

What are the top three mistakes that are made in interviews?

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Many graduates have achieved a lot in their lives, but fail to connect their experience to the competencies an interviewer is seeking to test. For example, if asked "Tell me about how you have contributed to a team", the interviewer wants to know how you interacted with others and how your actions contributed to the team's success in order for them to determine if you would likely act in a similar way in the role you're applying for. It's a good idea to structure your answers such as using the STAR formula - e.g.: outline the **situation**, what was the **task** required, what was your **action** and what was the **result** of your actions? Make sure you include the result (many people simply describe what they did without highlighting the result of their work) and then outline how this experience would help you in the role you're being interviewed for.
2. Lack of research into the organisation and role - expect to be asked about your motivation for applying. An interviewer will expect you to be able to provide basic information about the organisation and relate that to why you applied for the role.
3. Lack of preparation - an interview can be daunting if you haven't thought about how you plan to answer questions. Practice answering interview questions with friends and obtain their feedback. Think about your experiences and what competencies you can demonstrate to build a mental "bank" of examples. This will help you to become more confident and assist if you get any tricky questions - you will be able to pause to consider which the best example is, rather than wonder what to say.

Tricia Gardiner, Graduate Recruitment and Development Officer, Moore Stephens LLP, www.moorestephens.co.uk

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Assuming that they know what the job is about. This comes down to inadequate pre-interview research.
2. A 'WIFM' (what's in it for me?) approach and only being focused on what the firm is going to do or give the candidate rather than what added value the candidate will bring to the firm.
3. Lack of relevant qualifications.

Paul Sheridan, Sales Manager, IN Partnership, www.inpartnership.net

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Simply not preparing, e.g., no research into the company and no anticipation of questions to fit to role.
2. Dress – not wearing office attire.
3. Poor eye contact and body language, e.g., slouching in chair, not looking 'alert'.

Mike Smith, Learning and Development Manager, Chaucer Insurance, www.chaucerplc.com

The most common mistakes by candidates in interviews are often the most easily corrected ones:

1. Several graduates have come to an interview not knowing what the job is that they are applying for. Examples include candidates being interviewed for an Asset Management company, but assuming it was an Investment Bank, and occasions when candidates couldn't explain the difference between a Broker and an Underwriter when being interviewed by an insurance company. This information is very easily accessible and a candidate needs to research the industry that they are applying for to demonstrate how serious they are about working within it.
2. Knowing why you want to work for a particular company is key. Due to the economic climate, some people apply for any and every scheme, in the hope of just getting an offer. Retention is key when recruiting the right person, this is not a short term investment for the company therefore firms are looking for graduates who can show a genuine interest in the company and industry.
3. Communication skills, e.g., talking over an interviewer, rambling, not directly answering a question. Try to relax, be personable, friendly and polite. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so rather than try to bluff your way through it. Most interviewers will see through the bluff in a second.

Natalya Taylor, UK & International Graduate Recruitment Manager, Willis Limited, www.willis.com/careers

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Failure to thoroughly research the organisation and demonstrate an understanding of the company.

2. Failing to present themselves during the interview, appearing to lack the drive, determination and enthusiasm we are seeking.
3. Dressing inappropriately.

Gary Shoemith, Technical Training & Education Liaison Director, Willis Limited, www.willis.com/careers

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Not preparing for the interview, e.g. need to ensure you have a number of relevant answers with examples for each question asked.
2. Always ensure to look presentable.
3. Always give yourself enough time for travel to ensure you're not late.

Carina Barclay, Senior Resourcing Adviser, Legal & General, www.legalandgeneralcareers.com

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Waffling when giving answers and not being structured in responses.
2. Not being specific enough during competency based interviews. Competency interviewing is the method Sesame and many other employers use within interview situation.
3. Turning up late.

Anna Masheter, Sesame, www.sesame.co.uk

There really is one mistake that candidates make: insufficient preparation. These can be broken down into:

1. Lack of preparation; Interviewers want to know how well you are going to fit in to an organisation. Applicants need to think of examples which demonstrate this.
2. Prepare examples which are in 3 parts - describe the situation you were dealing with, what you did and what the results were (try to quantify results in terms of task, team and individual).
3. Candidates should think of examples where what you did didn't go so well; the key thing is what you learnt from the process.

John Morewood, Senior Graduate Recruitment & Development Manager, HSBC BANK PLC, www.jobs.hsbc.co.uk/14-en/HSBC.aspx

Applying for jobs is hard work, so once you get that first interview it's really important that you make the most of the opportunity to show how capable you are in person. Unfortunately, some candidates let themselves down at interview. There are many reasons why this happens, but the top three mistakes made in interviews - and how to avoid them - are:

1. **Failure to Prepare** – you must undertake some research before the interview and show an awareness of the organisation, the business sector and current issues, and the role you are applying for.
2. **Poor Communication** – you need to answer questions concisely and succinctly, prepare for the difficult questions and respond to them in a positive way, and ask your own questions to find out more.
3. **Lack of Personal Branding** – you should be smartly dressed, use appropriate body language, and ensure that everything you say and do is individual to you, authentic and consistent.

Once you build up experience and confidence in these areas, the standard of your interviews will improve and so will your chances of getting that job.

Laura Murphy, Head of Student Business Relationships, ACCA UK - www.uk.accaglobal.com

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Insufficient preparation – not researching the organisation in any depth. Company websites make doing this research easy.
2. Not being sufficiently business focused – in dress and in approach to the interview conversations – there's a need to show enthusiasm, engagement and drive.
3. Having no questions when it comes to "do you have any questions" time or having ones which are only focused on career advancement possibilities for themselves or the social side of work.

Gillian King, Director of Education & Trustee Development, The Pensions Management Institute - www.pensions-pmi.org.uk

From a Citi perspective, the most common mistakes that we see are:

1. Candidate's lack of research regarding the position they are applying for or about the organisation to which they have applied.
2. Little preparation for competency based interviews. Candidates often struggle to come up with examples of situations they previously dealt with that show their competency in a particular area.
3. A general lack of preparation for questions that they themselves want to ask the hiring manager
4. Negative comments of previous employers and why they left the organisation
5. There have also been occasions when some candidates have been inappropriately dressed for an interview.

Michelle McManus, Assistant Vice President, HR Site Head, Citi - www.citi.com

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Lack of knowledge of the organisation as a whole and in particular the role; little if any research undertaken which would assist preparation for the interview
2. Inability to provide specific answers to competency based questions. Prior to the interview, thought requires to be given to their existing skills /experience and occasions when they have displayed the behaviours required for the position
3. Arriving with incomplete application form/documentation - for successful individual this can delay the recruitment process.

Tricia Crooks, Resourcing Consultant, Royal Bank of Scotland Group, www.rbs.co.uk

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Lack of preparation for the interview: Look at the job advertisement and make sure you understand what the key requirements of the role are. These could be building relationships, planning and multi-tasking, producing reports etc. Having notes and examples from your experiences ready to draw on in these key areas if asked by interviewer will make a positive difference.
2. Poor or lack of candidate questions: This is the time for you to show off. The type of questions you ask the interviewer indicate not only the level at which you operate but your understanding and research that you've done into the role or the business.
3. Poor timekeeping - lateness! Make sure you know the route, and even do a trial run and be sure of where you need to get to! So many candidates get lost or arrive late. Of course employers are sympathetic to those who have genuine problems and don't make it on time, but it always pays to check the route!

Jo Hussey, Nationwide, www.nationwide.co.uk

The three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Lack of preparation beforehand. Candidates should always research the company before the interview.
2. First impressions are crucial. Look smart – always dress professionally for the interview, even if it is a company dress down day. Only take along what is necessary for the meeting.
3. Consider beforehand what information you would like from the company and, if this has not been covered during your interview, ask the relevant questions at the end.

Josie Laab-Garia, ICM Recruitment, http://www.icm.org.uk/default.asp?edit_id=567-68

In our experience, the three key mistakes which candidates make in an interview situation are:

1. Lack of evidence of preparation: the questions at an interview should all relate to the requirements of the job and the personal specification which makes it easier for candidates to think about and prepare answers.
2. Candidates not listening or understanding the question - it's tempting to connect with something in the question and recount all you know about the subject without reflecting.
3. Weak non-verbal communication: poor appearance, lack of professional conduct, over/under confidence and bad timekeeping. First impressions last!

Stephen G Mungavin, Principal Consultant, CIPFA, www.cipfa.org.uk

The common pitfalls that candidates fall foul of:

1. Candidates don't prepare a number of examples to emphasize their experiences. Some try and make one great project stretch over a number of questions
2. A lot of candidates don't gen-up on the Company (or role) they are being interviewed for - shows lack of interest and desire
3. Answering the questions in the 'we' rather than the 'I'
4. Not being specific in what it is they have achieved – not using STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result)

Nina Finch, Learning & Development Consultant, Leeds Building Society