

Actions & Phrases That Are Job Interview Suicide

by Amy Levin-Epstein

(MoneyWatch) Have you ever been in a job interview and said something that made the conversation grind to an awkward halt? There are few worse feelings than knowing your interview is not going well. And while it's possible to turn around a bad meeting before you shake your interviewer's hand goodbye, it's best to avoid certain actions or phrases that are serious ship-sinkers. Here are four to stay away from.

Talking like a robot.

Speaking in generalities like "Teams work better when a leader is collaborative," won't help you stand out, says Heather McNab, author of *What Top Professionals Need to Know About Answering Job Interview Questions*. "To the listener, this sounds like you know what you should do but leaves them wondering if you've actually done it," says McNab. Instead, give specific examples that you've prepared ahead of time to support your claims.

Asking what they can do for you.

When they ask if you have any questions, this is your opportunity to show you've researched the company and have relevant questions about their future and where you might fit in. It's not the time to ask about vacations or time off. "Show that you want to work hard and that hours on the job are your priority – not hours off," says Mark Jeffries, the author of *The Art of Business Seduction*.

Making assumptions about the interviewer.

If someone seems junior – whether by appearance or title – don't assume they are the low man or woman on the totem pole with no decision-making power. "Your misjudgment will be apparent if you insinuate that you are more experienced [or qualified] than him or her. For all you know, the interviewer may be one of the youngest graduates ever of an Ivy League school, or he/she is being groomed for an executive management position within the organization," says John. B. Molitor, co-author, with Barbara Parus, of *Crazy Good Interviewing*. If the interviewer feels belittled, you won't get his or her approval. Even if you're right about their status, they'll still pass on their sentiments to the person in charge.

Being a motormouth.

If you can't stop talking, the interviewer can't do their job. "Recruiters have a number of questions and a limited amount of time to obtain information to help them determine fit and qualifications and it is very unproductive when the candidate gives long-winded responses and does not pause to allow additional questions or follow up to be asked," says Debra Bathurst, vice president of HR with Oasis Outsourcing. Be clear, concise, and stay focused on answering only the question asked.

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