

# 10 Worst Job-Interview Gaffes

## Don't blow it! Avoid these common mistakes

It may sound simplistic, but here's the main thing to remember about going to job interviews: The interviewer doesn't know you. "You've really got to work at the impression you make," says Rick Richter, a recruiter with Toronto-based sales, marketing and management-recruitment firm **wwwork**. From what you wear to how savvy you are about the company and how you express, doing – or not doing – the little things you may not even think about, can ruin your chances of getting your dream job.

### 1. "My alarm clock didn't go off!"

You only get to make a first impression once. If you're late for your interview, it may be impossible to dispel the negative vibes.

*Why it's a red flag:* Being late indicates a lack of organizational skills (you couldn't get it together to arrive on time) and perhaps a lack of commitment (since you didn't care enough to arrive on time).

### 2. Dissing (disrespecting) the secretary

You may impress the interviewer with your accomplishments and efficiencies and be an overall good bet for the available position but will not get the position, if you are unprofessional towards the secretary or receptionist.

*Why it's a red flag:* Many interviewees will ask their receptionists if an applicant has displayed any rude behaviour. Everyone has to be treated with dignity and respect. If you can't even be civil during the interview process, you won't likely be able to do that with customers.

### 3. "Sorry, I haven't had time to google you yet."

This has actually been said by a job candidate to the president of a company.

*Why it's a red flag:* It makes you look like you're not interested, you're not thorough and you're not much of a planner or thinker.

### 4. "I single-handedly doubled my company's profits last year."

Interviewers commonly ask for an example of your latest achievement on the job and how you were able to manage it. Many interviewees respond by exaggerating their contribution to their current employer in the mistaken belief that it makes them sound better.

*Why it's a red flag:* If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is, and if the employer discovers that you're not telling the strict truth, it damages your credibility. On top of that, neglecting to give any credit to the other people involved is a good indicator you might not be a team player.

### 5. The salary minefield

When asked about salary expectations, don't say "I won't come for anything less than xxx.."

*Why it's a red flag:* This type of statement appears arrogant and rude and that's just for starters. It comes across as if money is the most important thing. The company's pay scales may be lower than your stated amount so this may be the only determining factor as to why you don't get the job. Also, the first question you ask should not be: "What are the salary and benefits?"

**6. “My last boss was such a jerk!”**

When asked how they had fared in their recent position, the applicant responded by being very critical of her boss. They also stated that the boss was a great guy, but provided no sense of direction and the whole experience was very negative.

*Why it's a red flag:* Being critical of a previous employer rarely sits well with a potential one. It makes them wonder what you'll have to say about them when you move on and it can be an indicator of an underlying negativity. If you're applying for a job in the same industry, there's always the chance your interviewer knows the person you're slagging (criticizing).

**7. “You mean this is not a therapy session?”**

When an interviewer asked an interviewee regarding a call-centre position, “What was the toughest situation you would ever have to face?”, the person told a very personal story, in a great deal of detail, about a friend who had died. The story was very emotional for the person and he started to well up.

*Why it's a red flag:* The interviewer may be worried the applicant cannot separate their personal life from their work life. A job interview is not the place to share such information.

**8. Ramblin' on**

In an attempt to deliver as much information as possible about themselves, applicants sometimes answer questions at length and stray from the topic. This may be a nervous reaction to a stressful situation.

*Why it's a red flag:* Yes, the interview is about you, but you can appear self-centred if you go on and on. How do you find out about the job, the company and the issues if you've been talking the whole time?

**9. “I don't really have any weaknesses.”**

When asked this question during an interview, don't answer, “I don't know. I'm pretty good at most things I do.” Really, nobody's perfect.

*Why it's a red flag:* You may do very well in all other areas of the interview, but this response may be the deal breaker. It may indicate to the interviewer that you are not able to be honest or not able to reflect on what issues are problems for you, so you can't make it better.

**10. Desperation**

It's a big mistake to contact the hiring person directly and plea for the job or another interview. Such actions exude a whiff of desperation that doesn't bode well.

*Why it's a red flag:* First, ask not what the company can do for you; ask what you can do for the company. Second, if you appear desperate for the job, it may appear you are not a top quality candidate and that you would take any job. Employers want to believe you're specifically interested in the job they have to offer.