



EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER

## **Common Interview Mistakes to Avoid**

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## Common Interview Mistakes To Avoid for Interview Success

Recent job scarcity means that greater demands are being placed on job applicants to take advantage of anything that will enable them to beat out the competition. A great way to get that advantage is to create a powerful impression from the start. Certain mistakes, however, are sure to destroy the value of a good first impression and cost you the job. It will also make you the brunt of their jokes after you leave. Here are some common interview mistakes that you need to avoid.

### No Prior Research

Before going to any job interview, it is essential that you take some time to learn about the company in terms of its history, its goals, and its accomplishments. Also, be sure to know what the job ad says and that you are able to meet the requirements. Respond to the position advertised with a resume that is tailored specifically for it, and bring some extra copies with you. After you arrive, it is also a good idea to confirm the details of the job that is being offered, just in case changes or clarifications have since been made.



Being prepared to answer basic interview questions (such as “Tell me about yourself,” or “Why should we hire you?” or “Why did you leave your last job?”) is another very important way to create a powerful impression that clearly says you are the person for the job. Each question answered skillfully and positively will help you create a better impression. You should take time beforehand to prepare your answers with considerable thought to be able to give.

Be prepared to ask some specific questions, too. You want to have, if possible, a friendly but professional conversation with the interviewer. Getting them to warm up to you will go a long way toward creating a good impression.

### Being Improperly Dressed

Showing up for your job interview in the wrong type of clothes is almost guaranteed to ensure that you won't get the job, says Rosemary Haefner at CareerBuilder (CNN). In a survey given to hiring managers as to what were the worst offences that could be made in an interview, she said that 51 percent responded by naming dressing inappropriately, which was followed closely (49 percent) with badmouthing a former boss.

### Wearing “Too Much” of Anything

Avoid flashy clothes, ties, or clothes that clash. Dress conservatively (navy blue, gray, or black suits) and only lightly use any perfume or aftershave. Wear a minimum amount of jewelry, too, with one ring on each hand or ear (guys – no earrings). Be sure to turn off all electronics, too. Well-polished shoes will quickly be noticed and tell the interviewer that you pay close attention to detail. Dressing sharply will enable you to create a good impression - even before a single word is spoken.



## Showing Poor Manners or Body Language

Doing things like not standing or sitting straight, fidgeting, not looking the interviewer in the eye when talking, placing your hands in front of your face, chewing gum (or a pen or something else), not talking clearly, looking at or handling your cell phone, etc., will only tell the interviewer you are either not very mature, or are very nervous. A couple more things that

you want to avoid include looking bored, constantly glancing at your watch, or yawning. Remember, too, that yawning is contagious – and you might put the interviewer to sleep (guaranteeing you won't be employed there!).

On the other hand, if the reason you are so tired was unavoidable (had to rush your baby to the Emergency Room at 3 AM, etc.), you may briefly explain it to the interviewer so that it can be overlooked. Rich Alexander at Job Interview Bootcamp mentions that your ability to listen may be being evaluated, too.



So wherever you are – be all there – and be totally focused. You want to start off right by walking in like your alive, greeting the interviewer with a firm handshake, and making sure that your voice is forceful enough to be easily heard. Do not sit down until asked to do so. Avoid the “Um’s” and the “Uh’s”, or “like,” and all slang. Act like you expect to get the job.

## Complaining about Anything

In an interview, people are expected to be on their best behavior, and when you complain - it will be instantly noticed.

Do not complain about your previous boss, your commute, how many days or weeks it took to get in to see the interviewer, about personal circumstances, etc. You want to avoid sounding desperate for the job, too. Your personal problems will not make you any more qualified for the job. Always be positive – which will also make you more pleasant to be around.

Complaining can also include something as simple as saying you left your last job because of money. While that may be true, you want to stay positive and say something instead like you are looking for a higher position or that you want a new challenge that will enable you to use your talents more fully.

## Focusing on the Wrong Thing

Remember that an interviewer has only one reason to see you - to find out if you would make a good employee in a specific position. Talking about side issues prematurely, such as salary, bonus, vacation time, benefits, days off, vacations, relocation or sick days, etc., could show a potential employer that you can't focus on priorities, meaning you aren't cut out for the job. Stay away from these topics until the right time comes - typically after the final interview. Instead, focus on questions related to what the job entails and what your responsibilities will be and what you need to do to be successful on the job. Show them that you are focused on the things that matter to your future employer first and the rest will take care of itself in due time.

## Inflating Your Previous Value

In many cases an interviewer has already heard most everything imaginable from interviewees – they could probably write a book. One thing that will immediately identify someone who may not be able to focus on the position they are hired for is someone who believes that they are indispensable, or who thinks they should start out at the top. Be honest about what you did in a previous job and don't overinflate or misrepresent it. After all, they're going to carefully check out your resume. If they are interested in you as a finalist, your previous employer(s) will be called for references and for confirmation regarding statements on your resume and even on those things you said in the interview.



## Failing to Show You Fit the Position

When the interview period is over, interviewers have to choose which candidate(s) they will hire, or who they'll recommend to be hired. To help them decide that you are the best candidate, you will need to summarize in just a couple of sentences why you are the best one. You want to do this because it is quite possible that the interviewer may not yet be able to piece the puzzle together. You can do this for him or her by saying something like: "Judging from your needs for an experienced \_\_\_\_\_, and with my years of experience as a \_\_\_\_\_, and a \_\_\_\_\_, I believe my talents and abilities make me the logical and perfect choice for this position."

## Failing to Ask for the Job

The last mistake that you want to avoid is not asking for the job. After you understand the full hiring process, and the time frame involved, you can get your answer in a number of ways. You will need to be prepared to get an answer before you leave. Remember that they may want to fill the position quickly – and you want to be the one that fills it for them. Asking for the job should naturally follow the above summary statement about why you think you are the best candidate.

Before the interview is over, get a business card from each person involved. This will help you get the correct spelling of their names and their position. Then, right after the interview, you want to jot down notes about the meeting. Within 24 hours, be sure to send a follow-up letter, says Alexander, because this will help you to be remembered. It also shows professionalism and that you are sincerely interested in the job.

### Links:

- <http://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/worklife/05/12/cb.interview.misakes/index.html>
- Alexander; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVvh08YtMp0>
- <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/50-Worst-of-the-Worst-and-usnews-3658564314.html?x=0>
- <http://motivatednetworker.com/50-worst-job-interview-mistakes/>
- <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/50-Worst-of-the-Worst-and-usnews-3658564314.html?x=0>

# ABOUT PATRICK ROPELLA



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Ropella, with 25 years experience, is the leading executive search and consulting firm specializing in the chemical, consumer products, technology and energy industries.

We help many of the world's largest companies find, hire, develop and retain their most important people. We recruit globally in sales, marketing, R&D, and manufacturing, from middle management to the most senior executive levels. At Ropella, not only do we find great leaders, we can also help you build a stronger, more competitive, and more innovative team with our Leadership and Organizational Improvement consulting services.

Nothing is more important to your company's ability to create value than the right blend of talent. Call us today and put our people and our process to work for you.

Having dedicated his career to helping companies across the globe in sourcing, marketing to, assessing, recruiting, on-boarding, retaining, training and transforming top talent, Patrick Ropella has a global perspective on Executive Search and Talent Management.

He has worked across all roles and functions, cascading from the top levels of management to also placing apprentices coming straight out of college. Over the past 20+ years he has seen many individuals he's personally assisted make career transitions, become well trained leaders, join the C-suite at many of the world's largest corporations.

His experience within the global chemical industry as a dominant talent management leader allowed his firm, Ropella Group, to grow to the leading position it now holds with a wide variety of corporate clients with the chemical industry, transition to serving major consumer product companies, energy companies, Nano, Bio and other high technology companies.

Patrick has traveled extensively, meeting with middle level to C-level executives at the top 100 largest chemical and consumer product companies in the world, branding the "Ropella" name globally. He has successfully placed hundreds of senior level executives with top name companies, including but not limited to: DOW, DuPont, Exxon, Georgia Pacific, SONY, Anderson Windows, GE-Silicone, P&G, Clorox, Pfizer, BASF, PPG, Monsanto, Revlon, Baxter Labs, Sealy Mattress, Ciba Geigy, Johnson & Johnson, Shell, Sherwin Williams Paints, New Balance Tennis Shoes, and many more.

Patrick has written for a wide variety of trade publications, newspapers and business journals on subjects related to the topics covered in The Right Hire. His writings have also been published in Germany, Italy, Latin America and Asia.

Patrick and Robbie reside in Milton, FL. with sons Richard and Robert nearby.

## AUTHOR OF

- ▶ The Right Hire
- ▶ The Right Fit
- ▶ The Right Team
- ▶ Over 50 published articles



Patrick Ropella's **SMART Talent Management System** focuses on training Human Resource leaders and Hiring Managers based on the core Talent Management topics of:

**S**ourcing, **M**arketing, **A**ssessing, **R**ecruiting, **R**etention, **T**raining, and **T**ransformation.