Top Ten Mistakes in the Initial Interview

by Dr. Tony Beshara

A job placement expert and author of The Job Search Solution, Dr. Tony Beshara cites these ten frequent transgressions made by jobseekers in their first meeting with a prospective employer.

1. **Forgetting that this is a selling situation and not asking for the job.** Your objective in an initial interview is to sell what you can do for the prospective employer. Candidates must communicate why they are unique, valuable, and need to be hired.

2. **Thinking interviewing is a ‘two-way’ street.** An initial interview is a ‘one-way’ street. Candidates have to prove themselves superior to all of the other candidates before getting to an equal exchange with a potential employer.

3. **Focusing on what you want in a job, instead of what the employers wants from you.** If candidates give the hiring authority good reasons why they ought to be hired, they can expect to hear plenty of reasons why they ought to come to work there.

4. **Not understanding what you are really selling to an employer.** Many candidates forget to sell specific features, advantages and benefits that they can provide the employer.

5. **Not articulating or ‘bridging’ your specific abilities for an employer.** Most candidates know they are good, but they don’t know how to convey their advantages and apply their transferable skills. Doing so does not come naturally, so it must be practiced ahead of time.

6. **Poor communication skills.** You must practice looking people in the eye and communicating clearly and concisely what you can do for a company that nobody else can.

7. **Dressing improperly and conducting yourself unprofessionally.** Candidates should always dress professionally and be relaxed yet serious in their body language.

8. **Not researching the company or the position for which you are interviewing.** The people who get job offers usually are better informed about the organization and people they are interviewing with.

9. **Inability to articulate what you would like in a new job or company.** Candidates must be able to communicate their professional goals and what they are striving for personally and professionally.

10. **Badmouthing your present (or past) employer.** Most candidates don’t recognize that employers are going to identify with other employers. Jobseekers’ past and present managers and supervisors must be portrayed in a positive light.

Adapted from Acing the Interview: How to Ask and Answer the Questions That Will Get You the Job by Tony Beshara (Amacom Books, 2008) available online at amanet.org/books.