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# Why I Won't Hire You (And What You Can Do About It)



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Careers

*I write actionable insider tips for job seekers and career switchers.*



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Looking for a new job? Now is a great time! The US has a record number of openings, so the market is in your favor.

But that doesn't mean you can skimp on the process. As someone who has spent several years making hiring decisions, I've learned (the hard way) that it's not worth getting a short-term fix that creates a long-term problem.

Here's why I won't hire you, and more importantly, how you can change that:

- **You don't understand my needs.** Once you determine your target role, the job search becomes about the employer, and specifically, the value you bring to the job. While you likely have some stellar achievements you plan to share in your resume or the interview, if they don't align with my key priorities, they'll fall on deaf ears. **Change it:** Research the company, department and market to understand the most critical challenges they're

facing. The internet is an easy place to begin, but also engage your network, who can provide insider tips that aren't available any place else. Then, hone your accomplishments highlighting the ones that have the greatest relevance. If you don't grab a hirer's attention quickly, you may never have the chance to build your case.

- **You haven't practiced.** As someone who has interviewed hundreds of candidates, it's easy to discern between those who've put in the time and those who are winging it. In an interview, *you* are the product. I expect you to know the relevant value of that product and be able to sell it to me in a way that shows you're reflective and prepared. **Change it:** First, review your resume, performance reviews and extra-curricular activities focusing on the themes across the skills you've built and lessons you've learned. Next, align this information with the core competencies of your target job, creating brief stories (see here) that demonstrate the impact of your actions. Finally, practice out loud, preferably with an objective partner who can offer feedback. What sounds perfect in our minds often doesn't flow as articulately when in an interview.
- **You make me do the heavy lifting.** There's an incorrect assumption that if you present impressive accomplishments, an employer will figure out where you fit in the organization. If this is your approach, you'll get steamrolled by your competition. The goal is to make it *easy* for a hirer to see how you'll hit the ground running without extensive hand holding. **Change it:** Don't just relay your strengths or a list of achievements. Take the extra step and show how these skills will benefit the company, department or team. Pretend you need to give me the *exact* words to convince *my* boss to hire you. This can be a great guide when crafting your strategy.
- **You're cookie-cutter.** Every year, LinkedIn posts the 10 most overused words in profiles. Chances are you have a few (or many) in your resume or elevator pitch. Since I have yet to see a job description that asks for a poor communicator who lacks creativity and isn't focused on results, these skills are usually the lowest common denominator for the cost of entry. **Change it:** Use numbers, concrete data, examples and action verbs that show scope and give a hirer a visual image of your accomplishments. Stories are powerful influencers and are becoming more critical to the hiring process.
- **You ask uninspired questions (or none at all).** This is one of those "make it or break it" moments in an interview. If you're flailing, this could be a chance to positively boost an employer's perception, and if you're kicking butt and taking names, you could still lose everything here. **Change it:** Revisit your research and prepare insightful questions

that show you care about the outcomes of your contribution to the company, not uninspired questions (e.g., "*What's your management style?*") or ones that focus solely on what's in it for you. Chances are, if I hired you on the spot and asked you to start now, you'd have questions. So, there's no excuse for not asking any.

- **You've not convinced me you're committed.** There are three things I care about when hiring: skills, fit and motivation. If you've made it to the interview, you likely have the foundational skills to be successful. If you were referred by someone I trust, that goes a long way in addressing fit. So, the hiring decision will come down to your motivation – your response to that question, "*Why do you want this job?*" **Change it:** Many job seekers view this question as a softball and offer a textbook answer about being passionate about the company. If you want an offer, prepare a response that *specifically* demonstrates why you're excited about the work you'll be performing and how this role fits into your overall career trajectory, including any concrete evidence that demonstrates you've already committed to this career path (e.g., you've completed a certification course on your own time, etc.).

The key theme is about being prepared. You can't control everything, but should strive to put an extensive effort into those aspects that you can control. It shows you care about the role, respect the hiring team's time and are interested in doing your best (which is a two-way street and companies should strive to do the same).

If you're nervous or trip over your answers a bit, I can see past that. In fact, your preparation will usually outshine a few stumbles, but the opposite isn't true unfortunately. Just because you're charismatic and quick on your feet won't hide the fact that you haven't done your homework.

If you're aiming for a career switch or are in a competitive field, these steps are even more critical. The brain has a way of tricking us into believing that what worked before will work again, but this isn't always the case.

Don't leave the interview knowing you could have done better. While there are many unknowns that will influence the outcome, investing in doing your best will pay off in the long-run.

Happy hunting!

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I started my corporate career as a recruiter, and over the past two decades have been helping job seekers attain great roles from the "other side of the desk" as a caree... **Read More**

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