

11.4: Selling U - How to Overcome Objections in a Job Interview

Learning Objectives

- Learn about common objections you may hear in a job interview and the best way to respond.
- Understand how follow-up to a job interview can help “overcome objections.”

It's exciting to get a call to go on a job interview. During your preparation (described in detail in the *Selling U* section of Chapter 10), you will, of course, research the company and learn everything you can about how it does business. You'll identify some questions that you want to ask because you realize that a job interview is a two-sided exchange—the company wants to learn about you, and you want to learn about the company. You'll plan your wardrobe, transportation, and other details well in advance of the big day. But one thing you may not think about is how to overcome objections during the job interview.

Common Interview “Objections”

Be prepared to answer the most common objections that may be voiced during your interview. Focus on the positive and keep your answers professional. In fact, you should practice your answers to these questions out loud so that your answers are crisp and conversational. When an interviewer presents an objection, take a breath before you answer the question. Restate the objection and then answer it. It's best not to dwell on an objection and talk too much, simply handle them and move on. Randall S. Hansen and Katharine Hansen, “Closing the Sale and Overcoming Objections in the Job Interview,” Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/printable/interview_objections_closing.html (accessed October 24, 2009). Here are some common objections and suggested ways to handle them.

Objection 1: You Don't Have Enough Experience

The best way to anticipate and even avoid this objection is to review your portfolio during the interview (see the *Selling U* section of Chapter 6 for more details about preparing your portfolio). Randall S. Hansen and Katharine Hansen, “Closing the Sale and Overcoming Objections in the Job Interview,” Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/printable/interview_objections_closing.html (accessed October 24, 2009). A portfolio is a visual way to demonstrate your skills and experience. It's one thing to talk about what you've done, it's quite another to bring it alive to your interviewer. It's especially important to show your work from internships, major class projects, volunteer projects, and other examples of your work.

Objection 2: I'm Not Sure You Will Fit In with the Team

This is another opportunity to refer to your portfolio by talking about projects that you work on with other people. Chances are you've worked on teams for class projects, internships, volunteer projects, and other areas. Be prepared with specific examples about how you have worked in collaboration with a team or taken on the leadership role within a team. Randall S. Hansen and Katharine Hansen, “Closing the Sale and Overcoming Objections in the Job Interview,” Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/printable/interview_objections_closing.html (accessed October 24, 2009).

Objection 3: The Position Doesn't Pay as Much as You Are Looking For

Your response to this objection should be something like “Salary is only one part of compensation. I'm looking for the right opportunity, and I'm willing to look at other areas of the total compensation program, including benefits, advancement, exposure, and other elements of my personal and professional growth.” It's best not to take this conversation into a salary discussion. Wait to have the salary conversation until the company has extended an offer. It's a good idea to have a salary range in mind *before* you go into an interview. Do your research on Web sites such as Salary.com so that you are prepared if your interviewer asks how much you are expecting as a starting salary. Mary Moss, “Tips for Overcoming Objections during a Job Interview,” Associated Content, August 13, 2007, www.associatedcontent.com/article/337859/tips_for_overcoming_objections_during.html?singlepage=true&cat=31 (accessed October 24, 2009).

Objection 4: You're Too Experienced for This Position

When you are starting out, it will be rare to hear that you have too much experience for a particular position. However, if you do hear it, be ready with the right answer. It's always best to seek a job you really want. But starting at a level that might be below

your expectations is a good strategy, especially in this economy.

When interviewers say this, they are worried that when the job you want comes along, you will leave. Answer this objection by pointing out that you are willing and excited about learning about the business from the ground up. Based on your research of the company, give your interviewer a specific reason about why you want to work for that particular company. People are more willing to give you a chance if you are really interested in working for the company.

“Hidden Objections” during Job Interviews

Although there are some common objections you may hear in a job interview, chances are you will rarely hear an objection on a job interview. This is one major difference between a sales call and an interview. Most managers and recruiters respond during an interview in a more neutral way so as not to imply that the job is going to one candidate over another. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 188. Prospective employers prefer to interview all the candidates and then make their hiring decision. Therefore, their objections are often more like hidden objections, those that are not openly stated during the interview. Unlike the sales call, it is not appropriate to keep probing to identify the objection. The best way to overcome objections, hidden or stated, is to be prepared to sell yourself in the most compelling way possible.

The concept of value, described earlier in this chapter, can be a successful way to overcome objections in a job interview whether the objections are stated or hidden. Prepare for the interview, understand the company’s needs, and demonstrate how you can meet the needs. Simple. Effective. Powerful.

Follow Up after Job Interviews: Set Yourself Apart

After you’ve shaken hands and finished your interview, keep in mind that your ability to stand out is not over. Follow-up is the currency of sales; those who follow up significantly increase their chances of getting the sale (or getting the job). Here are some ways to follow up and make yourself memorable.

Thank-You E-mail after a Job Interview

Prospective employers want people who want to work for the company. A thank-you note can set you apart from other candidates and show your interviewer that you really want the job (it’s easy for every candidate to say she wants the job, but not every candidate writes a thank-you note).

You have the opportunity to say thank you more than once. It’s also a good idea to take advantage of every opportunity to demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm for the company. Start with a thank-you e-mail that you send the day of the interview. It’s important to use e-mail to thank your interviewer for his time, and it is also the perfect way to deliver value. Take a minute and recap some of the topics you discussed with each interviewer (if there was more than one). Jot down a list and go online and look for an article, video, or interesting blog that would be worth sharing. Send a personal thank-you e-mail to everyone with whom you interviewed (no group e-mails here). Also, be sure to send a thank-you e-mail to the recruiter, if you worked with one to get the interview. It’s important to remember that a thank-you e-mail should be as formal and professional as a handwritten thank-you note.

Now, it’s time to write your thank-you e-mail. There are three major parts to a thank-you e-mail. It can be short, but effective.

- First, thank your interviewer for her time.
- Mention something specific that you discussed. Include the link in the e-mail.
- Close your e-mail with a note about next steps.

See Figure 11.4.5 for a sample thank you e-mail. Additional sample thank-you e-mail notes can also be found at <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankyouemail.htm>.

To: Chris Talbert
From: Lee Lonsky
Re: Thank you

Dear Chris,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation about the challenges ahead for Horizons Healthcare. It sounds like your efforts to change the culture are working. I thought you might like this video book brief for *Collaboration* by Morten Hansen from BNET.com. It highlights the points we talked about in our conversation about the culture of Horizons Healthcare and the role teamwork and idea sharing play in the success of an organization.

http://www.bnet.com/2435-13724_23-0.html?tag=width;gums

Again, thanks for your time and insights. I'm looking forward to the next steps in the process.

Sincerely,
Lee Lonsky

Figure 11.4.5: Sample Thank-You E-mail

Handwritten Thank-You Note

Sending a thank-you e-mail is good etiquette, and it reminds your interviewer that you can deliver value to the organization. But don't stop there. As soon as you send your thank-you e-mail, write a handwritten thank-you note to each person with whom you interviewed. You might think that it is unusual to send two thank-you notes, but it is the perfect way to communicate your interest and value to your interviewer in two ways: the thank-you e-mail demonstrates immediacy and helps you deliver value with a link to a relevant article, video, or blog, and the handwritten thank-you note provides a personal touch that few candidates take the time to do. As with the thank-you e-mail, timing is important for the handwritten note. It's best to write and mail it the same day so your interviewer receives it within a day or two of the interview. It's the perfect way to reinforce the fact that you go the extra mile to make an impression and build a relationship.

Thank-You Note

(click to see video)

This video highlights some key elements of a handwritten thank-you note.

See Figure 11.4.7 for a sample handwritten thank-you note. Additional sample thank-you notes can also be found at <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/samplethankyou.htm>.

Dear Chris,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me on Wednesday. I enjoyed hearing your perspective about the opportunities at Horizons Healthcare. I appreciate you taking the time to review the organizational structure as well as the expectations for the position. I was especially interested in your comments about the corporate culture. It sounds like all the teamwork and planning is paying off.

Thanks again for your time and insights. I'm looking forward to the next steps.

Sincerely,

Lee Lonsky

Figure 11.4.7: Sample Handwritten Thank-You Note

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Dos and Don'ts of Thank-You Notes

Here are some tips for writing effective thank-you e-mails and notes:

- **Do** ask for a business card at the end of each interview so that you have the correct spelling and title for each person with whom you interviewed. Randall S. Hansen, "Job Interview Follow-Up Do's and Don'ts," Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/interview_follow-up-dos-donts.html (accessed November 8, 2009).
- **Do** write individual thank-you notes to each person with whom you interviewed. If a recruiter arranged the interview, send a thank-you e-mail or note to her, too. Randall S. Hansen, "Job Interview Follow-Up Do's and Don'ts," Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/interview_follow-up-dos-donts.html (accessed November 8, 2009).
- **Do** write a thank-you e-mail or note even if you are not interested in the job. It's always a good idea to say thank you to someone for his time. Alison Doyle, "Writing Thank You Letters," About.com, <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankyouletters.htm> (accessed November 8, 2009).
- **Do** send a thank-you e-mail or note within twenty-four hours.
- **Do** proof your thank-you e-mail or note before you send it, including the spelling of the person's name.

Here are some things to avoid when sending thank-you e-mails and notes:

- **Don't** stop job hunting even if you had a good interview. The job isn't yours until you get an offer. Randall S. Hansen, "Job Interview Follow-Up Do's and Don'ts," Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/interview_follow-up-dos-donts.html (accessed November 8, 2009).
- **Don't** bother the employer and follow up in a way that becomes annoying. Randall S. Hansen, "Job Interview Follow-Up Do's and Don'ts," Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/interview_follow-up-dos-donts.html (accessed November 8, 2009).
- **Don't** follow up sooner than the interviewer or recruiter indicates is appropriate.

What If You Don't Hear Back?

At the end of a job interview, it's a good idea to ask about next steps. Usually interviewers or recruiters will tell you the expected time frame in which they will make a decision. This is valuable information because it will help you determine how and when you should follow up.

If you don't hear back from the employer or recruiter within the specified time frame, it's recommended that you call and follow up. Companies frequently have good intentions of making a decision quickly, but other business issues take priority. Following up with a phone call helps remind your prospective employer that you are interested in the position. While it is appropriate to follow up by e-mail, it is more effective to follow up by phone. It's easier to have a conversation with the interviewer or recruiter and get

some insight about the timing as well as reinforcing why you are a good choice for the position. Continue to do research on the company so that when you follow up, you can discuss company news. For example, you might say something like “I noticed that you were recently awarded the ACON business. It sounds like this is an exciting time at the agency and one that will need some motivated salespeople. I wanted to follow up on our conversation last week to see where you stand with filling the position.”

✓ Follow-Up Tip

Set up a Google News Alert (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) using keywords for every company in which you are interested in working. The news alerts will be delivered to your e-mail (or other source you specify), and you will know all the latest news about the company—as it happens. It’s a good idea to send an e-mail to your contact about the news as a follow-up and a way to keep in touch.

Follow-Up after Sending Résumés

You can see that follow-up is critical after an interview. It helps overcome objections even after the interview is over. The same principle of follow-up applies to every contact you make during your job search.

When you use the tools described in the *Selling U* sections of Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 to get the word out about your personal brand, follow-up will be especially important. Your list of twenty-five target companies and the appropriate people to contact at each that you created in the *Selling U* section of Chapter 7 should include a phone number and e-mail address for each person on your follow-up list. Within one week of sending a cover letter and résumé, a phone call to each person (or at least the top twenty people) on your mailing list will help reinforce your cover letter and résumé and give you the opportunity to sell yourself on the phone.

Follow-Up after Networking

You learned about the power of networking in Chapter 3. But like other forms of contact, networking requires follow-ups. Make it a point to follow up by e-mail or phone with each person on your networking list every four to six weeks.

It’s especially important to follow up quickly with those people with whom you connected about a possible job or contact to someone at a company. It’s appropriate to follow up within a week, unless the person told you otherwise.

Key Takeaways

- Unlike a sales call, a job interview usually doesn’t include stated objections.
- The secret to overcoming hidden objections such as experience or salary is to be prepared and establish the value you can bring to the company during the interview.
- Follow up after a job interview is a powerful way to make yourself memorable even after the interview is over.
- Thank-you notes (both e-mail and handwritten) should be sent within twenty-four hours of an interview to each person with whom you met. It’s also a good idea to send one to the recruiter who arranged the interview.
- Thank-you notes are a reflection of your personal brand. Correct spelling and grammar are required, including each person’s name and title.
- Follow-up, which may include a phone call or e-mail, is also important for each stage of your job search.

? Exercise 11.4.1

1. Assume you went on an interview for a job you want. Write a thank-you e-mail and handwritten thank-you note to the person with whom you interviewed.
2. Imagine that you are networking with someone who said his company may have an opening and asked you for your résumé. It’s been a week since you sent your résumé to him. When would you follow up? How would you follow up?
3. Assume that you are on a job interview and the interviewer says, “You have an interesting background, but I’m not sure you have the experience we need for this position.” How would you respond?

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