The Job Interview: Top Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Interviewing can be intimidating or scary because you want to be in control of all situations you find yourself in, and interviews throw you into the realm of the unknown. What questions will they ask? What are they looking for? Do I have what they need? While it’s not my nature to dwell on mistakes, I wanted to write this article because the mistakes we make during the interviewing process often comes from excess pressure to be “perfect” that we put on ourselves. By learning about some common mistakes I’ve seen and being honest with yourself, my hope is that you can grow and learn.

MISTAKE #1: RETICENT TO BE YOURSELF

Bottom-line: Interviewees “try to look good” and come off with a false sense of self that the interviewer actually senses because of a conflict between your persona and your language.

When you feel like your light switch is ‘off’ or you feel constricted “flat as a pancake”—inside you come from fear, doubt and judgment. You act overcomposed and you come across stiff and unmotivated, and robotic. That is not going to get you hired. Preparing for an interview is like writing the first draft of a paper, you practice your possible answers and become more confident with each description of what you’ve done.

In contrast, when your light switch is “on” you come from authenticity, fulfillment, and joy; thus, things flow better! When you are awake and aware trusting the answer will come from you and the energetic space of you and the interviewers together—creating a dynamic, you breathe, think, feel, speak and portray who you really are.

Keeping a brain-heart connection is essential to revealing your true self, full of intelligence, passion, skills, talents, and aptitude in a meaningful, memorable way to the interviewers. Remember, interviewers want to get to know you because you will be an integral member of their respected physician team. Furthermore, you are also interviewing them, consider, what would be the best part of work with them?

“I learned to describe things crystal clear and improve phrases for greater impact. You made my day; now, I can talk to the Program director in an interview!”—Rakesh, April 25, 2012, AAN Online Job Fair

MISTAKE #2: SHOWING UP UNPREPARED

Come to an interview prepared by knowing your top 10 values, top 10 accomplishments along with three situations of conflict, stress, or mistakes, and an up-to-date curriculum vitae. Practice makes perfect or at least the more familiar with your macroscopic and microscopic views of your experience, education, and vivid two-minute stories. A simple format: What was the situation, What you did to make it better, and The outcome. Or another story-telling format: Start with the climax, and grip them as you describe the remainder of your captivating or life-changing story.

Being prepared can bring a sense of confidence, an organized structure, and primed to talk about yourself.

The paradox is to be prepared and yet when things don’t go as planned or as you decided ahead of time, you mayumble and shutdown getting stuck or even lost. So, put your attention on your intentions—what you want to convey with your achievements, values, learning situations, etc. Be open to interpersonal dynamics that transpire in real time in an interview and speak up. Be prepared and ready to think on your feet. The form of the interview may throw you curve ball, let go of the attachment to way you think it should look and go with the question-answer conversation in the moment. Another paradox, you must be prepared and open to seize every opportunity!
“The best part of our coaching appointment was answering your questions and then getting feedback! Going through this mock interview reminded me of my plethora of experiences and how to apply them in future interviews.”—Annise, April 22, 2012, AAN Online Job Fair

“Sharol, you helped me boil it down to what is most important to convey about my experience, stories and presenting myself!”—Petya, April 24, 2012, AAN Online Job Fair

MISTAKE #3: NOT TAKING CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE
Speak up! You’ve earned your accomplishments, skills, and abilities. Now, is the time to portray and describe who you are and what you’ve achieved through your education, clinical experience, team approach, and leadership. Remember, nothing you’ve accomplished is too small or insignificant as long as it has relevant implications.

“You put the spotlight on my strengths and my weaknesses. I will keep my confidence and stop trailing off at the end of sentences.” —Mirza, April 23, 2012, AAN Online Job Fair

MISTAKE #4: ACTING LIKE YOU HAVE NO WEAKNESSES OR NO MISTAKES
We all have strengths and weaknesses. We are human, both in our human-ness and our human-mess.

Actually, interviewers want to know your areas of learning. That is why there are so many behavior and personality assessments, to make a great match. Interviewers are assessing you for their neurology team — and they need to know how they can count on you. Don’t be ashamed or feel “less than” with your weaknesses. Weakness can be a disadvantage, such as procrastination, perfectionism, avoidance, failure to prioritize your energy and your time, etc.

The best thing you can do is turn your weaknesses into a positive, such as perfectionism or a superior standard of excellence for a neurosurgeon is a great fit — right on.

Be honest with yourself. If you know of your weaknesses, hot buttons, or self-limiting beliefs that hold you back from success and don’t like them, get out of your own way. I invite you to face up to them and get resolution! In the resolution process, you will allow yourself to grow, be more compassionate, and move to the next level. Do you want that kind of freedom? •

“I had a big “Aha!” I took notes on the steps I need and want to take!”—Ryan, April 23, 2012, AAN Online Job Fair

“Don’t look up at the ceiling; instead, pay attention to the interviewer. Be more eloquent in wording my goals and weaknesses. I appreciated that!”—Nina, April 24, 2012, AAN Online Job Fair