

# Interviews leave little room for error

*By Carol Kleiman  
Chicago Tribune*

How important is the job interview to getting hired? Elliot Gordon is someone who knows. And he says it's crucial. Especially now." Gordon is managing director of Korn/Ferry International, an executive search firm headquartered in Los Angeles. It has 105 offices in 41 countries.

"Supply and demand have changed, and that means companies have more than one qualified candidate for most positions;" said Gordon, who is based in Irvine, Calif. "Employers used to be more forgiving if a job interview didn't go well, but now they can afford to be picky. The person who does best in the interview gets the job."

Gordon, who has an MBA, has been in recruiting for 25 years. He does prescreening of job candidates and urges job hunters to "be prepared."

That means, he says, learning as much as you can about the company. Find out before the interview about the organization's goals and future plans.

"Show interest and enthusiasm for the company in general and for your position in particular," the recruiter said. Employers want to hire someone who wants the job and is excited about it.

What's important in an interview, he says, "is not just communicating how great you are and the wonderful things you've done, but how your combination of knowledge, skills and experience can add value to the organization."

"You have to show you understand its goals by giving examples of things you've done that are similar to what they're trying to do. Lay out specifically what you did and give concrete results. And emphasize how they relate to the goals of the job you're looking for and the company you're applying to."

If you know the potential employer wants to increase customer service, for instance, and you've worked in that area, tell the interview exactly what you did to improve it and what the percentage results were. "Always be specific," Gordon urged.

Judith Lansky, president of Lansky Career Consultants, a career development firm in Chicago, says the job interview is an exercise in marketing and the product, is you.

"The interview is the make-it-or-break-it part, and you either get hired or you don't," said Lansky, who has a MBA in marketing and a master's degree in applied psychology. It's a lot more difficult to get hired today because employers are downsizing and there are so many people out there looking for the same job.

Lansky who started her consulting firm in 1982, says the best approach is to "present yourself in a way that is tantalizing to the potential employer. Why should they hire you instead of somebody else? There are a lot of 'someone elses' out there."

The career counselor who gives a workshop on how to ace the job interview, emphasizes "being in charge of the interview, that doesn't mean. to be obnoxious but to have a clear agenda about what you want to tell employers about yourself and what you want to learn about them."

She, suggests preparing in advance the points you want to make and having a list of questions to ask. And at the end of the interview, Lansky said, "Ask for feedback. Tell them you're really interested, if you are. People hire enthusiasm."

**And here's my advice on handling the job interview: Remain calm.**