

What Not to Do When Interviewing for Your First Job

David W. Stonesifer, CPA, has been the partner in charge of recruiting for over ten years and shares his top tips and experiences on how to best get hired and what NOT to do when interviewing.

It's that time of year again, college recruiting season. College students are looking to impress future employers and employers look to recruit the best and brightest in this year's graduating seniors. Having lead Herbein's college recruiting efforts for over a decade, I've seen it all in interviews and felt it would be worthwhile and perhaps entertaining to share some thoughts from the seat of the interviewer.

As you prepare for an initial or second interview with a firm, it's important to strive to make yourself memorable for your interviewer. Just be sure you're remembered for a good reason.

Top Five Tips When Interviewing for Your First Job

Be aware of the following five important interview points and be sure you don't make the same mistake these memorable interview candidates did.

1. Be prepared for your interview and research the company you're interviewing with.

A good recruiter spends time reading your resume and preparing for your interview. You should do the same and be knowledgeable about key issues with the employer. Every employer has a website – spend the time reading it the night before your interview.

I once had a student who spent the entire interview selling me on how great our firm was and how much she wanted to work at Herbein. Unfortunately for her, she continued to refer to our firm by the name of one of our competitors. She was not offered a position with the firm.

2. When interviewing for a professional position, dress appropriately.

Most recruiters understand that college students are on limited budgets and do not have a full wardrobe of suits. That being said, after you've invested four or five years and tens of thousands of dollars in your education, it's a worthwhile investment to spend what it takes to purchase a proper and conservative business suit. Consult the Career Services office, ask for help at the clothing store and research proper business dress online.

I've seen countless students have their employment chances dashed by wearing outfits too bold in color, too frumpled, too revealing or too casual. Believe it or not, I once had a student show up to an interview in a t-shirt and jeans. He was not offered a position with the firm.

3. Speak clearly, effectively, professionally and respectfully to your interviewer.

Your interview is your time to shine and to show your interviewer what skills and qualifications you have to offer. The interviewer is evaluating your ability to be a professional and to function in the business world. Your verbal ability plays a huge part in this evaluation.

I recall one candidate who responded to my description of a typical work day at Herbein with the phrase, and I quote, "Oh Hells no!" She was not offered a position with the firm.

4. Make eye contact with your interviewer and stay focused on your interview.

This is a critical communication and interview skill. A student needs to be comfortable and maintain good eye contact throughout the interview. By not doing so, an interviewee demonstrates a lack of confidence, shiftiness and a level of disinterest. This behavior is also extremely distracting to the interviewer.

I had one particular student that was so nervous and uncomfortable he would have no way of ever recognizing me again as he spent the ENTIRE interview staring out the window in the room. He was not offered a position with the firm.

5. Maintain proper manners throughout your interview experience.

Employers will often incorporate a meal into part of the interview process. This is done to evaluate the candidates social skills, manners and comfort level in a business meal setting. Be very conscious of your manners in this setting. Avoid ordering foods that are too difficult or too messy to eat (pastas with sauce, French onion soup, spinach, etc.) and by all means be conservative when ordering your meal. You don't want to be that person that orders the \$100 surf and turf and a martini if your future boss has ordered something more modest and no alcohol. Keep it simple and follow the most senior person's lead when ordering.

I remember one student who was literally eating leftover food off one of my colleague's plates during the meal. She was not offered a position with the firm.

I share with you some of these stories to illustrate how a lack of attention to details, small slips in focus and general lack of preparation can end of your hiring chances. With an enormous number of students vying for a limited number of desired positions, it is imperative to give yourself the best chance you can during your time with a recruiter. Utilize your Career Services office often, practice and refine your interview skills and be very aware of yourself throughout the entire experience. You want to be remembered for all your positive qualifications and not for a huge blunder during your interview.

August 26, 2015; from <http://www.herbein.com/what-not-to-do-when-interviewing-for-your-first-job/>

More about the author:

David W. Stonesifer

Partner

You get 3 strikes for a reason – find your pitch and swing away.

David W. Stonesifer, CPA began his career as an intern in the tax department with Herbein + Company in 1995. Upon graduation from Albright College in 1996, he joined the firm's audit department. During the ensuing twelve years, his demonstrated commitment to clients and dedication to the accounting profession help to earn him the distinction of being the first firm intern to achieve the position of Partner. Dave also leads the firm efforts in recruitment of professional staff at the collegiate level.

Dave is responsible for all aspects of services provided to clients with an emphasis in the manufacturing and distribution industries. He also specializes in providing consulting services to clients in the dairy and food processing industries. In this capacity, he provides cost analysis, cost benchmarking studies, and other management advisory services to companies in these industries.

Education and Certifications

- Albright College – B.S. Degree in Accounting
- Certified Public Accountant (CPA) – Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, State of Arizona, State of Missouri

Organizations

- Albright College National Advisory Council for Accounting – Past Member
- America Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) – Member
- Greater Reading Young Professionals network – Board of Directors
- National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives, Capital Chapter (NSAC) – Member, Accounting and Auditing Committee – Member
- Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA) – Member; PICPA Committee for Accounting Awareness, Schools and Colleges – Member; PICPA Reading Chapter – Executive Committee
- YMCA of Reading & Berks County – former Board member and finance committee member