How Bizarre: Avoiding Bad Interview Behavior

By Caroline M.L. Potter, Yahoo! HotJobs

Would you ever ask an interviewer for a cigarette? Or send your sister to meet a potential employer in your place? Or arrive with a bird on your shoulder? Probably not, but job seekers have done each of these things -- and worse -- according to a survey released by staffing firm OfficeTeam.

The folks who committed these professional faux pas probably didn't intend on doing so, but because they didn't follow the four rules below, they made themselves susceptible to bizarre behaviors. Remember these tips -- or be remembered for all the wrong reasons.

Be Prepared

Before any interview, you've got a considerable amount of homework ahead of you. Make sure you carefully research the company at which you're interviewing and try to learn as much as you can about the position and your interviewer as possible.

One executive revealed to OfficeTeam that a potential employee was so unprepared that he "got his companies confused and repeatedly mentioned the strengths of a competing firm, thinking that's who he was interviewing with." Another called his interviewer by the wrong name throughout the entirety of the meeting.

Always give yourself a few extra moments to prep for your interview, either on the train or subway, or while you're waiting in the lobby. Review people's names, the company's focus and your potential responsibilities, and go in with a clear head.

Be Mindful of Your Body Language

Even if you're nervous during an interview, you must avoid displaying any behaviors that might make you appear so. Another respondent revealed, "A job seeker gestured with his hands so much that he sat on them to stop it."

Also, make sure you're focused and alert. Interviews can go on for a long while, so go in well-rested with enough food in your system to go the distance. One unfortunate interviewee fell asleep during an interview, according to OfficeTeam.

Dress Appropriately

In almost all cases, the best interview attire is a simple business suit. As long as it's appropriate for the office, you won't look like you're trying too hard -- or not hard enough. A hiring manager told OfficeTeam, "Someone showed up for an interview in pajamas and his hair not combed, like he had just rolled out of bed."

Also, whatever you're wearing, check to make sure it doesn't need darning or cleaning. Adds another interviewer, "[A] candidate had a big rip in the back of his pants."

Choose Your Words Carefully

You've got to think on your toes during an interview, regardless of how prepared you are. There are always a couple of interview questions even the most savvy job seekers fail to anticipate. If you're caught off guard by a question, take a deep breath, reiterate the question, and answer slowly and thoughtfully. Shares an interviewer, "[O]ne applicant was doing really well in the interview until she got to the reason she left her other job. She told us everyone was out to get her."

Dave Willmer, executive director of OfficeTeam, says, "Although extreme, these examples illustrate the importance of interview basics. To be considered for a job, candidates must prepare well, dress appropriately and provide compelling information about themselves."