



8 worst things to say in an interview

By Anthony Balderrama



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Story Highlights

- Research the company beforehand to avoid looking unprepared or uninterested
- Talking about what days off you'll need should wait until after you get the job
- Ask about the typical career path rather than when you'll get a promotion
- Don't cross the line into too personal subjects when talking with an employer

Interviews are nothing if not opportunities to drive yourself crazy.

Just remind yourself to look good, appear confident, say all the right things and don't say any of the wrong ones.

It shouldn't be so hard to follow these guidelines except you'll be on the receiving end of an endless line of questions. Factor in your nerves and you'll be lucky to remember your own name.

Don't fret.

If you walk into the interview prepared, you can make sure you know what right things to say, and you can stop yourself from saying the following wrong things.

1. "I hated my last boss." Your last boss was a miserable person whose main concern was making your life miserable. Of course you don't have a lot of nice things to say; however, don't mistake honesty, which is admirable, for trash-talking, which is despicable.

"If you truly did hate your last boss, I would be prepared to articulate why your last organization and relationship was not right for you," says Greg Moran, director of industry sales and partnerships for Talent Technology Corp. "Then be prepared to explain what type of organization is right for you and what type of management style you best respond to."

2. "I don't know anything about the company." Chances are the interviewer will ask what you know about the company. If you say you don't know anything about it, the interviewer will wonder why you're applying for the job and will probably conclude you're after money, not a career.

"With today's technology," Moran says, "there is no excuse for having no knowledge of a company except laziness and/or poor planning -- neither of which are attributes [of potential employees] sought by many organizations."

3. "No, I don't have any questions for you." Much like telling the interviewer that you don't know anything about the company, saying you don't have any questions to ask also signals a lack of interest.

Perhaps the interviewer answered every question or concern you had about the position, but if you're interested in a future with this employer, you can probably think of a few things to ask.

"Research the company before you show up," Moran advises. "Understand the business strategy, goals and people. Having this type of knowledge will give you some questions to keep in your pocket if the conversation is not flowing naturally."

4. "I'm going to need to take these days off." "We all have lives and commitments and any employer that you would even consider working for understands this. If you progress to an offer stage, this is the time for a discussion regarding personal obligations," Moran suggests. "Just don't bring it up prior to the salary negotiation/offer stage."

Why? By mentioning the days you need off too early in the interview, you risk coming off presumptuous as if you know you'll get the job.

5. "How long until I get a promotion?" While you want to show that you're goal-oriented, be certain you don't come off as entitled or ready to leave behind a job you don't even have yet.

"There are many tactful ways to ask this question that will show an employer that you are ambitious and looking at the big picture," Moran offers. "For example, asking the interviewer to explain the typical career path for the position is fine."

Another option is to ask the interviewer why the position is open, Moran adds. You might find out it's due to a promotion and can use that information to learn more about career opportunities.

6. "Are you an active member in your church?" As you attempt to make small talk with an interviewer, don't cross the line into inappropriate chitchat. Avoid topics that are controversial or that veer too much from work.

"This sounds obvious but many times I have been interviewing candidates and been asked about my personal hobbies, family obligations, et cetera," Moran says. "Attempting to develop a rapport is essential but taking it too far can bring you into some uncomfortable territory."

7. "As Lady Macbeth so eloquently put it..." Scripted answers, although accurate, don't impress interviewers. Not only do they make you sound rehearsed and stiff, they also prevent you from engaging in a dialogue.

"This is a conversation between a couple humans that are trying to get a good understanding of one another. Act accordingly," Moran reminds.

8. "And another thing I hate..." Save your rants for your blog. When you're angry, you don't sway anybody's opinion about a topic, but you do make them like you less. For one thing, they might disagree with you. They also won't take kindly to your bad attitude.

"If you are bitter, keep it inside and show optimism. Start complaining and you will be rejected immediately," Moran warns. "Do you like working with a complainer? Neither will the interviewer."

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