

5 Common American Interview Mistakes

Key Vocabulary Words

1. Generic
2. Tailored
3. Pet peeve
4. To follow up
5. To stand out
6. To get blindsided

Lindsay: Okay guys. So what would you say are some of the kind of really common mistakes that people make when they're in an interview in the US?

Lauren: I think one of them, we're calling it the cold application here. Sometimes people send out an email, a cover letter, or a resume that's just really **generic**. It hasn't been **tailored** to the company and it doesn't look like the applicant spent a lot of time on it. Um and it's so easy in the digital world we live in to get some information about the company. Look it up. Check it out on LinkedIn, you know, have a coffee with

somebody and figure out something about the organization. Um and try and make it... it.... it sound like at least you've spent some time really thinking about it and where you could fit it and belong there.

Lindsay: For sure and make that initial connection. You know, you can... you'll have a lot more confidence going into the interview if you already have a personal connection with someone who's inside the organization. Right?

Rebecca: Yeah, see that's definitely like even if it's just tweeting to that person, now that Twitter is such a big thing. And you know, not necessarily the company's twitter, but you know somebody who works for that company and, you know, start off by saying "Can I just get a tour of your office?" and then, you know, that way they can at

least put a name to the face. And, you know, when it comes to writing your cover letter, you could say, you know, “I met, you know, an employee of yours and I got to see the office and my experience was this” and so it actually... put a little color into your cover letter.

Lauren: For larger organizations, that might be a little bit strange.

Lindsay: Oh, okay well...

Rebecca: What’s your perspective?

Lauren: Well I think, you know, I... I think any way you can really connect is helpful and if you don’t have somebody in your direct network that can make that connection for you and be that liaison, you know anywhere digitally you can get that, is helpful. But I think larger organizations sometimes will have enough information on their website that it’s almost like getting that inside perspective, so you just really gotta (got to/have to) look for it.

Lindsay: For sure. Yeah, there’s no excuse not to these days with the internet right? With all the resources we have. So in terms of nonverbals. What should we do? What should we not do? The handshake?

Rebecca: Oh, the handshake.

Lindsay: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rebecca: Um, I am not a fan of weak handshakes. I... Actually it’s kind of a **pet peeve** of mine and so of course in an interview, you always want to try to grab their hand. Like, you don’t want to break it but you wanna

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(want to), you know, firmly grasp their hand because it shows more confidence...

Lindsay: Right.

Rebecca: ...as opposed to just, you're feeding them your hand.

Lauren: Confidence is key and that's, you know, if you're nervous, if you're twitching, if you're not making eye contact. Any of those things make me think as an interviewer you're not prepared to be there and if you're not prepared to be there, I don't wanna (want to) spend my time with you.

And I'm... And I'm already gonna (going to) be dismissing you before we even get started. So whatever you can do as an applicant to really prepare yourself to be confident, you know, whether that's knowing more about the company, knowing more about the terrain, practicing, any of that will... will be worthwhile.

Lindsay: Awesome.

Rebecca: Some things that I've learned in public speaking classes is that any sort of twitch, as... as has been mentioned that you might do, whether it's.... like if you're standing and talking some people might sway or some people play with the rings on their hand or play with their hair. Those things can be really distracting in an interview. And so if you

are the type of person who would do that in public speaking, put your hair back, take all your... off all your jewelry, so that way you're not tempted to really fiddle too much while you're actually speaking with the person.

Lindsay: That's a great idea. Good tips. Thanks guys. Excellent. How 'bout (about) forgetting to **follow up**. I mean is this common? Does this happen?

Lauren: Sure. I... I think anytime you have a conversation with someone about ya know, the professional work space, it's completely appropriate to just follow-up and say "Thanks for that conversation. Here's what I learned." And make sure you, you know, if you were going to connect them with someone or provide some extra information that you do that. Um, you know, in terms of what you should write and what explicitly you should say. What do you think Rebecca?

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Rebecca: As the interviewer or as the person who just had been on the interview?

Lauren: I think as the interviewer following up. Like what's important?

Rebecca: As the person who interviewed or the interviewee?

Lauren: Oh, the interviewee. Sorry.

Rebecca: Okay. As the interviewee, like in my experience, what I've done is just saying, you know, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. I really um, appreciate, you

know, getting the chance to speak with you some... uh, some more as opposed to, you know, just through email and actually seeing the organization and like how everything runs. Uh, you know if you are interested in the position, if you are interested in the internship, or whatever you're applying for, I would like put that sort of foot forward and say, you know I would love to speak with you further, if you, uh, wanna (want to) have more conversations about this. You know something to sort of that effect because if you're just playing the whole "It's nice to meet you. I appreciate the time," that could be more generic and then they might think, "Well, does she really want the position? Is she just saying "Thank you" to be polite?

Lindsay: Okay, so be a little bit more direct?

Rebecca: Yeah. Like you don't have to explicitly say, I want the job, but you could just say like, you know "I look forward to hearing from you." Any sort of little inclination that shows that you're interested.

Lindsay: Great and yes, it's a way to **stand out**. Another way to **stand out** because I would imagine that not everyone actually does this, still.

Lauren: Right.

Rebecca: And don't wait more than like... I would say do it that day or the next day maybe...

Lauren: Yeah.

Rebecca: ...but don't wait more than like two days to do it.

Lauren: And email is okay. Back in my day, we used to send 'Thank you' notes and... and...I... I think no one expects a mailed "Thank you" note anymore. You know if you really want to do that, sometimes it could be a nice touch, but we live in a digital world. These decisions are being made, you know, right away. Email is totally appropriate.

Lindsay: Yeah, yeah. For sure. For sure. Okay. Cool. And um, oftentimes I see that people go in just not knowing anything about the company that they're interviewing for, so whaddya (what do you) think about that? That's crazy right? It's career suicide.

Lauren: It is. I... I think you've... you've gotta (got to) know everything you can and I... I think some great places to start aren't just the company website, but also news outlet. What are their competitors? You know their... their competitors are probably not going to be listed on their website, but going into that interview, you should probably know

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who they are and kind of what their struggles and challenges are as well.

Lindsay: Right. What kind of press coverage have they had? What have they done? Anything else about that?

Rebecca: No, nothing really. Just to confirm all that. I mean you don't want to go in **blindsided**. You have to at least have some knowledge of how...

Lindsay: For sure.

Rebecca: ...the company works...

Lindsay: For sure.

Rebecca: ...because you need to know what your role is going to be...

Lauren: Exactly...

Lindsay: ...within that company and, you know, how you are going to help them move forward.

Rebecca: Yeah, I think, yeah, if you don't know anything about the company it becomes, you're... like it's if you're more generic, and everybody like you're just getting through all the interviews, checking them off and you're not actually putting the time or effort into them, so do your research.

Lindsay: Good and the last one. Um. This is an interesting one. So what are your thoughts on "selling yourself?"

Lauren: Yeah. It's... It's critical and I think everyone should go into interviews assuming that that's the expectation. You know I think it feels uncomfortable. You know, it might feel strange to some of us when

we feel like we're being pushed to do that. You know, I don't want to be too forward, I don't want to be too forward, but expect that your interviewer is expecting that, so you're not being too forward. You're being forward enough. Um, I think you really need to be very clear about how you're different from other applicants, how you stand out, what you have to add, um, and... and be explicit. You don't have a lot of time with them.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Lindsay: Right.

Rebecca: And similar to uh some of the other interview questions, about, you know, 'what are your weaknesses?', an employer won't always ask what your strengths are, but I think in terms of selling yourself, like whether they ask you that question or not you do want to bring up your strengths, like whatever it is and don't... don't sound like you're just putting in the blank strength that um, you know, everyone might typically use. Like find that one thing that you think makes you special and then emphasize that in your conversation and really, like say that "This is why I am different from everybody because I have this great strength."

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Lindsay: So going back to what we said before, being self-reflective, taking the time to get to know what you do well...

Lauren: Yeah.

Rebecca: ...who you are and what you can add.

Lauren: Exactly and being really confident in that, um, and doing everything you can to show that throughout the interview.

Lindsay: Awesome.