**Job hunt etiquette: How to handle 6 tricky situations**

Job hunting can cause sleepless nights. Sure, it’s exciting to think about the end result of job hunting – **career growth**, a chance to work with new technology, perhaps even **landing** your dream job. But getting there means sitting through quite a few **awkward** conversations and navigating tricky situations that come up during the interview and hiring process.

If you are **on the hunt** or thinking about looking for a new job soon, f……………. yourself with the best practices below so you can go into your next interview cool, calm, and prepared to handle these situations with grace and professionalism.

**1. When your resume has holes or a gap**

As long as companies treat job descriptions like wish lists, most job seekers will have to apply to positions that seem slightly out of r………. . Even if they only have some of the listed requirements, job s…………. must be prepared to explain why they are a **perfect fit** for the role.

It is rare that a candidate will match 100 percent of the requirements listed on a job description. If you do not have experience with a software or technology **listed**, conduct research on the technology before your interview. This shows a **demonstrated interest** and a strong **sense of initiative**. Try to **draw parallels** between similar software/technologies with the same function that you have worked with and explain the similarities and differences between the two.”

Employers want to know that you are willing and able to **learn on the job**. If there was a situation in your last role that you learned a specific software on the job, make that a point of conversation and highlight your willingness to learn.

A gap in work history is another issue job seekers should be prepared to ad………… . Explain what you were doing during that time. Hopefully, it was something meaningful. If you are currently in the midst of a gap, filling your time with volunteer work and online courses will make it easier to discuss when you are in an interview.

**2. When they ask about your weaknesses**

Hiring managers typically like to get creative with their interview questions, but some classics will never go out of style. What will, however, are **the canned responses** to those classics that hiring managers have heard time and time again. Instead of saying your greatest weaknesses are working too hard and caring too much, try being real instead.

The question ‘What are your weaknesses?’ is an interview favorite, so you should definitely prepare an answer. The hiring manager is trying to **gauge** /geidż/ how you e………… yourself and over……… challenges. Mention something that you know needs improvement but that you’re working on.”

Here’s an example that demonstrates how to turn a weakness into a strength: “I used to **procrastinate** often, but I always made my deadlines. However, I realized this t……..t made my job more difficult, so I took a time management class to learn how to better organize and put a plan together. I’ve been working on it since and notice how much more productive I am.”

No matter how you answer this question, it’s important to keep your emotions in check. People tend to become defensive when talking about their weaknesses, but we are all human; no one is perfect. Interviewers see it as **humble** when you can **admit to** a weakness and failure. Be real! Talk about a mess-up you had, how you resolved the mishap, and what you learned. Come prepared with specific examples, explain what you learned from each situation, and how you have applied those learnings to future projects. Don’t **bash** others when explaining a failure; **take ownership** and don’t make excuses. Interviewers want to see humility and **vulnerability**.

**3. When they ask why you are leaving your job**

Your friends and closest **confidants** may hear that the reason you are job hunting – or why you lost your last job – is because of your tyrannical boss or crazy co-workers. But when a hiring manager asks this question, **tread** carefully. They aren’t trying to **get dirt on** your last company, and they don’t want to play **the blame game**. What they are really interested in is your motivation.

Is the commute too long? Are your projects boring? Did you **hit a ceiling** and doubt you’ll get promoted anytime soon? Was the company **going under**? Motivations are good indicators of your personality, emotional intelligence, ambition, and interests.

Thinking about your motivation will also help you avoid a big interview **no-no**: **badmouthing** your current employer. This type of response is **indicative of** the type of professional you will be at their organization and how you’ll interact with current employees, clients, and prospective customers. Rather, flip the narrative from what you’re running away from to what type of opportunity you are running toward, and why the company you are interviewing for can provide that opportunity.

Be truthful about why you are leaving your current role but emphasize the specifics of what you’re looking for in a new career **endeavor**.

**4. When the salary question comes up**

Salary negotiations prove **notoriously** tricky to navigate. Even if you go into the conversation prepared, questions remain: Who should name their number first? At what point in the interview? How much **back and forth** is appropriate? What if you can’t agree?

Legally in certain states, recruiters can’t ask you your salary. However, do ask the range for the role. If your salary is higher or a **lateral**[[1]](#footnote-1), you can make a judgement call early in the process on whether or not **pursue** the role. Or, you can **blatantly** say you would make a move for $X and see if that fits with their range.

It is a good idea to start the discussion early in the process. Addressing it on **the front end** will avoid the back-and-forth towards the end of the interview process. The interviewer may be asking about your past salary to ensure that they make a competitive offer that is within their budget. If you feel that you are underpaid, share where you are at and why you are seeking the number you are looking for. The same way you would talk to your boss about why you deserve a raise, highlight what you can bring to the role and the impact you can make for the company.

If you don’t want to share your salary history up front, it’s well within your right to **hold off**. But it’s smart to have a strategy for how you will respectfully delay the conversation.

Whatever you do, don’t let the pressure of the situation **trip you up**. It is important to not commit to a salary on the spot just because you feel pressured into doing so. The more a role matters to you, the more likely you are to make a mistake. There are numerous cases of candidates saying they’d accept a figure that is way below their market value when the company would have offered a much fairer salary.

Whether you give a range or a number, you will have to give the hiring manager something to work with. Being too **cagey on** this topic could cost you the job. **Withhold**ing the information, especially if asked multiple times, may cause a hiring committee to move onto another candidate.

**5. When a recruiter goes dark**

Few things are as **disheartening** as waiting days or even weeks to hear back after a job interview. Especially if you’ve **followed up** and gotten no response in return. **Ghosting** is real and happening in the job hunting world. The following three-step approach is recommended when it comes to communicating with a prospective employer.

1. Follow up with a phone call and leave a detailed message regarding the feedback or response you are seeking. Be patient and wait three to five business days for a response.
2. If you have not received communication after five days, send an email explaining that you attempted to get in touch with the person via phone and haven’t heard back yet. **Reiterate** what information you are looking for and remember to be polite and **courteous**. You don’t want to **come across as** impatient or demanding by reaching out too often.
3. If another five business days have gone by with no response after the second attempt, you can send a final ‘closure’ email. State something to the effect of, ‘I’ve tried reaching out a few times and unfortunately I haven’t heard back from you. At this point I will consider you not interested in my candidacy and will stop attempting to reach you. However, if something changes and you would like to engage with me in the future, please feel free to get in touch. I wish you well in your search for the right candidate.’

Remember, professionalism and etiquette should **go both ways**. If you are ghosted, consider what that says about the company - this is usually a bad sign.

**6. When you come in second place**

After several rounds of interviews, salary negotiations, and meetings with potential co-workers, it’s hard not to picture yourself in the new role. That’s why it can feel like a **sucker punch**[[2]](#footnote-2)to be told it was between you and one other candidate and they **went with** the other person.

You need to remove your disappointed emotions from your communications with the employer. Share that you were very excited for the opportunity and ask if they would consider you for similar roles in the future. If you made it all the way to second place they have already decided that you are capable of doing the job.

Instead of **taking offense**, keep an open mind, and ask why. Most times, you can get honest feedback about your interview or communication style that will help you with future interviews. Sometimes, the honest answer is that the hire was just a better cultural fit or had a specific experience that you didn’t. Take the feedback and learn from it. Communication with good recruiters shouldn’t be transactional, it should be informative.

One way to do is by posing the question: “Are there any reservations you have about my fit for the position that I could address?”

This gives the interviewer the chance to discuss any gaps in the candidate’s experience that may prevent them from getting the role. At the end of the day, regardless if you know the reason for not getting the position, be polite and respectful and thank the interviewers for their time. Recruiters and hiring managers will remember your professionalism, or lack of, based on how you respond to **rejection**.

1. A sideways or **lateral** career move is a move either within your current company or to a new organization with similar title, pay, and responsibility [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A punch that takes someone **by surprise** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)