

WHAT WORDS SHOULD YOU NEVER SAY WHEN BEING INTERVIEWED FOR A JOB?

Here are a few that are considered “red flag words” by interviewers. Avoid these because these words don’t do you any favors. I’ve listed alternatives to use instead!

Perfectionist — another word for “procrastinator”

These people often put off work because they are daunted by the expectations. They begin to write a report and can’t get past the first sentence because they are paralyzed by the belief that their first draft has to be flawless. Psychiatrist Dr. Elana Miller, MD, says that perfectionists are often sensitive to criticism and need clearer guidelines so that they don’t waste time on things that are not important.

What the candidate should say instead: detail oriented

Multitasker — another word for “unfocused”

According to current neuroscience research, our brains can not focus on multiple tasks at the same time, but actually switch between tasks quickly, giving us the illusion of multitasking. Meaning, people cannot listen in a meeting and write an email at the same time – they are doing each of these tasks for a few seconds at a time while constantly switching their attention back and forth. While this sounds impressive, serious productivity is lost in both activities.

Candidates may boast that they can move quickly between tasks, but this lack of focus is actually less efficient, increases mistakes, and can be ultimately exhausting. These candidates may have an inhibiting sense of urgency which will lead to them to work hard, but not work smart.

What the candidate should say instead: organized, can work under competing deadlines

People-person — another word for “I don’t understand what this job entails”

This is an especially common word used in interviews for positions in sales, human resources, recruiting, and customer support. “People-person” is a phrase with no meaning, and is usually said by someone who doesn’t understand the demands of the job. You want the candidate to describe him or herself in a way that shows they understand the specific competencies of the job.

What the candidate should say instead: Collaborative, customer-focused, client-facing

Intelligent — another word for “I don’t have to try”

Adults who outright declare themselves as intelligent often take pride in mastering tasks quickly and ranking well among peers. This self-labeling as “intelligent” starts from a young age, as according to the groundbreaking studies by Claudia Mueller and Carol Dweck in 1998.

In a series of experiments on 5th graders, children who were constantly praised for their intelligence preferred easier tasks where they could quickly show mastery and were focused on their competitive standing among others. In contrast, children who were praised for their hard work sought out new challenges and adopted an internal sense of competition of beating their personal best.

These mentalities can follow us to the workplace, and those employees who assert that their intelligence is their greatest strength may display high competitive nature between coworkers, avoidance of unfamiliar tasks, and poor reactions to failure.

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