

## Mind Your Manners!

By Mary Waldron

An interview is the final destination in any job pursuit; we all know that. So when you walk in the door, there are several things that must be aligned, so to speak. Not to sound like your mother, but minding your manners is one of them. "Well, duh," you're probably thinking. But you'd be surprised at some of the mindless blunders people make in these first-impression encounters. One *maybe* forgivable, but after that, you're on thin ice.

### Get Rid of Your Gum.

Take a Tic Tac. Have an Altoid. But don't chomp on gum. When you're the one chewing it, you might think you are being inconspicuous, but that's impossible. Many younger professionals don't even think about this one, but people will notice, regardless of the fact that it may or may not drive them nuts.

Believe it or not, many people see gum chewing as cheap and tacky. That may seem like an extreme attitude toward an everyday behavior, but take a moment to visualize a beautiful, graceful woman, like the late Princess Diana, smiling. Then, imagine that she opens her mouth to start chewing on some Bubble Yum. Can you see her jaw chomping and gnawing on that gum? You get the picture.

Better yet, just don't have anything in your mouth during an interview—and that includes everything from hard candy to dental retainers. (Yes, this happens. Kinda sick, huh?) Aside from the fact that they can be distracting and possibly tacky, these "additions" might impair your speech, which will prevent communication, which could cost you the job.

### Throw Out Your Frappuccino First.

I would not have included this one unless I had seen it myself. What possesses a person to come waltzing into someone's office with a coffee drink or soda in one hand as he or she shakes hands with the other? This one really should be a no-brainer, but seriously, there are a couple of reasons why this is wrong:

It takes the attention off of you. You could trigger the interviewer to start fantasizing about a venti Java Chip Mocha Frappuccino, and he or she could miss the entire interview mentally.

It's also rude because you didn't bring a drink for the interviewer. And if you did, that would just be weird.

Finally, it's just plain risky! Coffee and soda *do* stain carpet. And don't even get me started on the condensation drinks leave on wooden desks. Disgraceful.

Obviously, bringing a bottle of water and stashing it in your purse or throwing it away in the lobby before the interview is okay, but that's as far as it should go.

### **You're Not Talkin' Wit' Your Homeboys.**

Yes, it's important to be comfortable in a job interview, but don't go off on a verbal rampage when you two start bonding. In a good interview, there's usually a moment the two of you share when you realize, "Okay, this is going good. We're on the same page." Don't let this moment turn sour by getting a little too comfy. Some people warm up a little too much, and they start talking to the interviewer like they would a good friend.

Throwing in a little *appropriate* slang may be permissible with a younger interviewer, but please do not use any words that could be construed badly or cuss words. I wouldn't advise using "damn," "piss," or anything similar in a job-interview setting. Just be more conservative than usual; you never know what will come out of your mouth if you're not thinking!

### **Make "Thank You" Your Mantra.**

This is such a simple thing, but some people just don't say it enough. You should say it when you are offered a seat, when a door is opened for you, when you are offered water...the list of "thank-you-worthy moments" goes on forever. Even if it's not a definite moment to say thank you, say it anyway. When in doubt, say it. Say it too much. It's much better to come off as excessively thankful than as someone who is ungracious. Although it seems small, it goes so far in the grand scheme of things. People hear "thank you" and notice the difference.

### **Don't Slouch!**

I'll admit that I have been guilty of this one before. I was always taught to physically relax in interviews so I didn't come off as a stiff, nervous little thing. But this does not mean leaning back in the chair like it's a La-Z-Boy. Always sit up straight and be alert in a job interview. Don't fidget with your hands, twist your hair, or shift your feet all over the place. Just stay in a neutral position, and stay focused on the interviewer. Don't start fooling around with your purse or cell phone. All attention should stay on the interviewer; it's just respectful.