

You just landed an interview with a coveted hospital in the city you've been dreaming of for years. It would mean a significant pay increase, along with stronger job opportunities for your spouse and better schools for your kids. As you don your best suit and head with sweaty palms to what you are hoping will be your next place of employment, don't forget to pack your common sense. This list of our favorite infamous interviewees may serve as good reminders of what can happen when you leave your common sense behind. Enjoy!

The Dawdling Responder

One job seeker sailed through the interview process and was immediately offered the job. Perhaps no one told him that it would not be prudent to respond, "Thank you so much for this opportunity! Tell you what — I'll be getting back to you in six months with a response on your offer." Of course it may have been worse had he demonstrated his enthusiasm at the offer by busting out break-dance moves, but common sense would have dictated that he communicate sincere interest in the opportunity by providing a timely response. Six months — not so timely. If you need a few days or even a week to consider an offer, assure the interviewer that you will get back with her or him on a specific day. And then, of course, follow through.

The Mute Criminal

Criminal background checks are standard, no surprise there except to the interviewee who underwent a lengthy interview process all the while hoping that the misdemeanors he'd accumulated through the years (one per decade) would be ignored. It wasn't, and this particular interviewee had no skill at spinning his experiences into positive outcomes, so he began his muddled reply with a rather uncomfortable and protracted pause. The interviewer, predictably, was not impressed. The candidate's time was wasted, as was the prospective employer's. If you have a skeleton or two in your closet, it won't necessarily disqualify you from a position, but anticipate that the interview process will uncover those bones. Take control of this issue by bringing it up before a background check reveals it, and address the issue in a positive light, explaining how you have grown through or acquired new skills as a result of the experience.

The Lunch Lady

A well-dressed woman with a professional demeanor and a stellar resume was demonstrating to her interviewers how she led training sessions. Normally in these sessions she would provide snacks to the trainees, so she decided to provide snacks to the interviewers as well. After all, it was lunchtime, and there may have been a few stomachs rumbling. Unfortunately, though, to her interviewers, this smacked of unprofessionalism. Perhaps they were concerned about dribbling goo on their ties or blouses, or perhaps they did not want crunching sounds to compete with conversation. Either way, her decision to incorporate a potentially charming if slightly unusual interview tactic lost her the job. So if you are ever in doubt about whether an activity is appropriate, be conservative.

The Want-to-Be Comedian

A male interviewee was asked the familiar "How do you handle work pressure?" question. He drew a pensive expression and then creatively replied: "I liken it to my experience surviving in a household of

teenage daughters with PMS.” And, readers, he didn’t stop there. He made a few jokes about preventive measures and calendars. Save it for the stand-up routine. An inappropriate analogy is a great way to offend the interviewer. Creativity is great, but when it borders on the offensive, it moves into hazardous territory. Stay in the region of known safety.

The Tumultuous Telephoner

Picture this: the dog is barking to be let out, the cats are scuffling loudly in the adjacent room, the baby is howling at the top of her lungs, and you are on the most important phone interview of your career. Not a comfortable scenario. Unfortunately, a candidate recently experienced a scene similar to that. The background noise during her phone interview was so disruptive that the interviewer asked if the candidate needed to reschedule for a more convenient time. And if that weren’t bad enough, the candidate’s spouse yelled in the background, “If the hiring manager thinks this is noisy, just tell him to call back in two hours when the rest of the kids get home!” One just cannot convey professionalism from a zoo. If your interview is by phone, lock yourself in a room, keep the pets out, and bribe your family with dinner out for an hour’s total quiet. With common sense in gear you can easily create the calm, distraction-free environment you need to present yourself as the competent, focused professional that you are.

The Chemically-Enhanced Candidate

Clearly nobody with even half an ounce of common sense is ever going to consider doing cocaine during an interview. Well, that part of the cranial grey matter was apparently missing for the job candidate who took a bathroom break during an interview in order to snort a line. Apparently this little fix depleted any other common sense he might have had. When he returned to the interview, he thought it wise to explain to the hiring manager why there may be traces of chemical substances in his drug screen. Hard to believe, but that is a true story. While you certainly will not be ingesting chemical substances in between questions about your professional background and skill sets, you may want to lay off the wine at lunch. And if a seemingly harmless indulgence like a heavy meal makes you drowsy, you’ll need to avoid that prior to an interview. Your mind should be razor-sharp and your thinking, quick.

The Unsavvy Dresser

One interviewee walked into the room and before he sat down, the interviewer had already formed an opinion that was not promising. The candidate was wearing black pants, a blue blazer, and brown shoes. Certainly your mother taught you that it is the inside that counts, right? But not in an interview — this is where you are judged by how you present yourself on the outside. Your professionalism, character, personality, and competence are being assessed visually from the moment you walk into the room. This candidate did not follow the basics of dress codes, and his indiscretion was perceived as an unforgivable breach of professionalism. Never, ever forget the basics.

The Diverted Traveler

A gentleman booked a flight online for his upcoming interview with a large, highly respected health system. The route included a relatively lengthy layover in the world’s entertainment capital. To pass the time, this job seeker decided to partake in a few of the city’s diversions. Lady Luck was apparently pleased

with him, though Lady Prudence was not. As his dollars (or alcohol) accumulated, his good sense diminished, so that when he should have been boarding his plane, he was cashing in his chips. Needless to say, he missed the connecting flight, and, consequently, the interview. The moral of the story: Don't miss a connecting flight in Vegas on your way to an interview. What stays in Vegas is your good reputation.

The Fast Friend

One sharp, talented candidate was confident that she had not only wowed her interviewer, but also had clicked with her right away. They had several common interests and similar personalities. So, in her thank you follow up note, she included a photo from a recent family trip to a mutually appreciated vacation spot. The interviewer, much as she liked the candidate, was not impressed. The little red flag that signals "What you are about to do may be slightly inappropriate" failed to rise (or it did and she ignored it), and she lost a fantastic opportunity. It's fantastic to have immediate rapport and that can make for a more relaxed interview, but remember that in the end, business is business.

The Gnashing Professional

The final reason-challenged candidate actually demonstrated a good deal of common sense in many key ways. Unfortunately, the demonstration of professionalism she established with her timely response, favorable background check, clean drug screen, punctuality, polished appearance, and professional appropriateness was dashed to pieces by a tiny wad of gum rolling around in her mouth during her interview. The result was more redneck than executive. But we know you have more common sense than that.

It all boils down to common sense. Although you may not even be able to conceive of doing anything remotely near what these interviewees have done, we have cringed while witnessing these very real events. These examples serve as good reminders to follow the red flags of prudence along the often stressful, but in the end, gratifying, process of interviewing.

Please accept our apologies if you resemble any of these remarks. We are on a mission to create better interviewers one candidate at a time. We believe a sense of humor, dash of common sense and willingness to learn from mistakes are ingredients for career success and life in general