



ATTORNEY SEARCH

by Dan Binstock, Carey Bertolet,
& Danice Kowalczyk

35 Absurd ways to create an awkward moment in an interview

Given the nature of practicing law, almost all articles on the subject are likewise-and appropriately-serious in nature. Topics such as recent decisions, practice group mergers, or building a book of business typically do not result in the reader experiencing an unexpected burst of laughter.

However, you've stumbled upon an article that focuses one of the rare exceptions in this field: Interviews. Given the inherent pressures the interviewee and the interviewer feel to make the best first impression, combined with the strong set of socially acceptable "do's" and "don'ts", there is hardly ever any slight deviation from normal behavior. And when there is, the incongruity of the situation can cause people to squirm in their seats with discomfort. If you are one who sees and appreciates the humor in these types of awkward situations, keep reading.

One recent late evening, several BCG recruiters started playing the "Could you imagine if somebody did X" game in the context of hypothetical law firm interviews. The more absurd the scenarios, the funnier they were when we imagined the awkward tension they would create.

In the spirit of changing things up a bit this summer, and adding some humor to the articles in this field, here's a list of ridiculously absurd ways to create awkward moments in interviews, and make interviewer think you've gone completely insane. (Overkill Disclaimer: This is a joke. However, if you think any of these are funny, be careful to not picture any of these actually happening while you are on a "real" interview - you might just laugh when you least want to.)

1. While sitting in the reception area awaiting your first interviewer, tell the receptionist that you have "lots of nervous energy" and volunteer to water the plants or handle other general housekeeping services. When the receptionist declines the invitation, start doing imaginary cleaning. When the recruiting coordinator comes to meet you, make the person wait and watch for about 10 seconds while you complete your imaginary chore (such as sweeping without a broom).
2. At the top of your resume, print (in italics) lyrics that are remotely relevant, such as:
I would fight for you - I'd lie for you
Walk the wire for you - yeah I'd die for you
You know it's true.
Everything I do - I do it for you.
- Bryan Adams (from "Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves")

35 Absurd ways to create an awkward moment in an interview

3. (For those of you aged 30 to 34) After the interviewer stands up to greet you, you should shake hands in a rushed fashion, shout "shotgun!" and jump into the interviewer's chair. Gesture for the interviewer to sit in the guest chair, and begin the interview normally.
4. Behave as if you are in a time warp from the 1940s, where practicing law is still a very small and elite brotherhood. For example, when introducing yourself and shaking hands, proceed as follows: "Attorney John Smith, here. Member in good standing of the D.C., Massachusetts, and Kentucky Bars. It's an honor to meet you, counselor."
5. Regardless of gender, wear a frilly wedding dress to the interview. If anyone questions this, just tell them "It's the appropriate attire for when I've found my perfect match." (smile broadly and lick teeth)
6. If they ask why you are leaving your current firm, reply (in an unexpected defensive and aggressive tone) "Well, would you want to stay at a firm where everyone avoided you for absolutely no reason at all" (immediately cock head slightly to the side, and keep intense eye-contact for several seconds)
7. Bring an attorney to your interview and whenever you are asked a question, whisper to your attorney before answering.
8. At the beginning of the interview, take off your belt, fashion it into a loop and position it horizontally across the interviewer's desk. Every time you nail a question with an excellent answer, stand up, lift the belt, and strike the interviewer's desk in one flourished stroke, adding "Ya cha cha! I love it rough!" Sit back down and continue with interview.
9. Listen attentively to interviewer's explanation of the firm. Then, with a deadpan expression, point to the appropriate body parts and say "Milk, milk, lemonade, 'round the corner, fudge is made."
10. When asked why you did not get an offer after you summered at another firm, reply "That firm was way too uptight." When the interviewer probes deeper, reply "SOME people get 'sensitive' when you drink a little at lunch, come back to the office, and try to body slam the receptionist."
11. Every time somebody asks a tough question, reply "Objection, Your Honor" and then follow with (in a different voice) "Objection Sustained." Then, just stare at the interviewer with a victorious grin and don't answer the question.
12. Bring a cane (for aesthetic purposes only) and point it directly at the interviewer when trying to emphasize a strong point.
13. During the interview, keep directing the conversation to the interviewer's office décor and or family pictures. (Example: If the interviewer asks whether you have taken any depositions, say "Depositions shmepositions - where did you get that Thomasville bookshelf? Is that real oak?")
14. Wear an eye patch over one eye. During the interview, in a slow and deliberate manner, casually place it over your other eye.
15. Bring in a small Black's Law Dictionary, and every time the interviewer mentions a mildly legal term (such as "discovery"), open the dictionary, look up the word, repeat the definition quietly (but within earshot), and then close the dictionary and answer the question normally.
16. If asked whether you have any weaknesses, answer "I work too hard, I'm a perfectionist, and I deflect questions like a politician at interviews."
17. If they continue asking about your weaknesses, respond with "My calves are a half-inch wider than my thighs."
18. When they ask what you like doing, reply "I enjoy commercial litigation, white collar criminal defense, and long slow walks on the beach at sunset, but not in that order." (Stare and lick teeth awkwardly)
19. Hide a mini wood gavel in your jacket, and at the end of the interview, take it out and slam it on the interviewer's desk, and state "This interview is adjourned." Laugh hysterically. [Note - for increased effect, accidentally make contact with an object such as a family photo, desk clock, etc.]
20. Wink at least once during each interview.
21. At the end of each interview, while shaking hands, continue to hold on to the interviewer's hand while you continue to reopen and force additional conversation. For example, while still shaking and holding the interviewer's hand, ask "So tell me, what does it take to be a superstar here?" Refuse to let go of the interviewer's hand, maintain serious eye contact, and slightly invade personal space.

22. Wear aviator sunglasses during the interview, and keep analogizing practicing law to being in battlefield and an "intense dogfight." At the end of the interview, before shaking hands, put on a World War II pilot's helmet.
23. When the interviewer tries to wrap up the interview, get a defeated look on your face and say, "Ouch. . . you hated me, didn't you?" (smile seductively; perfect opportunity to wink)
24. Instead of sending thank you notes, send mix-tapes of songs that are remotely relevant (e.g., "Take on Me"; "I want you to want me"; "Call me"; "I only have eyes for you"; "Let's stay together")
25. If you have interviewed but have not yet heard back from the firm, take it upon yourself to "give yourself an offer." First, call the managing partner and say "I just spoke to [insert name of innocent junior partner], who extended me an offer; I wanted to thank you and let you know that I'm thrilled to accept."
26. After each name on the references list write "Deceased."

If an offer seems promising, make the following requests:

27. "I've heard that only partners get paid parking spaces, but I want a parking space for myself and one for my imaginary friend, Keldin. Keldin drives a Buick, so make sure it's not a compact space."
28. "I would appreciate a 3d business card that is a bust of my head in a top hat."
29. "I hate working by myself. You'd be fine if I shared your office and desk for the first few months, right?"
30. "I do not work on holidays of any religion, in case one of them is right. This leaves me available only 4 days of the year. On two of them I will be fasting and therefore will be weak, and not much should be expected."
31. "With your stated commitment to excellence, I'm assuming that having a windowed office for my spiritual advisor will not be a problem."
32. "I do not drink socially. However, I do believe in whiskey lunches and vodka Tuesdays. Will that be a problem?"
33. "As a feng shui practitioner, my desk must be positioned to block my closed door at all times. If a partner knocks and I cannot guess who it is within one minute, they must leave my sacred space."
34. "I'm a pretty old fashioned lawyer and never found all these fancy computers to be of any use. I'm assuming your IT folks could find a way to fully integrate my Commodore 64?"
35. "I will need two parking spaces and an unlimited supply of ear plugs because I commute to work on a forklift."

This article ("article" being used very loosely in this context) was written by Dan Binstock, Carey Bertolet, and Danice Kowalczyk, all former large law firm attorneys who are now legal recruiters with BCG Attorney Search. Thanks to Justin N. Heimberg, who is not a legal recruiter but shares the same sense of humor, for his ideas on this topic. The article is meant strictly for humorous purposes and should not be construed as advice!