

4 Moves You Didn't Realize Make You Look Unprofessional in an Interview

By this point, you know not to apply to any jobs with an email address that screams, “I created this in the eighth grade!” So, you’re no longer Lovescats11@aol.com as far as your prospective employers are concerned. You also know not to show up late for the interview. And you have a firm grasp on the importance of making eye contact and delivering a solid handshake.

But did you know that there are several other things that could negatively impact the impression you make with a hiring manager? I spoke to four career coaches to get the outside-the-box scoop on the truly unprofessional things that are bound to hurt you in your job search process. Read on so you can avoid them like you avoid crowds on Black Friday.

1. You’re Desperate—and You Show It

Laura Garnett, career coach and consultant, says that nothing makes you look more unprofessional than when “you feel desperate.” This is because, as the old cliché goes, “People can spot desperation from a mile away.” Garnett knows that it can be hard to mask if you’re actually feeling this way, but, nonetheless, “you have to ensure that you are confident, know the opportunity is a good fit for your strengths, and be able to speak to why and how you are right for the role and the organization.” She encourages job seekers to “be clear on what your career vision is and how this opportunity fits into that.”

Avoid “being a yes person,” she says, encouraging job seekers to “demonstrate curiosity and interest in the organization” and not just talk about yourself nonstop. Nary an interviewer is going to be interested in you if you don’t know when to give up the floor.

2. You Hide Who You Really Are

Garnett’s advice is worth its salt, that’s for sure, and so is career strategist, Rajiv Nathan’s, whose unexpected thoughts on the subject are worth remembering. His belief is that if you hide who you really are in interviews, you’re not doing yourself any favors. Nathan explains that he “frequently advises people to stop dividing work life from home life, and acknowledge that you’re one person at the end of the day. Share who you are as a person, don’t just share the role you think the company’s trying to cast for its ‘play.’”

To him, that “includes sharing the weird or potentially ‘unprofessional’ things you’re interested in.” Basically, in order not to appear unscrupulous, you’ve got to delve into the so-called unprofessional. Nathan has gone there, telling “interviewers within the first three minutes” that he loves WWE pro wrestling and that he’s a rapper. This kind of information is going to set the stage for a far more interesting, memorable conversation than if you pretend to be one-dimensional.

3. You Don’t Finish Your Homework

You’ve probably heard about the importance of researching a company (a.k.a., homework) before going into a job interview. You want to be able to talk intelligently, so you read the mission statement, do a Google search of the founders, and have a general understanding of their past and present standing.

But, cautions Adrian J. Hopkins, a Muse career coach, this isn't homework you can half-ass. It's not enough to spew off a couple of "top-line company facts." If you want the job and wish to avoid looking unprofessional in any way, shape, or form, you're going to have to "go above and beyond a basic understanding of the company." Let the interviewer know how you plan to grow with the company and get him thinking that he can't "believe" he hadn't the good fortune of meeting you sooner.

Review Google News for references to the company, paying special attention to any statements that executives make about their strategic direction. If you're familiar with where the leadership team wants it to go, it's easier to make a case for why they should bring you on to help them get there. If the organization is smaller and not in the headlines, review its blog and social media, and prepare a new and thorough perspective on something that you've read.

4. You Blow it on Social Media

Has the incredible importance of your social media presence sunk in yet? This sounds super obvious, yet status faux pas are somehow still an issue—making it the most unexpected unprofessional behavior at this point. Career expert and coach Heidi Duss can't stress this point enough: "Everyone needs to be very aware of what they are putting out." She goes on to explain that "Hiring managers and recruiters will Google someone and find his or her online presence."

To drive her point home, Duss shares an anecdote of her own:

I once had a college student apply for an internship in our finance department. The hiring manager came to me and noted that he had checked out her Twitter feed and she had horrible things to say about the university she was graduating from, as well as the professors she had. Every other word was derogatory. The hiring manager said, 'If she talks about her school/teachers this way, what is she going to say about our company when something does not go her way?'

The hiring manager had made her point, and so, apparently, had the candidate.

When it comes to getting the job of your dreams and presenting yourself as a professional and desirable candidate, there's more to it than simply having a typo-free resume and wearing a freshly pressed button-down. Before you pat yourself on the back for remembering to bring extra copies of your application materials to the interview, make sure you brush up on a few of the lesser-known ways that job seekers come across as unprofessional.

Credit: <https://www.themuse.com>