

Looking Inside the Job Interviewer's Head

Aside from seeing how your answers match up to the job skills, what else do interviewers look for in job candidates during an interview? You may be surprised to learn how much is going on during an interview.

It is valuable to know what is going on as you deliver your answers. Many thanks to: Eileen Levitt, Karen Stevens, and Andy Newman for sharing their interviewing expertise and contributions to this list. Here are some of the important areas that interviewers are considering during the course of your interview:

- **Appearance** – Is the candidate neat and clean? Is he wearing a suit and tie? Is she dressed for success? Is hair neat and trimmed? Is there anything odd about the candidate's appearance? Does he/she reek of perfume or cologne?
- **Rapport** - How effective is the candidate at building rapport. Does he/she engage me in conversation rather than simply answering my questions? When an interview flows more like a conversation - or better yet a productive meeting - that is usually a sign of a candidate who is good at rapport building and will probably be able to integrate himself/herself easily into a new position/team.
- **Being Direct** - Is the person answering my questions? Many times applicants have certain information that they want to get out about themselves, and by doing so, fail to answer my questions. Sometimes, they don't seem to understand what the questions are. Did the person provide actual examples? Applicants often speak in general terms. I want to know if the person has experience in a particular area and can demonstrate it through specific examples.
- **Eye contact** – Throughout the interview, does the candidate make appropriate eye contact? Does the candidate look away and then return to me when responding to my question? Does the candidate look down or away too much? Is he/she being evasive?
- **Body language** – Did the candidate stand up when I first came in the room? Is the candidate “open” or “closed?” Are his/her arms folded defensively? Does the candidate slouch in the chair? Does candidate lean forward when questions are asked? Did the candidate have a firm handshake at the end of the interview?
- **Poise** - Does the candidate appear confident in his/her abilities? Does the candidate seem to be insecure? During the interview is the candidate able to explain his/her ideas and experience with a sense of self confidence?
- **Distraction** – “I'm starving...where will I go for lunch? I wonder who left a message on my Blackberry? I wish I could get through this day...what a slow week.” Face it, doing interviews all day can be tedious. Don't take it personally. Work extra hard on eye contact and varying the pitch and tone of your voice.

- **Speech** – Is the candidate too loud? Does he/she tend to run on and talk too much? Can the candidate's words be easily understood? Does the candidate blurt out responses or interrupt before my questions are completed? Does the candidate mumble? Is the candidate unable to communicate effectively? Is his/her vocabulary suitable for the position/department? Does he/she use big words to impress? Is the candidate's grammar generally correct?
- **Attitude** – Is the candidate overly self confident to the point of being cocky? Was he/she evasive on any questions? Is he/she someone that is generally likeable in a social or work setting? Will the candidate fit in socially with his/her office mates? Can he/she be expected to be cooperative and take direction from a supervisor or peer? How well will this candidate accept negative feedback?
- **Humility** – Does the candidate credit many of his/her accomplishments as being part of a larger team? Is there a sense that the candidate likes to take all the credit for his/her success? Will the candidate fit into and work well on a team?
- **Individuality** – On the other hand, what did that person actually do. Many times people work in teams, and that is great. But when they leave the company, the team isn't going with them, not to mention that people can hide in a group. I need to know what is the applicant's actual contribution? So when an applicant says, "we did this" I always want to know, what did that person actually do.
- **Industry** - What companies did the applicant work for? Did those companies have good/bad reputation? Are they competitors to our firm? Will he/she be loyal to us?
- **Academics & Training** - What school(s) did he/she attend? What is their level of education? Has the applicant continued to accrue additional certifications or learning experiences beyond the "required" ones?
- **Research** - Did the candidate research our company/our competition? Did the applicant check our website?
- **Job fit** – Can the candidate perform the duties? Will he/she need additional training? Does he/she have the appropriate background/education/training to be up to speed in weeks? Are there obvious skills shortcomings that will disqualify the candidate?
- **Department/Company fit** – Is this candidate a good representative of the company. Does it appear that he/she will be a good fit as he/she begins to meet other people in the company? Is there potential for growth? Are there other complimentary skills/traits/interests that will be seen when he/she is more on board?
- **Assessment** - How well does this candidate compare to the others who we are interviewing for the same position? Are there characteristics or other assets that make this candidate stand out? Are there obvious negatives that hurt this candidate?
- **Results** – If it was my personal money going into this hire, would I spend it on this candidate? I need to place the candidate into one of these categories. Do I plan to call him/her back for a second interview?