

## **Today is Not the Day to be Humble.**

“Today is not the day to be humble”, is what I often say to people when doing a mock interview.

Are you showing the “best” you in the interview?

Interviewing is one of the areas of the job hunting process that so many people freak out about. I do lots of mock interviews with college students and mid-life career changers, and I am amazed that so few people understand WHAT an interview is. If you don't know what it is that employers are looking for, then you won't know what to do in one.

The goal is to find someone who adds the greatest value to the company that other employees will get along with.

With that in mind, here are six of my tips to “up” your client's interview game.

1. The interview starts in the parking lot. At one place of business where I worked the administrative assistants were part of the interview process. They met each person, offered something to drink, asked them to sit down, and then told them when the interview would begin. My boss and I interviewed the candidates and when the interviewee had left, we asked both admins what they thought of the candidates.

Often we'd hear that they were rude to them or simply non-communicative or very uneasy. Other times we heard they really connected with them, were very nice, polite, and professional. We NEVER hired anyone the admin's didn't like.

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What are your skills? Even my son here during his marketing internship demonstrated commitment and a strong “can do attitude”.

2. What can YOU do “add value” to the company? This is the filter you should have on whenever you answer a question, say hi to a person, or ask them questions. This is NOT about what you gain from getting the job but what value you add to the company. Be clear and be specific. What skills do you have? What personal character traits would benefit them? What accomplishments do you have related to this position?

I volunteered recently to do mock interviews in a local high school and when I asked one student, “Why do you want this job?” He replied, “It looks like an easy way to make money”. WRONG ANSWER.

3. Think in threes. There is something about our brains that likes threes. If I ask you “What skills do you bring to the position?” and you answer giving me ten skills, I simply won't remember them all. You give me three or four of your top skills and I will though.

“Tell me about yourself (in the context of this job).” If you tell me ten things about yourself, I'll probably be bored. You can give me two or three past jobs and three or four related skills and you'll be memorable but if you ramble on telling me ten different disconnected things about yourself, you'll have lost me on what is often one of the first questions.

Thinking in threes will also be easier for you to remember important skills and interests that you want to share with the company. Plus, your answer should be somewhere between one and two minutes (unless they are asking you a problem-solving question).

4. Tell me a story. When working with college students or young professionals, I tell them that they need at least 5-8 stories to tell that highlight skills, accomplishments, character traits, or passions. People remember stories and you want to be memorable. All stories should have a purpose in telling them, either to highlight something you did or to demonstrate you learned something. All stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. Leave one out and it ain't a story.

**BEGINNING:** Describe the scene so the interviewer understands the context.

**MIDDLE:** Next, identify what YOU did to make this happen. Be specific and make sure you are teaching the person something positive about you.

**END:** Give me the results of what happened. Even if it was not positive, what did you learn from it? Describe what you would do differently next time.

I asked one student to tell me a time when she had to work with a difficult person. She went on to describe a group project in one of her classes and what she did but completely left out what happened. Did she pass the project? Did the problem-student fail and the rest of the group pass? I told her it was like she had given me a book and ripped out the last chapter!

5. Skype or phone interviews. Many companies are doing Skype interviews or phone interviews in round one. Dress as if you were going to the company for the interview for both. If you dress up you WILL act more professional. You will think more clearly and you will typically enunciate better.

Find a quiet place to do the interview, one that you will not get interrupted by loud music, traffic, dogs barking, etc... Think about what could go wrong and try to deal with it in advance. Most colleges have interview rooms you can use but if you are not at a college and do it from home, make sure you have done everything possible to keep the interview professional.

If it is a Skype interview, take the time to position your computer video so the background is not distracting. Is there a lamp sticking out of your head? Does your laptop look up your nose to the ceiling? It only takes a minute to check it out but you don't want any distractions to take away from your interview.

Make sure you have strong cell phone coverage and if you can find a room with a land line you can use, choose that over a cell.

There was a college student who insisted on using his cell phone for an interview because he didn't want to bother the person and give them a different number to call. He was in the interview room and discovered that while in the room his cell phone coverage was bad. So he ended up standing in the hallway of the administration building with people walking by him, talking, closing doors. Once I realized what he was doing, I whisked him into an office space for him to finish it.

6. Practice, practice, practice. Any skill can be improved through practice. Throwing a baseball or shooting a basket takes practice and interviewing is no different. The best is to do a mock interview with

someone like a career coach / counselor or at least someone who has done interviews in the past. You can also video yourself on your phone or computer so you can see what you look like.

Then get out there and do it! The more interviews you do the better you'll get. It really is that simple.

Credit: <http://peak-careers.com>