Be open-minded and friendly without signaling disapproval.

Memorable Moments in Interviewing History

CareerBuilder asked employers to share the most outrageous mistakes they've seen candidates make during job interviews. Strange but true, HR and hiring managers reported that job interviewees have ...

- Warned the interviewer that she "took too much Valium" and didn't think her interview was indicative of her personality
- Acted out a Star Trek role
- Answered a phone call for an interview with a competitor
- Arrived in a jogging suit because he was going running after the interview
- Asked for a hug

- Attempted to secretly record the interview
- Brought personal photo albums
- Called himself his own personal hero
- Checked Facebook during the interview
- Crashed her car into the building
- Popped out his teeth when discussing dental benefits
- Kept her iPod headphones on during the interview
- Set fire to the interviewer's newspaper while reading it when the interviewer said "impress me"
- Said that he questioned his daughter's paternity
- Wanted to know the name and phone number of the receptionist because he really liked her