

How Not to Get a Job

By Mary Waldron

This week's article is dedicated to a special friend of mine—well, not really. I'm being sarcastic. Let's call this "friend" Gordon. Gordon went on a job interview very recently and managed to commit a variety of job interview crimes that I would not wish on anyone. Save yourself the time, energy, and humiliation by reading on to learn why Gordon will not be getting the job this time. By the way, this is a completely true story.

Gordon is a recent graduate from a distinguished university in the western United States. He has never interned anywhere; nor does he have any job experience relevant to what he'd like to do. Nonetheless, he is a good writer and has submitted some quality writing samples. The point is he's not anything to rave about, but he can write, and he lives close to company headquarters. Even though this kid is fresh out of college and not extremely qualified for the job, the employer gave him a chance.

Crime Number One: Dress Like a Slob.

On the day of his interview, Gordon arrived dressed in old black jeans, a wrinkly white dress shirt, and a black tie. Might I add that the shirt was not even tucked in, which showed deliberate carelessness. It was not as if this

ensemble was all he could pull together and he was desperately trying to appear professional.

Crime Number Two: Act Like a Pompous, Unenthusiastic Jerk.

No one should have the holier-than-thou attitude that this guy exuded throughout his interview—especially not a green college graduate. He leaned back in his chair and talked like he was a seasoned pro. Don't get me wrong. It's very important to be confident in job interviews, but poor Gordon just didn't get it. Instead of eagerly engaging in a conversation with the employer, he thoughtlessly lounged in his chair and frequently avoided eye contact. His lack of enthusiasm for the job and his attitude showed that he was obviously out of touch with reality and how professionals conduct themselves.

Crime Number Three: Tell the Employer That You Have Other Interviews Lined Up for Jobs That Pay More.

When an employer asks when you are available to start, there's no better way to turn him or her off than by emphasizing that you have other interviews for jobs that *pay more*, so you're not sure about your availability yet. Don't misunderstand me; you can tell the employer you have other interviews. But never, ever intentionally rub it in the interviewer's face by highlighting the fact that the other jobs for which you plan to interview pay more. I can

see why someone might say this, hoping to spark some competitive-pay opportunities, but don't do it. You'll sound rude.

Crime Number Four: Insult the Company in Front of the CEO.

This is the grand slam of them all—one of those stories you hear about but rarely get the pleasure of seeing. Poor Gordon still does not even know that he committed this crime. As he was walking to his car, Gordon made the mistake of calling a buddy on his cell phone to gab about his interview. Never assume no one is listening, and never assume someone from the company could not be lurking. Thinking he was in the “safe zone,” Gordon crossed the street after leaving the office and proceeded to the parking lot where his car was parked. It never occurred to him that the company might own the building across the street, too. He probably should have been more observant as to his surroundings during the interview, as well, because the company's CEO, who was walking down the street next to the other building, remembered him and his unacceptable interview attire. As the unsuspecting Gordon gabbed on his phone, saying, “Yeah, the company sucks, but it's a job,” the company's CEO was listening intently. Need I say more? Classic.

Crime Number Five: Send Your Follow-Up Material Late, and Make Excuses.

I really should have ended with the fourth crime, but this one is the sugar on top. After his less-than-impressive interview, Gordon was given a sample writing assignment to prove that he could live up to the company's expectations. Rather than turning it in with a thank-you email on the date it was due, Gordon sent it late with an excuse explaining why it was late.

Needless to say, our friend Gordon did not get the job. He's probably out on other job interviews committing more job-interview crimes as we speak. Shame, shame, shame. Take a few tips from Gordon, and add them to your interview repertoire today!