

## Nine Etiquette Tips For Job Seekers

as seen on *The CareerJournal.com*

You may have heard the story of Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Co., inviting job candidates to lunch with him -- primarily to observe their salting habits. If the candidate salted his food before tasting it, Mr. Ford ruled him out. If the candidate tasted his food first and salted (or didn't) after, Mr. Ford determined he was a person who evaluated situations before taking action -- just the sort of person he wanted for his company.

Most employers have their own expectations of candidates, whether or not they're expressed. If you don't meet them, you may be flunking your job test. But there are generally accepted rules of applicant etiquette. Following the nine guidelines below will help you abide by them.

1. *Be on time.* If you're late, no matter how valid your reason, you're making a statement about your ability to plan and prepare for the unexpected. You're also indirectly making a statement about your respect for the interviewer's time. It's better to build in an extra 15 minutes and walk around the building once or twice than to arrive late.
2. *Be polite.* According to Chris Lucy, an OfficeTeam area manager in Rochester, N.Y., a staffing firm based in Menlo Park, Calif., interviewers will often ask the receptionist, following the interview, how the candidate behaved when he came in the front door. Of course, you always should be polite. But you should be especially polite to the front-office staff, knowing they might be asked their impressions of you. Know that simple courtesies, if not extended, could cost you a job. A vice president of a well-known bank in Los Angeles, for example, decides against any applicant who calls him by his first name before being invited to do so.
3. *Don't ramble.* Be mindful of the amount of time allotted to the meeting. "If he indicated you'll have about 45 minutes, try to honor that," says Ms. Lucy, who's been advising candidates for 16 years. "Don't rattle on and on, but instead glance at your watch discreetly and stop talking if you need to." Additionally, don't interrupt the interviewer. "Try to look interested, even if you already know what the interviewer is telling you about the company," Ms. Lucy says. Such gaffes could offset the benefits of your impressive resume or professional appearance.
4. *Be aware of your body language.* A surprising number of candidates slouch, instead of sitting upright, says Ms. Lucy. Good posture projects energy and enthusiasm. Additionally, she says, "the inability to look directly into the interviewer's eyes probably will be interpreted as a lack of professionalism or -- worse yet -- a lack of honesty. Crossed arms often suggest a lack of receptivity to new ideas."
5. *Be honest.* Up to 15% of executive candidates lie on job applications, according to Jude M. Werra & Associates, a consulting firm in Brookfield, Wis., that reviews executive applications. At some employers, the penalty for a discovered lie on an application is immediate dismissal. Is it worth the risk? If a lie is uncovered, even if the sanctions aren't so severe, your employer probably will have trouble trusting you.

6. *Be assertive.* While you may have reservations about calling to learn if a decision has been made, some organizations view such calls as a positive. "We like it when applicants follow up an interview with a phone call," says Jamie Columbus, president of Judy Columbus Inc., a residential real-estate and sales organization in Brighton, N.Y. "It shows initiative. We're biased in favor of assertive people who call for feedback following the meeting."

Show how much you want to work for a particular company or the depth of your passion for the industry or position you're seeking. If you're applying for a design position, for example, don't hesitate to bring a portfolio that gives a graphic description of your job history.

"I love to see what applicants have done in other organizations," says Ms. Columbus. "Being able to see samples of their printed work or letters from their clients definitely influences our decisions. Having the visual proof of what they're talking about makes the whole process so much easier."

7. *Be prepared.* Ask questions on occasion instead of answering them continuously. Better yet, your answers should show that you've taken the time to learn about the company -- that you're not just looking for a job, you're looking for a job with this particular employer.

"We expect job applicants to be familiar with our company before they show up for the interview," Ms. Columbus says. "We expect them to have visited our web site and to have read local press reports about us. We also appreciate those applicants who bring several copies of their resumes so we don't have to stop the interview to make copies for all the members of the team."

Additionally, be prepared to perform. Ms. Columbus says she often asks candidates to complete such tasks as designing a sample brochure or creating a plan of action. "The way they fulfill the expectation and the speed with which they do it, along with the quality of their work, has enabled several people to get the jobs they now have," she says.

8. *Be professional.* Make sure your resume and cover letters are neat and clean. Check them for typos and an improper tone. "The first things we look for in a cover letter are accuracy, creativity and directness," says Ms. Columbus.

9. *Send a thank-you note.* You have a better chance of making a favorable impression. More than 76% of employers like receiving a post-interview thank-you note, but only 36% of applicants write them, according to a survey by Accountemps, a staffing firm in Menlo Park, Calif.

A thank-you note need not be long or fancy. A simple handwritten or typed message on plain paper will suffice. Thank the interviewer for his time, offer to provide any additional material that may be required and say that you look forward to working for the company or enjoyed meeting him. "

We appreciate thank-you notes sent to each member of the interview team. And it's great if they come the day after the interview, rather than two weeks later," says Ms. Columbus.