



How to Recover From a Bad Interview

Provided by the career experts at Robert Half

Interviewing for a new job is no easy task, and chances are you've faltered at some point in the process at least once. The list of potential pitfalls is numerous — everything from arriving late to not answering the hiring manager's questions as well as you would have liked to a simple lack of rapport between you and the interviewer. No matter the reason for a bad interview, the result is nearly always the same: a greatly diminished chance of landing the job you'd hoped for and, often, a significant blow to your self-confidence.

Can you turn it around? By keeping your cool, you may be able to recover from a poor showing and put yourself back in the running for the position. Consider these situations and ways of handling them:

You're running late

You mapped your route beforehand and left home an hour and a half before your interview was scheduled to start to ensure you would arrive on time. But a wrong turn off the highway is jeopardizing your on-time arrival. In situations like this where a bad impression seems inevitable, head it off by calling your interviewer as soon as you suspect you will be late. If you're running behind schedule by more than 15 minutes, offer to reschedule the interview for a different time or day. Apologize for your tardiness and follow up with a written note that conveys the same sentiment. Most — but not all -- hiring managers will understand that unforeseen incidents can strike at the least opportune moments and will appreciate your consideration for their schedules.

You drew a blank

No matter how much time you spent preparing for your interview, sometimes you simply can't think of a good response to a hiring manager's question. To a certain extent, this should not come as a surprise. Increasingly, hiring managers are asking applicants puzzling brainteasers, which are meant to

provide a greater sense of a potential employee's personality and creative-thinking skills than standard interview queries alone. Consider a recent survey commissioned by our company that asked executives for the strangest questions they had been asked by hiring managers during interviews. The responses include such head-scratchers as, "If you could be any animal, what would you be?", "What did you want to be when you were 10 years old?" and "What would I find in your refrigerator?"

Of course, even standard questions like "Name your greatest weakness" can occasionally throw you for a loop.

If you leave the interview thinking, "I could have answered that better," use your thank-you note as an opportunity to recover. Don't rehash any mistakes you made, but use the letter as a method of selling yourself and your skills better than you did during the meeting. Thank the interviewer for his or her time and reiterate why you think you are perfect for the position. If possible, key in to a point the hiring manager made during the interview and tie it to your experience or background. For example, if the interviewer stressed the company's commitment to leading-edge technology, include in your thank-you note details about your involvement in the selection and purchase of a new accounting software system for a previous employer.

You didn't establish a connection

Often, the cause of a bad interview is a lack of rapport between you and the hiring manager. But not hitting it off with the interviewer doesn't necessarily mean the end of the line for you.

First, consider that a number of factors external to the interview could have affected the hiring manager's behaviour. Personal issues or a looming deadline at work could have caused him or her to seem distant or distracted. Don't take it personally; you may have made a better impression than you think. Also remember that many companies today are ensuring they make quality hires by asking candidates to interview with more than one individual. You may have the opportunity to make a stronger connection with a different person down the road.

Regardless of the reason, if you fail to establish rapport with the interviewer, focus on keeping the relationship alive by following up occasionally for updates on the status of the opening. You can also

send the hiring manager articles of interest you come across in newspapers and trade publications as a means of remaining in contact.

Occasionally, a bad interview can actually be a good thing. If the situation seemed tense because the interviewer asked inappropriate or irrelevant questions, for example, this may signal a lack of respect for employees or disorganization in the department or firm. In this case, these warning signs can help you steer clear of a potentially regrettable move. Remember, an interview is not only an opportunity for a company to judge you, but also for you to evaluate the employer.

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, there's little you can do to recover from a bad interview. Rather than become discouraged, remember that the company thought well enough of you to invite you in. Chalk the incident up to "experience" and focus on what you learned so you can improve your interview skills and make a great impression next time.

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