

Educated, Now What? *Jo Leonard*

Savvy interviewing skills for college graduates

My son graduated in December from Temple University, knows what he wants to do, has had five interviews for jobs that I believe he is qualified for, but has had no offers yet. His resume is getting him the interviews, but something isn't working out right. Do you have any thoughts? He's very personable and dresses well, so we're not sure what's going on.

Jennifer Doylestown

Thanks for this great question. I'll use this opportunity to address the subject of interviewing in general as I'm guessing there are a few reasons why he's not getting the offer.

Here are some initial things to consider and I'll address them to your son, as he'll be able to answer them better than you.

Are you passionate about the position for which you are applying?

How well do you know what this position entails, i.e. what will you be doing in the first 6 weeks and the first six months?

If you're not sure then

The basics

1. Start by asking yourself how passionate you are for the position you're applying for and do you know what the position entails.
2. Practice in front of a professional or a mentor in an unfamiliar setting.
3. Have questions prepared from the beginning.
4. Research the interviewer, not just the company.
5. Make eye contact and be aware of body language.
6. Follow up in a creative fashion.

you're probably not asking the right questions at the interview and that's absolutely critical.

A good hiring manager can detect passion very easily. Even if you are somewhat shy or introverted, there are ways for you to communicate your passion. Some of my clients are extremely shy, and so we teach them to "fake it until they make it." With practice and a good coach, you'll find that you can build your confidence and even start to enjoy yourself.

Interviewing like a professional is entirely possible, even for young adults. Getting some interview training will set you apart from your competition and believe me

you have competition, regardless of your targeted field of interest.

Most graduates are advised to practice in front of a mirror or their parents and friends. I say that is very poor advice. Practice in front of a hiring manager, or a mentor or coach. Put yourself in an unfamiliar setting and see how you do.

Consider this: Interviews should be a two-way conversation. If you're not asking as many questions as the interviewer, something is wrong. Have questions prepared from the beginning, middle and end of the interview, not just at the end when they ask, "Do you have any questions for me?"

Here is a shortened ver-

sion of a formula we've developed for young adults going through the interview process.

Find out immediately why they called you for an interview. Asking, "What exactly was it about my resume that prompted you to ask me for an interview today?" can do this. Suddenly you know what they're looking for.

Now that you know this, you can tailor your answers to their questions accordingly. For example, if they say, "Tell me about yourself," you should highlight the strengths you have that match what they've just told you they're looking for — easy. Keep the answer to that question fairly short and then throw the question back to them.

"Which of these traits would you like me to elaborate on?" Again, they'll tell you what they're looking for and you'll have even more clues.

Second, by having questions prepared in advance such as the ones above, you will illustrate that you are confident and professional.

Here's another great question to ask: "In six months,

how will you know you have hired the right person?" Again, this gives you clues as to what they're looking for in a successful candidate.

Let's briefly address tips on how to wow the interviewer and really stand out in the crowd.

Do as much research on the person you are meeting as possible, not just the company. Go ahead and "Google" them — you never know what you will find. If the interviewer just appeared in a newspaper or delivered a speech at an event, talk to him about it when you meet. Everyone loves to talk about themselves, so go ahead and ask him about his work, the event, the speech, the promotion, etc.

The most important part of an interview is building rapport with the interviewer.

It's rather like dating. You're looking to find something in common with them and you won't find that out by only answering his questions and smiling.

You can also build rapport by practicing a little "matching." This technique simply involves being aware of the interviewer's body language, voice tone, voice volume, animation, eye contact, etc. Loud people tend to gravitate towards other loud people. Soft spoken people are often turned off by loud, animated people, so be aware of who you are talking to, and

match them subtly. It's an interesting technique that we teach, and it works.

Finally, follow up in a creative fashion, especially if the job you're going for is in the creative field, i.e. entertainment, communication, advertising, teaching, sports, media, retail.

In addition to a simple thank you letter (hand written, please), send an article from a magazine that may be of interest to the interviewer. If you've done a good job at the interview and found out something about his careers or personal lives, this should be easy.

From ski resort suggestions in Colorado to a new Italian restaurant in the interviewer's neighborhood, a well-considered follow up will set you apart and put you well on the way to getting an offer.

If you have specific questions about your graduate's career search, send them to us. We will try to answer all inquiries in future columns. All questions and comments may be directed to newhope@ingnews.com.

Jo Leonard is the president of Jo Leonard, LLC. "Partners in Career Navigation," with offices in Lumberville and Lambertville, N.J. Visit www.joleonard.com.

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