

# Why It's Critical To Get A Hiring Manager Talking In An Interview

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After a recent speed interview practice session, a group of recruiters, human resources consultants and others sat down to discuss interviewing. They shared one big idea: Get the hiring manager talking and it could improve your chances to land the job.

After all, most people like to hear themselves talk and many like to share knowledge and expertise. They want to be heard and they want their insights to be valued. They like candidates who are engaged and curious about them, the workplace culture – and what it takes to succeed.

So after a job seeker answers the first question – often the “tell me about yourself” query – ask what kind of candidate they are ideally seeking, suggests Jeremy Little, one of the consultants. He established his company, Superior Human Resources Solutions in Pinckney, Mich., this year after his own job search yielded unsatisfactory possibilities.

Once you hear the manager outline her hopes for the ideal candidate, use that information to tailor your responses throughout. Other suggestions to get the interviewer talking:

Make a list. Have a dozen questions ready to ask, and prioritize them. You don't want to be caught without a query at the end because the hiring manager has already told you so much about the job and workplace. That alone could disqualify you from contention.

Build rapport. Look for clues on the recruiter's interests in her office. Or if you are asked a question about what you do in your free time, answer and then ask them a related question. Find that shared interest in quilting, brewing beer or coaching Little League.

Ask about leadership style, success. Try to determine how your potential manager handles stumbles, stress and surprises, Little suggests. Find out how flexible they are and what kinds of people fare well and poorly in their department.

Embrace the silence. “Wait – just wait. Don't feel a need to fill that silence with unnecessary conversation,” said Little. Once you've answered a question or asked one, it's the manager's turn. They may be thinking of a follow up or they may be considering whether to introduce you to their boss. Either way, treat the quiet like a friendly pause.

Listen actively. Sometimes you may be so caught up in the “how am I doing?” or “what can I say to improve my chances?” mindset that you aren't really paying attention to the hiring manager's conversation. So practice active listening – an engaged behavior that includes clarifying questions and careful attention to body language.

If you end up with an inexperienced interviewer, you could spend half or more of the interview time hearing about their career and concerns. Try to understand their major headaches and issues clearly – and demonstrate your problem-solving skills. Even if the interviewer is experienced, “ask questions along the way,” Little said. “Try to have a conversational style interview.”

The approach – and the rapport you build – could tip the hiring decision in your favor.

