

# INTERVIEW MISTAKES

## Mistakes & Their Consequences

**Mistake:** Failing to establish rapport with the applicant

**Consequence:** The interview never gets off the ground.

**Mistake:** Not knowing what information is needed.

**Consequence:** The interviewer does not know what questions to ask the applicant.

**Mistake:** Concentrating exclusively on the applicant as a person.

**Consequence:** The interview does not compare an applicant's demonstrated abilities and experience with the actual job requirements.

**Mistake:** Not remaining silent or listening long enough.

**Consequence:** The interviewer talks too much and fails to obtain meaningful information from the applicant.

**Mistake:** Not allowing sufficient time to observe the applicant's responses and behaviors

**Consequence:** The interview is too short and superficial. (An interview of about an hour increases the chances that the applicant will impart meaningful information.)

**Mistake:** Incorrectly interpreting information obtained from the applicant.

**Consequence:** The interviewer draws the wrong conclusion about the applicant's ability to perform.

**Mistake:** Unawareness of or inability to deal directly with biases for or against certain types of applicants (stereotyping).

**Consequence:** Hiring decisions are made for reasons that may be indefensible.

**Mistake:** Allowing one characteristic or trait of an applicant to be overly influential (either favorably or unfavorably).

**Consequence:** Candidates who perform well during the interview might be overlooked.

**Mistake:** Using stress techniques designed to trap or fluster the applicant.

**Consequence:** The interviewer might not collect relevant information.

**Mistake:** Conducting a poorly structured or an unstructured interview.

**Consequence:** The interviewer fails to collect relevant or necessary information.

**Mistake:** Comparing an applicant's life with one's own life.

**Consequence:** Time that should be spent on obtaining information relevant to the job is wasted.

**Mistake:** Failing to control or direct the interview.

**Consequence:** The interviewer fails to collect all the job-related information.

**Mistake:** Asking questions answerable by a simple "yes" or "no".

**Consequence:** The interviewer fails to obtain sufficient information.

**Mistake:** Making judgmental or leading statements.

**Consequence:** The interviewer communicates desired responses to the applicant.

# INTERVIEW MISTAKES

Questions Not to Ask & Topics  
to Avoid

## QUESTIONS NOT TO ASK DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

- What kind of child-care arrangements do you have?
- Does your spouse expect you to be home to cook dinner?
- What will you do if your children get sick?
- How do you get to work?
- How many children do you have?
- Does your spouse live with you or contribute to your support?
- Do you own a home?
- Do you own a car?
- Do you have any debts?
- Do you have any loans?
- Do you plan to get married?
- Do you plan to have children?
- What sort of birth control do you use?
- Are you likely to quit if you get married or have children?
- Is your spouse likely to be transferred?
- Is your spouse from this area?
- Would a white (or black) supervisor create any difficulties for you?
- How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?
- Are you a militant?
- Do you get along well with other women (or men)?
- Will it bother you if the others swear?
- What language does your mother/father speak?
- Were you born in this country?
- Do you have people in the "old country"?
- That's an unusual name-- what nationality are you?
- Can you provide a photograph of yourself?
- How old are you?

## TOPICS TO AVOID DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

- Arrest records
- Less-than-honorable military discharges
- Gender and marital status
- Maiden name
- Number of children
- Ages of children
- Number of preschool children
- Spouse's name
- Spouse's education
- Spouse's income
- Form of birth control
- Family plans
- Childcare arrangements
- Conviction record
- Car accidents
- Lawsuits or legal complaints
- Ownership of home or rental status
- Length of residence
- Ownership of car
- Form of transportation to work
- Loans
- Wage assignments or garnishments
- Bankruptcy
- Credit cards
- Insurance claims
- Judgements
- Citizenship or national origin
- Mother's maiden name
- Place of birth
- Other languages spoken
- Proficiency in speaking, reading and writing English (unless job-related)
- Disabilities
- Handicaps
- Prior illness or accidents
- Hospitalizations
- Current or prior medication or treatment
- Workers' compensation claims
- Weight
- Age
- Date of high school graduation
- Religion
- Church affiliation
- Social organizations

## COMMON RATING ERRORS

Halo Effect	The tendency to rate a person high on all factors even though the person was outstanding on only one factor
Horns Effect	The tendency to rate a person low on all factors even though the person was below expectations on only one factor
Central Tendency	The inability to rate all or most applicants anywhere but in the middle.
Similar to Me	The tendency to rate higher those people who look, act, or have a background most like the interviewer.
First Impression	Making the hiring decision within the first few minutes of the interview, instead of evaluating all of the information from the full interview.