



## Mending Job Interview Muck-Ups

By Mary Waldron

It can happen to the best of us. MapQuest did you wrong. You forgot your portfolio. You gave the wrong impression. The list of mishaps that can take place on the day of a job interview goes on and on. But don't sweat it—the most important thing to do in these situations is to handle the flop with grace.

Read on to find out how to mend (or at least try to mend) those unexpected surprises on the day when everything counts.

### 1. You're Late.

Always, always leave early for job interviews. No matter how well you think you know the area, you're not a fortune teller. Traffic is one of the most unpredictable things in the world, aside from the opposite sex. One day, the traffic at 11:30 a.m. on the 10 freeway could be smooth sailing, and the next day at that time it could leave you screaming and cursing the world. It's just a sad fact of life. Deal with it, and act accordingly.

With that said, tardiness to job interviews happens all the time, every day. How should you handle this? Call ahead when you know you're going to be late. Don't just roll along the freeway staring at the clock in denial. Call as soon as you know there's no way you will park and make it into the building on time. Simply call, quickly apologize, and tell the interviewer that you will be there in however many minutes you think it will take you. When doing this, always over-estimate your arrival time; if you don't, you're just setting yourself up for more embarrassment.

### 2. You Make a Bad Impression.

This can be on a major or minor scale. But no matter how badly you "eww" the employer, it's important to handle the situation like an adult by apologizing either immediately or after the meeting. People are all different, and they certainly react differently, so if the employer didn't like your joke or misunderstood something you said, acknowledge it, apologize, and move on.

Let me clarify what I mean by "acknowledging it and moving on." When misunderstandings or accidental insults occur during first meetings, many people are too timid to acknowledge what they did for fear of making it worse. In reality, however, not acknowledging these moments and humbling oneself to apologize can be far more detrimental to a job seeker's future.

Now, when I say "move on," I mean that you should not dwell on the fact that you screwed up; it's so unattractive to the employer. It will likely make the employer feel uncomfortable if you go overboard with the excuses and apologies. The most professional thing to do is to make the apology short, yet sincere, and painless. Then everyone is happy, and no one feels awkward.

### 3. You Need to Follow Up.

There are some things that cannot be mended at the interview. Sometimes it takes a little follow-up work. If you forgot a portfolio or any other hard-copy material, take the time to send it immediately after the interview with a pleasant and classy note of thanks. If you don't have any reason to send a note and you feel like you need to drop a line, find a reason. It's always more effective when you have a reason to send a note. You can recall a question the interviewer had or a topic you discussed. Then, send a note in response to the question or clarifying a detail.

Another thing you can do is subtly remind the employer that you are excellent. How do you do this? By highlighting achievements. If you were awarded any merits or featured in an article or newsletter, send a short email to share this with the employer. Don't make a huge deal out of it; just make it more of an FYI. That way, you can show them how great you are by showing how great others think you are. Also, if you send a short and direct email, the employer can take it or leave it without feeling gagged and bound.

## On the Net

MapQuest

[www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com)

SigAlert.com

[www.sigalert.com](http://www.sigalert.com)

Job Interview and Career Thank-You Letters

[www.quintcareers.com/sample\\_thank-you\\_letters.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/sample_thank-you_letters.html)