9 Things Interviewers Never Tell Job Candidates, But Should

In the best job interviews the candidate says a lot and the interviewer very little – after all, the interview is about the candidate, not the interviewer.

But there are some things interviewers would love to tell job candidates well before the interview starts.

**1. “I really want you to be likeable.”**

Obvious? Sure, but also critical. Skills and qualifications are important, but we all want to work with people we like... and who in turn like us.

So we want you to smile. We want you to make eye contact, sit forward in your chair, and be enthusiastic. (Here are other ways to be incredibly likeable.) The employer-employee relationship truly is a relationship -- and that relationship starts with the interview (if not before.)

A candidate who makes a great first impression and sparks a real connection instantly becomes a big fish in a very small short-list pond. You may have solid qualifications, but if we don't think we'll enjoy working with you, we’re probably not going to hire you.

Life is too short to work with people we don't like.

**2. “Please don't start by telling me how much you want the job.”**

We do want you to want the job -- but not before you really know what the job entails. We may need you to work 60-hour weeks, or travel more than half the time, or report to someone with less experience than you. So sit tight.

No matter how much research you've done, you can't truly know you want the job until you know everything possible about the job. (One good way to know you really want the job is to ask really smart questions.)

**3. “I really want you to stand out.”**

A sad truth of interviewing is that later we often don't recall, unless we refer to our notes, a tremendous amount about some of the candidates. (Unfair? Sure. Reality? Absolutely.)

That means the more people we interview for a job, and the more spread out those interviews, the more likely we are to remember certain candidates by impressions rather than by a long list of facts.

So when we meet with other people to discuss and decide on the best candidate, we might initially refer to someone as, "the guy with the purple suede shoes," or "the woman who rides dressage," or "Duke grad who speaks four languages."

In short, we may remember you by "hooks" – whether flattering or unflattering – so use that fact to your advantage. While your hook could be your clothing, an outside interest, or an unusual fact about your upbringing or career, a much better hook is the project you pulled off in half the expected time or the improbably huge sale you made.

Instead of letting me choose how we’ll remember you, make sure you give us one or two notable reasons we’ll never forget you.

**4. “But I don’t want you to stand out for being negative.”**

Again, there’s no way we will remember everything you say. But we will definitely remember negative sound bites: like the candidates who complain about their current employer, their coworkers, or their customers.

So if for example you hate being micro-managed, instead say you're eager to earn more responsibility and authority. We get there are reasons you want a new job, but we want to hear why you really want this job instead of why you just want to escape your old job.

Never forget that an interview is like a first date. We know we’re seeing the best possible version of "you."

So if you whine and complain and grumble now... we know you'll be a real treat to work with a few months from when the honeymoon is over.

**5. “I really want you to ask questions that are truly important to you.”**

We need to know whether we should hire you, but just as importantly we need you to make sure our job is a great fit for you.

So we want you to ask the right questions: what we expect you to accomplish early on, what attributes make our top performers outstanding, what you can do to truly drive results, how you'll be evaluated – all the things that matter to you… and as a result to us.

Bottom line, you know what makes work meaningful and enjoyable to you. We don't. There's no other way to really know whether you want the job unless you ask great questions. So we want you to ask great questions.

**6. “But I wish you wouldn't ask questions that have little to do with work.”**

We know you want a positive work-life balance. Everyone does. Still, save all your questions about vacation sign-up policies, and whether it's okay to take an extra half hour at lunch every day if you also stay a half hour late, and whether we've considered setting up an in-house childcare facility because that would be really awesome for you.

First let's find out if you're the right person for the job, and whether the tasks, responsibilities, duties, etc. are right for you.

Then we can talk about the rest.

**7. “I love when you show you can hit the ground running."**

We expect you to do a little research about the company. That’s a given.

To really impress us, use the research you’ve done to describe how you will hit the ground running and contribute right away – the bigger the impact the better. If you bring a specific skill, show how we can immediately leverage that skill.

Think about it from our side of the table. We have to start paying your salary the first day, so we love to see an immediate return on that investment starting the first day.

In short, we’re happy to help you develop into a superstar… but we love when you’re already a star.

**8. “Now I want you to tell me you want the job – and why.”**

By the end of the interview you should have a good sense of whether you want the job. If you need more information, tell us so we can figure out how to get you what you need to make a decision.

If you don't need more information, do what great salespeople do: ask for the job.

One, we’ll like the fact you asked. We want you to really want the job – but we also want to know why you want the job. So tell us why: You thrive in unsupervised roles, or you love working with different teams, or you like frequent travel, or you do your best work when….

Ask us for the job and prove to us, objectively, that it's a great fit for you.

**9. “I like when you follow up, especially when it's genuine.”**

Every interviewer appreciates a brief follow-up note. If nothing else, saying you enjoyed meeting us and are happy to answer any other questions is a polite gesture.

But "polite" may not separate you from the pack.

What we really like – and remember – is when you follow up based on something we discussed. Maybe we talked about data collection techniques so you send information about a set of tools you strongly recommend. Maybe we talked about quality so you send a process checklist you developed that we could adapt to use in our company. Or maybe we both like motorcycle racing, so you send a photo of you standing beside Valentino Rossi before a MotoGP race in Mugello (and I'm totally jealous.)

The more closely you listened during the interview, the easier it is to think of ways to follow up in a natural and unforced way.

Remember, an interview is hopefully the start of a longer relationship -- and even the most professional of relationships are still based on genuine interactions.