

How to Sell Yourself on Interviews, Part Two

By Elinor Stutz

It is very important to remember that you cannot sell yourself until you know what the interviewer needs. Therefore, the interviewer speaks first. The smart strategy is to listen well and then match his or her needs.

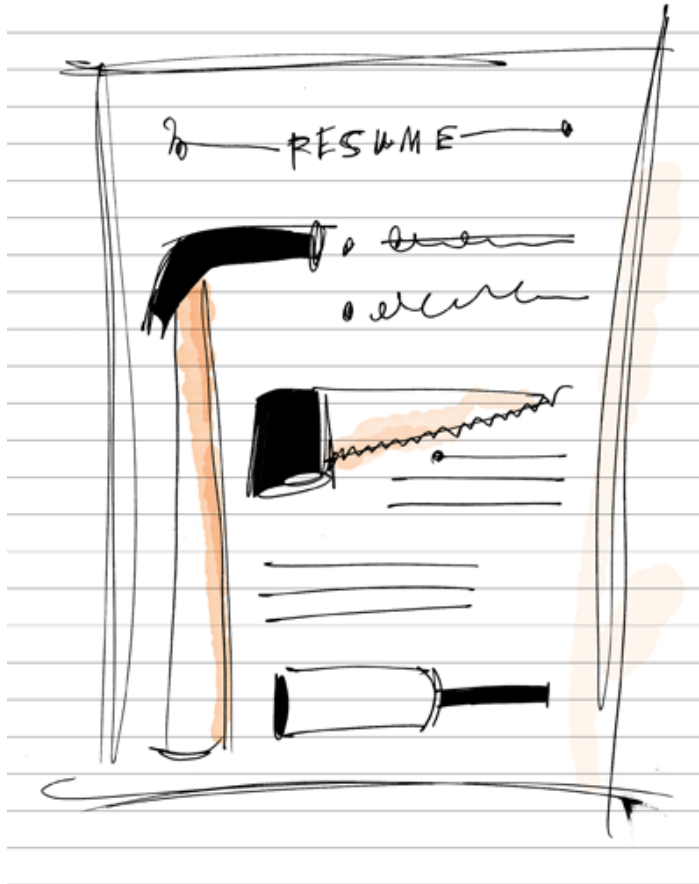
Take an active interest in the conversation. It is okay to say you do not understand something that is being said. The person will appreciate your keen interest in understanding and your honesty. It will be far worse to pretend you are knowledgeable and have the deception backfire. We are a global society, so often people will use a word in a different manner than that to which we are accustomed. Always clarify and recap where required.

Just as you observed in the mirror how you speak, watch the body language and facial expressions of the person interviewing you. Observe how s/he communicates and takes in your information. If you see an eyebrow raised or arms crossed while you are speaking, stop speaking immediately to ask if there is a question. If you do not stop, the other person will concentrate on the sentence that was not clear to him or her for the remainder of the conversation and deem you not credible. You must strive to be certain the interviewer is on the same page with you at all times.

Vocabulary is another form of DNA. People will recognize their words. So when you do take notes, take them in the other person's vocabulary. When you ask a question about what was said, use the phrase s/he used pertaining to the subject matter. This will, again, lead him or her to feel comfortable with you and believe you are on the same page.

Some people will ask difficult questions on interviews such as "I need someone who has the experience of doing XYZ, but it's not evident on your resume you have done this. How can I be sure you're the right candidate?" You can answer by saying, "Yes, it's true I have not done precisely XYZ. However, in the past I was asked to meet a particular challenge for which I also did not have the experience. Since I am a quick learner and fast on my feet, not only did I figure out how to solve the problem, but I also received accolades for the solution." Only say something to this effect if it's true. You must always be truthful.

Long ago, it was said that people "buy" when three to five needs are found; just one need will not make a sale. You are selling your expertise, so you must dig deep in conversation to find out why you are there, what has transpired leading up to your being there, and what the ramifications are for not having someone in the position to date, including the cost of not moving forward.



The open-ended questions may include the following:

- “What are your goals for the department?”
- “Where do you see this position headed?”
- “Will you describe a typical day for this position?”
- “Can you describe interactions with other departments (as appropriate)?”
- “What qualities are you looking for in your leading candidate?”

When it is your turn to describe yourself and why you are best suited to the position above all of the other candidates, you must match the information shared with you. For example, you might reply, “You said this is your major challenge; here is my past experience and how I can help you move forward.”

As you finish a topic of discussion, ask if the interviewer has any questions about what you said. You can also ask if s/he agrees with you on some of your points. You might ask, “Would you agree that...?” or “Do you believe this would help?”

At the end of your interview, recap the high points of why you were asked to come in, the type of person being sought, and how you can help the company achieve its goals. If you wish to pursue employment with the company, you must ask, “Am I the type of candidate you are seeking?” Get the answer out in the open so you will know if you have a true shot for the position.

If you get an affirmative “Yes, you are the type of person we are seeking,” ask what the next step is. Is it another face-to-face meeting with someone else, a meeting with a board of directors, or a follow-up phone call to human resources? In order to proceed, you must know what is expected. Typically, the follow-up is with the person interviewing you.

Whatever the answer turns out to be, write down the date and time to follow up. Ask for the interviewer’s preferred method of communication—whether to follow up by phone or email. Be certain to mark the appointed date and time on both a paper and an electronic calendar so there will be no forgetting! This is the point, as stated earlier, where most people fail.

The very next step as you leave the office is to ask for the person’s business card. Shake hands, thank him or her with a big smile for taking the time to meet with you, and restate that you are very excited about the position for which you are interviewing. As soon as you return to your office, handwrite a note thanking the person for his or her time. State once more that you are very excited about the opportunity. Enthusiasm is contagious. Keep the note short and legible, and assure the interviewer you will be contacting him or her at the appointed date and time. Handwritten notes are a lost art and will put you ahead of the employment-seeking crowd.

Be certain to follow up at the designated date and time. You must be precisely punctual to further build credibility and your eligibility as the leading candidate. If the follow-up is by phone, remind the person that s/he asked you to call at this particular time and then announce your name. Remind the interviewer that you enjoyed the conversation in his or her office and are following up about the position as recommended. Then be quiet.

Once again, it is the prospective employer’s turn to talk. He or she will let you know what is now required. Ask questions as appropriate and reconfirm instructions given to you.

Negotiation for some, and for women in particular, is a difficult concept. Women haven’t been schooled in business or in the art of negotiation, and, to date, they are greatly underpaid compared with men. For this reason, I offer the following suggestion:

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For every interview in which you participate, ask for \$2,000 more than in the previous interview. Generally speaking, you will interview better and better as time goes on. At the same time, your salary requirement will increase. Ultimately, you will most likely wind up securing a position with a higher pay scale. It's the non-negotiated negotiation! This tactic will also help to increase your self-confidence.

Reviewing the strategies shared in this article, you will see that the three tips shared upfront were followed throughout the interview process. The script was tossed, every step was initiated from the interviewer's point of view, and you followed up exactly as requested. You have just greatly increased your chances for success in gaining the job of your choosing.

About the Author:

Elinor Stutz, CEO of Smooth Sale and author, has transformed her highly successful sales career into a career training entrepreneurs, network marketers, and beginning salespeople. Her company states, "We help you turn stormy sales cycles into a Smooth Sale." Community service is of great importance to Ms. Stutz. Periodically, she counsels job seekers on how to gain employment. Several people have written to say that her tips helped them to secure job offers.

Ms. Stutz has been a guest on many radio shows. Her book, *Nice Girls*, was highlighted in the November 6, 2006, *TIME* magazine business supplement, and she mentors entrepreneurs at The Learning Café. For more information, call 800-704-1499 or visit www.smoothsale.net. Smooth Sale delivers original work in the forms of professional sales training, licensing of programs, speaking engagements, and the *Smooth Sale Tips* e-zine. Smooth Sale also offers the following resources: *Nice Girls DO Get the Sale: Relationship Building That Gets Results*, published by Sourcebooks; *The Smooth Sale Toolkit*; the Smooth Selling four-CD training seminar; and *How to GROW Your Business: The Entrepreneur's Handbook—Mindset, Strategy, and Implementation*.