

TheSavvyIntern

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The 5 Defining Moments of Every Job Interview

Posted on January 23, 2012 by Mark Babbitt

In every job interview, there are five “make-it-or-break-it” moments that send the candidate onto the next round of interviews, possibly even a job offer, or to the discard pile.

Of course, there are highly important aspects before (research) and after (effective follow up) the interview. For the purpose of this discussion, however, we’ll focus exclusively on **winning your initial interview** with each employer.

Without further delay, here are the five defining moments of every job interview...

1. The Entrance

No matter how digital our job search becomes, nearly nothing is more important than our first impression. Arriving on time, a firm (dry) handshake, shoulders back, eye contact, the ability to make effective small-talk until you sit down, and more... all matter. Why? Because failing in any of these areas **shows a lack of confidence and/or respect** for the recruiter – NOT a great way to start an interview.

2. The Conversation

You’ve done your pre-interview research and several mock interviews; you are perfectly prepared to talk with ease about why you WANT the job, why you CAN do the job and why YOU are the perfect candidate. Why is this important? (Hint: it isn’t for the reasons most think).

The primary goal for this critical part of the interview is to turn the “interrogation”... **into a conversation**. Just two people talking... in a relaxed, sincere, “I like this guy” kind of way. When you’ve accomplished this goal, and are truly engaging with the recruiter, you’re well on your way to nailing the interview.

3. The Value Proposition

Now that you’ve moved the recruiter to conversational mode, it’s time to rise above most of your competition. How? By clearly working **your unique value proposition** into the conversation!

Your value proposition is what makes you the most hireable candidate for the position. Maybe it is your experience, passion, your entrepreneurial outlook, knowledge of the competition or ability to lead teams. More than likely, it's a combination of all of the above, and more. Articulating why you are the right person for the job makes the recruiter's decision – and job – that much easier while leaving no doubt you have the confidence to step right into the role.

4. The Questions

At some point, the recruiter is going to ask: "Do you have any questions of me?" – and **you better be ready**.

Saying "no" implies you aren't interested. Saying "Not at this time, we covered everything" shows you haven't done your homework. Asking questions easily found online demonstrates a lack of passion and creativity. Inquiring about the exact compensation and benefits may indicate you are worried mostly about you.

At this critical point in the interview, you should ask three types of questions, in no particular order:

1. A question about the recruiter's personal experience with the company ("What do you enjoy about working for this company and our industry?")
2. A question specific to the job or project ("In my first 60 days in this role, how would we measure my success as a (insert job title)? How can I make the most impact?")
3. A question about the company and its future ("I see your competition, ABC Company, has rolled out a new product line; short-term, how will we contend with their launch?")

Please **note the use of "us" and "we"** in the questions – and the lack of "I" and "me".

5. The Close

You've made a good first impression in what has become an engaging, two-way conversation. You've clearly stated your value proposition and asked impeccable questions. And then you shake hands and say "Thanks for the interview, hope to hear from you soon!"

Wrong!

Each interview is an **opportunity for you to "close" the deal**; to not only help the recruiter make a decision about your candidacy, but also to **get them to commit to next steps**. For instance, you may ask, "How do I compare to other candidates?" Or, you may ask "Do you have any reservations about my ability to do this job well, or to fit in well with the existing team?" After getting answers to either or both of those questions, ask one more: "What are next steps with my application... and how soon will you be making your decision?"

This "never fails" round of closing questions is sure to create a positive "last" impression as you leave their office!

Anticipating, preparing for and successfully executing a strategy for these five defining job interview moments shows the recruiter you are thoroughly prepared for the interview. More important, these interview tactics set you apart from 95% of your competition – and places you that much closer to job search success!

About the Author: *A passionate supporter of Gen Y talent, CEO and Founder of YouTern Mark Babbitt is a serial entrepreneur and mentor. Mark has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal, Mashable, Forbes and Under30CEO regarding internships, higher education's role in preparing emerging talent for the workforce and career development. Recently, Mark was honored to be named to GenJuice's list of "Top 100 Most Desirable Mentors". You can contact Mark via [email](#) or on [Twitter](#).*