

## 3 Things That'll Make Your Job Interviewer Forget About Everyone Else

"Think of it as a first date."

"It's just like dancing with a new partner. Follow their lead."

"It's a negotiation. Like buying a car."

These are just a few of the worst pieces of advice I've ever been given prior to a job interview. I'm sure you've heard hundreds of others, and as you know, none of these analogies are correct. A job interview is, simply put, an interview. For a job. Trying to compare it to anything else is a waste of time. Assuming you need a job, there's nothing like it because no other interaction has, as the major undercurrent throughout your time with another person, the following fact: if you don't hire me, I can't pay my bills and provide for myself and my family.

That being said, there really is no secret to getting a job if the following things are at play:

- a) You're qualified for the position
- b) You're confident that you could do the job
- c) You are comfortable talking to strangers.

For most people with common sense, 'a' and 'b' are no-brainers. Maybe you'll apply for something a little over your head and talk yourself into it, but for the most part, if you're sitting across from someone doing the hiring, you're close to worthy of being hired. 'C' is where most people run into trouble. Unfortunately, not everybody is effortlessly charming, witty, funny, knowledgeable and/or attractive enough to make a lights-out first impression.

Keeping that in mind, here are three very simple things anyone can do to impress the person in charge of your future pay checks.

### 1. Research

Research the company and research the person you may be interviewing with. You might not know the latter, but if you know the former, there is no reason you shouldn't know everything about the company you'd like to work for when you walk in the door. As someone who has dealt with plenty of writers under consideration for staff positions at various publications, it is staggering how many writing candidates simply didn't take the time to become familiar with the publication they're trying to work for prior to an interview.

This is something that almost every editor on earth will complain about: people applying for writing positions at their magazine who never take the time to actually read the magazine. From my conversations with friends in other fields, this seems to be a common phenomenon that can easily be avoided.

If the word "research" scares you, you either really don't want/need the job or you're lazy and you shouldn't get it anyway. If you simply aren't a great researcher, then try this: read the basic company history or (and this is absolutely something you can do) ask the recruiter/HR person if they can send you some company information if their website isn't helpful.

The second thing you should look up is the latest press releases from the company. Nothing kills a job interview faster than when the interviewer asks, "Obviously you're familiar with our

recent push to acquire Company X, or develop X technology, or our new product X” and you just sit there, having no idea what he’s talking about.

Search for the last two years’ worth of press releases and you should get a good idea of what the company has been up to. Also, form a question that you can immediately ask to show you know what you’re talking about. Here’s an example in my field: If you’re a writer and you read that my magazine recently launched a digital edition of our publication to be designed by Company X for iPads and Android tablets, research Company X and then ask, “I heard you guys hired Company X to put together your digital magazine. I love what they did with Magazine Y, are you guys happy with them?”

Then, you’ll get the interviewer talking and you’re off and running.

## 2. Pay attention to every little thing on your way in to the interview

From the moment you walk in the door, keep your head on swivel. Check out the paintings, the crap on people’s cubicle walls, the way people are dressed, everything. You should be like a quarterback reading a defence. Look for anything you can use in the interview that will make them feel like you’ll fit right in.

If you’re lucky and the job interview is in somebody’s office, you should be able to find something you can talk about that isn’t lame — a painting, a picture of kids at an amusement park, a dog... something to put everyone on common ground. Just remember, you’re there for an interview, so don’t ramble about your last trip to Disneyland for too long.

Far too often people will come in for a job interview and establish great banter, only to take it a beat too long, which leads to an awkward pause, which will be the last thing the interviewer will remember when they start asking you questions. If you happen to be killing the get-to-know-you chit-chat and you have the interviewer laughing his ass off, feel free to take that moment to segue to the interview. This goes double for the end-of-interview banter. If you once again have your interviewer in stitches laughing, or you say something that really impresses them, take the time to end right there and say: “I’ve really enjoyed this. Hopefully I’ll be talking to you guys soon.”

## 3. Be or do something memorable in a good way

Tell your interviewer something interesting and pertinent to their business that they don’t know. It could be anything, but make sure it’s correct, and make sure it’s interesting and can be easily worked into a conversation. This will require some research, but when you’re sitting across from someone and you tell them something they didn’t know or that they might be able to use, they’ll wonder what else you know that they don’t know and you’ll stand out.

If you don’t like the above strategy, you can always work into a conversation a great hobby or skill you have that will be memorable and stand in as a placeholder for your personality when you leave. The only caveat here is that the hobby has to be generally thought of as interesting, or, at the very least, kind of cool... Don’t bring up your bird-watching expedition in Arizona or people will probably only remember that you are a bird watcher, and even though that may be perfectly normal in some circles, bird watching might not be interpreted as exciting, innovative and energetic in the workplace.

You don’t have to be an action junkie for this to work, and definitely don’t lie because the last thing you need is to tell someone you’re a Class VI white-water rafter and then find yourself

drowning in the Colorado River next to your soon-to-be-boss. However, picking up a hobby like mountain biking, hiking, surfing, or something unique like stand-up paddle boarding, will make you seem like someone who embraces life and might be fun to have around the office. The more interesting/dangerous the sport or activity, the more memorable it'll be, but know the difference between what sounds awesome and what sounds ludicrous. Ideally, your employer's plan on employing you for a while, so don't wow them with a bunch of Sanctum style brush-of-death spelunking stories that'll have them thinking you'll be in traction three weeks after they hire you. You want them to find you fascinating, not reckless.

For those less athletically inclined, the activity/hobby you talk about doesn't have to be physical at all. You can be into travel, food, home brewing, whatever... Just show a passion for something that they'll remember, even if it's simply this: he's the guy who stayed an extra night in Houston because he heard about this amazing rib joint and decided to miss his flight to try it. And if your story is fun/funny, you'll be fine.