



The Most Frequent Interview and Job Fair Mistake: Little or No Knowledge of the Company

The Internet has made it easier than ever for job seekers to learn about prospective employers. It may come as a surprise, then, that 44 percent of executives recently surveyed said the most common interview pitfall for today's candidates is insufficient company research.

The survey was developed by Accountemps temporary staffing service. It was conducted by an independent research firm and includes responses from 150 executives with the nation's 1,000 largest companies.

Executives were asked: "Which do you think is the most common mistake candidates make during job interviews?" Their responses:

- Little or no knowledge of the company 44%
- Unprepared to discuss career plans and goals 23%
- Limited enthusiasm 16%
- Lack of eye contact 5%
- Unprepared to discuss skills or experience 3%
- Late arrival 2%
- Other 4%

"Conducting effective research can give job seekers a decided edge over the competition when applying for a position," said Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of *Managing Your Career For Dummies*. "The more information candidates have about potential employers, the better prepared they will be to demonstrate this knowledge during the interview."

Messmer points out that prospective employees should be able to answer the following key questions before the first meeting with a hiring manager:

- What business is the company in?
- What products and services does it sell?
- Who are its primary competitors?
- What current industry issues or events are of interest to the firm?
- What are the company's mission, vision and values?

According to Steve Kenney, Accountemps director of permanent operations, candidates preparing for an interview can locate most of the information they'll need on the Internet. "Most company web sites include press releases, product and service information, and profiles of the firm and its executives; publicly held corporations also post detailed financial information online," Kenney said. "In addition, a keyword search on targeted sites will typically locate articles written about the company."