

The Interviewer - Friend Or Foe?

The hostile interviewer

We often anticipate the interviewer to be friendly and well mannered. However, there are occasions in which the interviewer turns out to be hostile, impatient, inconsiderate and even aggressive. This may be due to their lack of experience, being unprofessional or plainly because they have an unpleasant personal nature. An interview conducted by such a person may induce apprehension or even anger on the applicants' part. In addition it may even compromise their self confidence. The higher the sense of insecurity and sensitivity is on the applicants' part, the greater the negative effect it will have. This may manifest itself in unwillingness to cooperate with the interviewer and subsequently disqualify the applicant.

The job applicant may also think:

"If the interviewer is so hostile this may be indicative of the atmosphere at work and I have no wish to work with such colleagues or in such atmosphere"

This attitude is counter-productive. First and foremost it may inhibit the applicants' ability to effectively cope with the interview and second, the conclusion drawn may be wrong altogether. Perhaps the interviewers' behaviour is not indicative of anything – just of their own inappropriate behaviour and you may lose out on a wonderful opportunity. Moreover, perhaps the interviewer has deliberately acted in such a way to assess your ability to handle unpleasant situations.

Regardless of who the interviewer is you must always be well mannered and respond in a concise and professional manner. Your goal is to prove that even when you face an unpleasant interviewer you can face up to the challenge and be professional. If you have faith in your self, avoid trying to please the interviewer. Believe in your abilities and you will be able to cope with any interviewer. The interviewer will know that you are a person that is easy to get along with, a person that can withstand pressure and deal with unpleasant situations.

The friendly interviewer

In some cases you will meet a friendly, calm and welcoming interviewer. This may come as a relief to some and may lead them to act enthusiastically and at times in a careless and perhaps unmeasured manner. Some may be voluntarily open to a degree in which they disclose information that is not necessarily required. The job applicant may think: "Since the interviewer is so friendly I have nothing to be concerned about, I presume they really like me and I can tell them anything".

Disclosing unnecessary information may be damaging and may even lead to disqualification.

For example: An applicant for a financial and administrative position is interviewed by an informal and friendly interviewer. She asks the applicant if in his current position in a financial and administrative position the bulk of the work is financial or administrative. Since the applicant feels comfortable he discloses the fact that most of the work he does is administrative by nature (even though there is a financial aspect to it). This kind of response has in effect compromised his chances of succeeding in the interview since the impression made is that he does not have the kind of experience they are looking for.

In fact, the applicant may have all the skills and experience required but since he decided to disclose all the information in an uncalculated manner he has made an unbalanced impression.

In most cases, a friendly and informal interviewer is an experienced one that 'seduces' the job applicant to act freely. Some applicants may feel overly comfortable in such situations and may disclose their weaknesses to an extent that may lead to their disqualification.

Important! We recommend you focus on giving a concise presentation of your professional abilities. There is no need to disclose unnecessary private information and/or weaknesses to reciprocate the interviewer for his good natured behavior.

Treat the interviewer in a professional manner

Instead of fearing the interviewer and subsequently undermining and diminishing your professional accomplishments, or behaving in a disrespectful or aggressive manner in the interview we recommend you learn how to be professional and practical.

Being able to act in a professional manner in an interview is important.

Heightened vulnerability and sensitivity may cause you to fail a work interview. A lot of people view the often personal nature of the questions as intrusive and as a result take offense or behave in a cynical, aggressive or introverted way towards the interviewer. By doing so, they expose their weakness and may cause themselves to fail the interview. Treating the interviewer in a professional and practical manner is the way to communicate well and deal positively with the interviewers' authority in an interview.

Prior to an interview it is important to change your attitude towards the interviewer and remember a number of facts:

1. The interviewer is not trying to fail you but rather he/she are trying to assess your skills and abilities. If you truly believe in yourself you will have no difficulty facing the interviewer. This fact seems straight forward but research shows that over 90% of job applicants are concerned that the interviewer is trying to set traps for them. These concerns impede your ability to feel confident in an interview. Try to internalise – the interviewer is not trying to set traps or fail you he/she are only trying to assess your compatibility. The more you comprehend this fact the more your attitude will become professional.

2. In most cases the interviewer is a professional that has the ability to assess if a candidate is compatible for a certain or position or not. Therefore, it is important and appropriate you treat them with respect. Some job applicants arrive at an interview already in a defensive and critical state of mind. These applicants may think that no interviewer has the ability to assess in the space of 20-30 minutes if a candidate is truly worthy. They may also think that the interviewer is not capable of spotting their true abilities and therefore if they are disqualified it is due to the interviewer's lack of ability. This is a misconception at heart. Mostly, the interviewer has probably interviewed tens if not hundreds of job applicants and has all the required skills to make a sound judgment regarding their abilities.

Remember!

An interview is an opportunity for you to exhibit your qualifications and skills rather than an opportunity to engage in friendly conversation and gain sympathy. Just as there is no reason for you to be offended or defensive when meeting a hostile interviewer, you must not celebrate and 'let your guard down' when meeting a friendly and informal interviewer. In both cases you must be concise, well mannered and answer adequately to the questions asked – nothing more or less.

About the Author

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