

How to ace every hiring manager interview

Find their pain point

Why is this position open? What business problem do they need you to solve? What is the #1 thing they need you to accomplish in the first 30-90 days? What is one thing you could focus on to dramatically improve their current situation? Common pain points include:

1. Need more revenue
2. Need more clients
3. Need to cut costs
4. Need to increase productivity

Here are two great examples:

1. Waiters are responsible for taking great care of their customers, and upselling (selling those ice cream sundaes and bottomless margaritas). A waiter could assume that's the biggest focus in an interview. However, what if the owner just had to fire 3 people for showing up late to work? If that's the case, then the candidate should focus on punctuality and dependability.
1. Recruiters are responsible for hiring people – fast! It could be easy to focus exclusively on time to fill (how fast you've gotten people hired in the past) during a job interview, but what if the company has a terrible turnover issue? And what if they spent waaaay too much money on recruiting last year? Then, you better focus on cost per hire and quality of hire / retention during the interview.

How to uncover & address any concerns

The very best way to figure out what their concerns are is to ask directly – before you leave the meeting. As a consultant, it is especially important to work on this. I promise: asking tough questions will get easier, and 9 times out of 10 it will be the reason you got the job.

For instance, when I was just starting out as a consultant, I asked the CEO “If I could fix just one thing for you, what would it be?” He said “Stop the in-fighting between the sales people and the recruiters. It drives me nuts!” The job posting and most of the interview had been focused on compensation planning and technology platform selection. Had I stayed focused on those, I would have lost the deal. Instead, because I asked that question I was able to talk about 2 of my proudest career achievements: the turnaround of two failing recruiting groups ... and a big part of my success was because I focused on uncovering the root cause of the infighting and worked with both sales and recruiting to stop it. There were two other much more qualified candidates, but he hired me because of my focus on his biggest irritation. Here’s how you can uncover any concerns in your next role:

1. Listen
2. Take notes
3. Ask clarifying questions
4. Ask them directly! Sample questions:

“Do you have any concerns about me in this role?”

“How do I stack up against my competition?”

“Do I have everything you’re looking for?”

“Am I missing any key skills or experience?”

How to close the deal (with hiring manager)

1. Know what kind of recruiter you’re dealing with
2. Know what makes you great (key skills + experience)
3. Identify the gaps b/w what you’ve got + what they want
4. Get ready for the 5 core questions
5. Get ready for the scary questions (anticipate the worst)
6. Research the recruiter & the company
7. Prep some questions

How to close the deal (with hiring manager)

There are two key messages they need to hear at the end of the interview:

1. I can do the job – and do it well
2. I want the job.

How to close the deal: Ask final questions and/or deliver a positive statement ... to deliver those two key messages. Here are several methods that work well:

1. “Thank you for meeting with me.”
2. “I’m very interested in this position. Here’s why ...
 - Reason #1 (brief!)
 - Reason #2 (brief!)
 - Reason #3 (brief!)
3. “What are your thoughts?”
4. “What are the next steps?”
5. “Based upon our meeting today, how do you see me fitting your needs?”
6. “How do I compare to other candidates?”
7. “What are the next steps in your process?”
8. “Where do we go from here?”

Remember to say thank you! “Thank you very much for your time today. Based upon what we’ve talked about, I am very interested in learning more.”