

Understanding the Power Dynamic of the First Interview

When you are invited to an interview, the ball is not in your court...yet. It may seem tempting to participate with swagger and assume that, because your resume and cover letter were chosen, you have an advantage over all of the other candidates. Smart job candidates understand the power dynamic at each stage of the interview process, working to maximize whatever position they are in. In short: your power rests primarily in your ability to meet an interviewer's expectations.

But how?



When you are on a first interview, make sure that you:

- **Research the company.** One of the best ways to torpedo your chances in an interview is to ask a seemingly simple question: “So what do you do?” It may seem like a good conversation starter, but it’s actually telling the interviewer that you care so little about the position that you couldn’t even be bothered to Google the company. Since that’s obviously not true, do your part. Find out about the company. Ask your recruiter and do your homework. Come prepared.
- **Focus on the details of the job.** Use the information you gain from your research to discuss the details of the job. Whether you are interviewing with a hiring manager or with the supervisor of a particular department, you make a good impression when you ask questions like “what specific challenges do you see me tackling in the first 90 days?” Remember that, though the power is in the hands of the interviewer, you are still deciding if this job is the right fit for you as well. Ask questions to find out if you and your skills are a good match for this company, team, and specific assignment.
- **Answer the question that’s being asked.** Yes, you are there to show the interviewer that you are a fantastically skilled employee who deserves to be a member of their team. But when an interviewer asks you a question, answer it. Don’t spend two seconds addressing the question and five minutes showcasing your talents and experience. Though you may think you are doing what everyone does at an interview, remember that you are a guest. The interviewer is asking specific questions for a reason, and your willingness to answer the question without inserting a long list of unrelated resume points shows your confidence, strength, and ability to communicate effectively.
- **Speak about yourself as a part of the team.** When you are talking about the company and the future, use terms like “we” and “us.” It’s a subtle but skillful way to help the interviewer see you as a part of the team. You can do this in a number of ways, but don’t pre-script your responses. Be confident about the fact that you can do the job, and the rest will come naturally.

It’s our primary goal to match companies with the right candidates, but we can’t control the interview process. You can! Using your understanding of the power dynamic between interviewer and candidate can help you make the most of the opportunity you have, increasing your odds of moving forward in the hiring process.