

The Election's Lessons for Your Next Job Interview

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The U.S. presidential race is the nation's largest job interview, and we're all the hiring managers. So in this historic election year, what can job seekers learn from Senators Barack Obama and John McCain? A lot -- both about what works in an [interview](#) and what might cost you the job.

Consider these tips from the campaign trail:

Do know your talking points.

One thing McCain and Obama have done well this campaign is know who they are and how to share it with the public through talking points.

"The lesson for job interviewees is to stay on message," says Thom Singer, author of "Some Assembly Required: How to Make, Grow and Keep Your Business Relationships." "Know in advance what you want to tell the person interviewing you."

What are your strengths? What's your passion? Know your answers and pepper them throughout the [interview](#).

Do practice speaking skills.

Poorly spoken people rarely become president.

Even if your job doesn't require much talking, the interview will. Take a tip from Sen. Obama, who transformed his bureaucratic speaking style years ago into today's soaring oratory.

"By the time you get to the interview, the interviewer has already determined that you're qualified for the job, or you wouldn't be there," says career coach Cheryl Palmer. "The more you can make a personal connection, the more you demonstrate that you will be able to walk into the job and contribute, the more chance you have of getting the job."

Do keep it concise.

There's a reason debates limit candidates' response times to two minutes.

"Usually two minutes is sufficient to answer a question," says Palmer. "More than that and you're probably going to give the interviewer more information than she wants. Significantly less and you are probably not providing enough information."

Don't assume one answer fits all.

Sen. McCain doesn't give the same speech to veterans and businessmen. Your [interviews](#) aren't interchangeable, either. Research the company's website for its mission statement, press releases and strategic plan, and tailor your talking points.

"A common interview question is, 'What do you know about our company?'" says Palmer. "Candidate A might say, 'I was hoping you could tell me more.' If Candidate B says, 'I know this company is working on XYZ initiative. I was wondering how this position fits in with that initiative,' right off the bat, the interviewer is going to see that Candidate A needs a job, any job, but candidate B wants *this* job at *this* company."

Don't manipulate.

Want the job badly? Keep it honest.

"If you fake it, someone always gets caught," warns Singer. Instead, ask yourself these questions from Jamie and

Maren Showkeir, coauthors of "Authentic Conversations: Moving from Manipulation to Truth and Commitment":

** Are you complimenting that family photo because you mean it or because you want to get in good with the manager?* The manager is likely to tell that you're trying to suck up and tune out.

** Are you desperate?* "The more you want the job, the more likely you are to engage in over promising, spinning or overstating your accomplishments," says Jamie Showkeir.

If necessary, mention at the outset that you think the job is a good fit and you're a little nervous. That way, you acknowledge the elephant in the room and you're free to be honest and make a connection with the interviewer.

The good news? The more honest you are, says Jamie Showkeir, the more likely you are to get the right [job](#) for you.

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