

CAREER CENTER

View a Job Interview As a Sales Call

Whose responsibility is it to see that a good employment interview takes place, the hiring organization or the job candidate?

Current thinking is that the hiring organization should have a reliable and accurate interview process and there is little a job candidate can do to influence it.

That is scary when combined with recent surveys which have shown that a majority of the HR professionals questioned believe people in their own organizations use poor interviewing techniques resulting in hiring the wrong person for the job, or not hiring the right person. The largest percentage of these mistakes was felt to be caused by a lack of training or a lack of preparation to properly interview and select for the position. So we know that bad interviews are going to take place.

Can a job candidate improve the odds of having a good interview?

Now let's look at the analogy of viewing a Job Interview as a Sales Call, as the title of this article suggests: the Job Candidate is to the Interviewer as a Salesperson is to the Buyer.

Job Candidate is to the Interviewer as a Salesperson is to the Buyer

In a **sales call**, if the Buyer is not prepared, I can not picture a Salesperson being passive and sitting there waiting for the Buyer to ask him the right questions. In a sales situation, the Salesperson is trained to seek out the needs of the Buyer and then formulate a presentation matching the features of his product to the needs of the Buyer.

If the **Job Candidate** will look at the **interview** as if he were a **Salesperson** making a **sales call** on a **Buyer** (the hiring official) he would obviously not be satisfied sitting passively through a bad interview either. To create a good outcome, there is a point at which the Candidate would step up and make sure that his appropriate talents and qualifications make it onto the table and to the best of his ability, are matched against the job requirements and company needs.

A sharp Candidate would do it with enough tact and skill to avoid being labeled as being too pushy or aggressive because, the Hiring Official, no matter how ill-prepared, may need to save face and feel that he himself is the one in control.

Do not allow your possible conclusion that the Interviewer is inept or untrained, lead you to be a bore or to act inappropriately. The Interviewer may be inept but the interviewer is still the interviewer. A successful alternative conclusion is likely only if you have taken time to establish rapport and have adequate communications skills.

When tangible evidence indicates the Interviewer is unskilled or ill-prepared, the situation can be tested with a sensitively asked question such as, “What is the process you would like to follow?”

If the answer continues to confirm the fact that the interview will be ineffective or a disaster if the course is not changed, the Candidate may continue to probe with questions such as:

“Where does this interview fit in the selection process?”

“Who will likely make the final decision?”

“What problems do you want to solve with this hire?”

“What do you see as the major activity or projects the successful candidate will tackle?”

“What were the shortcomings of the prior incumbent?”

Presentation

Once you feel you have gathered all the major needs of the company for this position, you can now put together a presentation of your best qualifications and accomplishments that will satisfy the company’s needs. Refer the Interviewer to accomplishments highlighted in your resume, being very specific to match them to their needs. Supplement the information in your resume with stories of additional accomplishments addressing as many of their needs as appropriate.

Present the accomplishments in terms that the Interviewer can best appreciate; a Human Resources professional may appreciate examples of organizational fit, management style and adaptability, while an operations manager may best relate to dollars to the bottom line and your ability to solve problems and make your boss look good.

Close

Gain the Interviewer’s agreement that the needs of the company are properly covered by the capabilities you possess, by using a Closing question, such as, “Do you agree that I represent an ideal solution to your organizations needs?”

Probe for objections that you can in turn, clarify and satisfy with additional presentation of related accomplishments.

Obviously, being hired even using this approach depends upon a lot of factors somewhat beyond your direct control, such as:

- Does the interviewer have the authority to hire you?
- Does their process require them to interview additional candidates?
- Is the interviewer mentally capable of putting it all together to follow the logic of your presentation to its proper conclusion?
- It may not be the best job for you or you may not be the best candidate for it.

This process may not result in a one for one interview-to-hire ratio but thinking of the interview as a sales call will open up the opportunity to possibly salvage the interview that was destined to be a bad interview. Good luck using the interview as a mental game.

Jon Harvill CPC, APICS Atlanta Career Center Director, can be contacted at 770 952-0009, jharvill@dunhillatlanta.com or visit Dunhill's website at www.dunhillatlanta.com