

How Important Is It To Stand Apart From Others In An Interview And How Difficult Is It?

By: [Paul Shearstone](#)

Q: How important is it to stand apart from others in an interview and how difficult is it?

Any professionally trained interviewer can attest these questions are the most asked by people involved with job-hunting. How important is it? Absolutely vital! ... How difficult is it? Not hard at all.

I can demonstrate the importance with a true story from my book 'The Art of the Interview'.
[*Now on CD-ROM]

In the early 1980s I interviewed a young man who, in our meeting, began to quote information pertaining to the company he was applying. He cited the previous year's corporate gross revenue figures, the number of employees' country wide, projected new product launches and other related information. Needless to say, I was impressed. He got the job.

In retrospect, although I tried to be unbiased, when comparing him to the other candidates I interviewed, his knowledge of the company [The Company I worked for and Loved] colored, in his favor, the whole interview. My impression was he had spent much time researching the organization which showed considerable interest and effort on his part. Not one of his competitors had done so.

Months later, I asked him where he'd done his research to find so much about the company. He smiled and said, "Remember our meeting was scheduled for 2: PM that day you were running 15-minutes behind?" I nodded affirmatively. "Well, as I sat in the reception area waiting for you, I noticed, among the magazines on the coffee table, a Corporate year-end report in which, among other things, contained the company's complete history. Fifteen minutes gave me plenty of time to 'research' the company." [And then he grinned]

This story is true although the important lesson here is; he did something so simple, that in the end, made such a huge difference. He beat out twenty other candidates - many of whom had more impressive credentials than he. The fact remains, when the moment counted, and with little effort, "He was Impressive!"

You may think me a little unyielding as to the importance of this point. The fact remains, 'Little Things' can make 'All the Difference'. For other examples of this we need only look at Olympic athletes.

The runner that crosses the finish line 1/100th of a second faster than the next, wins Gold. A Gold Medal can mean the difference of millions of dollars in future endorsements.

One might ask; Is this Gold Medal winner ten times faster or better than the second runner? No, he is only 1/100th of a second faster – the length of a pencil. Decades of training and practice to become a Gold Medal winner, a celebrity and a multi-millionaire all came down to 7-inches – When It Counted!

For us, the other important factor to remember is that when interviewing for a new job, there is no Silver Medal, second place, so to speak. We either get the job or we don't.

The Bottom Line:

Although it's easy to see the task of standing apart in an interview, a little daunting. It is, nevertheless, absolutely integral to anyone's success in today's Unique Value-Add driven marketplace whether it's products, services - especially when it relates to us. In the end, we are all trying to make a sale. Potential employers must buy-off on the value and uniqueness of us.

The good news? Standing out in a 'Huge' way is rarely necessary and often we find, standing out a 'Little' - not all that difficult.

Good Job Hunting!

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