

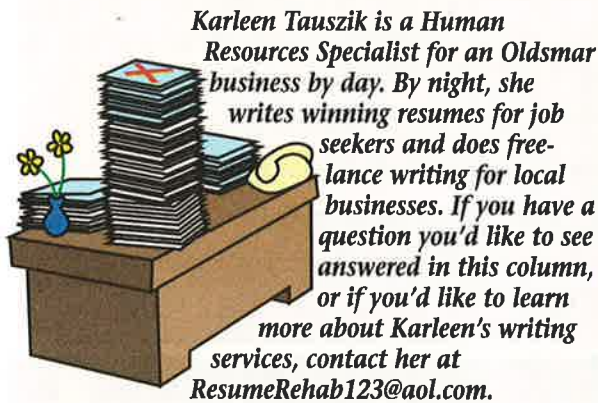
# OLDSMAR The People's Paper

# MONITOR

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## Local Recruiters Give Their Opinion: What's Important When You Interview



not crushing. Again, this shows self confidence, poise, and old fashioned good manners. Follow the cue of the person who is interviewing you. He or she should initiate the handshake. Be ready to shake hands with anyone else you are introduced to, if they offer their hand.

Several of the recruiters said they like to see that candidates are educated about the company, and are clear on what the job entails. With the internet, there's really no excuse in this area. Most companies have a website, and you should take the time to study it before your interview.

The more you know about the company, the more you can show a sincere interest. You can also ask better questions and most importantly, you'll have a better idea of how you can fit in with the company and its goals.

One recruiter specifically expressed frustration at candidates who "ask stupid questions", meaning asking about something they should already know from the job description or the company website. So be sure to do your homework! Also, keep away from salary or benefit package questions in the first interview.

Candidates that talk too much were a pet peeve of several recruiters. Listen carefully to the questions in an interview. Try to answer each one clearly, perhaps including one brief example to illustrate your point. Don't ramble. Concentrate on the question, not on the next thing you want to say.

Never speak badly about your present employer or disclose information about them that has not yet hit the press. You may come across as a trouble maker. If you suspect your employer is going broke or is relocating or being bought, keep it quiet unless it's been in the papers. Otherwise, the person interviewing you will wonder what you'll leak about their company if you were hired.

Grooming and good hygiene were also brought up as key to a good impression. Specific turn offs mentioned were pet hair on your interview clothes, smelling like cigarette smoke and using too much cologne or perfume.

In August, I gave my boss a shock. "Can I leave work early to attend the Work Net Pinellas Job Fair?" I asked. It was held at the Hilton Garden Inn here in Oldsmar.

As his jaw dropped, I quickly explained that I wasn't going in order to look for a new job. I wanted to attend to collect more information for you, my readers.

With over 25 companies there, I knew I'd be able to talk with plenty of human resources and recruiting people. My intent was to survey them on a few questions, and use their answers to further educate you on the job search process.

As it turned out, the recruiting and staffing people who were there were enthusiastic and very willing to share their experiences and opinions! And they were happy to share tips to help you find a job quickly and successfully.

Specifically, I asked these recruiters, "When someone comes in for an interview, what top things do you look for, and what your biggest turn-offs?"

Their responses varied quite a bit, but there were plenty of common threads. I'll go through their answers in quantity order from the least to the greatest. As you read these, remember that recruiters and Human Resources personnel want to see you hired. It's their job to help find the

best candidate for the opening. I'm writing this so your chances of having a successfully interview are improved. Hopefully you'll learn a few tricks to help you land that job!

One of the recruiters said he watched for the candidate's interaction with the receptionist. Few people realize how much we depend on our receptionists' insights and first impressions. Some job applicants treat the receptionist poorly, thinking that the job is at the bottom end of the organizational chart and doesn't deserve respect.

In reality, the first impressions and opinions of the receptionist are often shared with HR personnel, and are taken seriously. Since receptionists deal with visitors to the company all day, they often have a keen eye and a sharp sense that can pick up on personality traits, manners, self esteem and stress levels.

The importance of eye contact and shaking hands was also discussed. Both can easily show the confidence of the applicant. Eye contact should be maintained as much as possible, without staring. Looking around the room while talking with an interviewer is distracting. Looking down frequently shows that you're not confident in the interview situation.

Your hand shake should be firm, but

Three of the recruiters listed good verbal communication skills and body language as essential in a successful interview. In stressful situations like an interview, it's easy to speak too fast or too loud. Try to calm your jitters and slow down. Keep your posture open. Arms crossed across your chest can give the subliminal message that you're not cooperative or open to what's being said.

Five recruiters all agreed that it's essential to have a confident attitude, but not an arrogant attitude. Several spoke of candidates who "act like they're too good to work for us." Obviously, that's an immediate turnoff. The interviewer needs to see that the candidate can fit into the work environment and can cooperate as part of a team.

Being on time for an interview is essential to a good first impression, according to seven of the recruiters. I asked how late is too late, and was told, "No grace". And being "extremely early", says one, is nearly as bad as being late. Showing up too early can throw off the schedules of those who are interviewing you. So make sure you're on time, and I would suggest no more than 10 or 15 minutes early.

And finally, the biggest turn off to the recruiters I interviewed is candidates who don't dress professionally, or who dress inappropriately for the company. The meaning of "dressing professionally" has been diluted over the years by business casual and Monday through Friday casual dress codes. The result is confusion.

But all you need to do is ask. When you're called to come in for an interview, ask about the company's dress code. Common business advice for interviews is to then dress one level up from the dress code. Think about how you would dress if you were representing that company in an important business meeting.

I hope the results of this survey help you the next time you have an interview. Remember, you only get one chance to make a good first impression. And if you keep in mind what these recruiters are looking for, you'll be miles ahead of many of the other candidates. Good luck!