

Job Interview Tips

Get Advice and Insight from Waggener Edstrom's Staffing Partner

By Thad Peterson, Monster Staff Writer

Like many career advice experts, Steve Fogarty, staffing partner at Waggener Edstrom, says candidates should research a company thoroughly before an interview. And if the company is a private firm, that's not an excuse to skip doing your homework.

Where there's a will, there's a way, and finding a way to gather information on a company "distinguishes the great candidates from the good candidates," says Fogarty.

Consider Fogarty's company, a large independent public relations agency. He says that if someone were trying to find out about Waggener Edstrom, the candidate could take a number of steps. In addition to simply visiting the company's Web site, joining a trade organization like the Public Relations Society of America would almost certainly give someone interested in his company exposure to people who work there.

Fogarty offers a less conventional method as well: "People might be able to find a press release that one of our PR people has written and contact that person and say, 'I saw your press release. It looks really good. Would you be open to me asking a few questions? I'm doing research on your company.' That's a way to get information."

What else can you do to improve your chances at the interview?

Try these tips from Fogarty:

Be Concise

Interviewees rambling on is one of the most common interview blunders Fogarty sees. "You really have to listen to the question, and answer the question, and answer it concisely," he says. "So many people can't get this basic thing down. You ask them a question, and they go off on a tangent. They might think you want to hear what they're saying, but they didn't answer your question."

Provide Examples

It's one thing to say you can do something; it's another to give examples of things you have done. "Come with a toolbox of examples of the work you've done," advises Fogarty. "You should come and anticipate the questions a recruiter's going to ask based on the requirement of the role. Think of recent strong strategic examples of work you've done, then when the question is asked, answer with specifics, not in generalities. You should say, 'Yes, I've done that before. Here's an example of a time I did that...,' and then come back and ask the recruiter, 'Did that answer your question?'"

Be Honest

Somehow, candidates get the impression that a good technique is to dance around [difficult interview questions](#). "If you don't have a [skill](#), just state it. Don't try to cover it up by talking and giving examples that aren't relevant. You're much better off saying you don't have that skill but perhaps you do have some related skills, and you're happy to tell them about that if they like."

Keep Your Guard Up

According to Fogarty, you can split recruiters into two schools. There are those who are very straight-laced and serious, and candidates had better take the process seriously as well when dealing with them.

"Then you have recruiters like me," he says, chuckling. "I'm going to be that candidate's best friend when they call me. My technique is to put them at ease, because I want them to tell me everything, and a lot of candidates mess up in this area. They start to think, 'Oh, this guy is cool. I can tell him anything.' And then they cross the line." And that can take a candidate out of contention. Remember: Always maintain your professionalism.

Ask Great Questions

Another of Fogarty's interview tips is to come ready with [good questions to ask](#). He says nothing impresses him more than a really good question that not only shows you've researched the company in general, but also the specific job you're hoping to land in particular. "That makes me go, 'Wow, this person has really done their homework. They not only know the company, but they know the role.'"

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