



# JUST THE ONE I WAS LOOKING FOR

*A Job Recruiter Explains How Graduates Really Get Hired*

Joe Mayne

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# THE **FORMULA** FOR JOB HUNTING SUCCESS

The formula for success in nearly every area of your life, from job-hunting to painting to parenting, has been known for a very long time. In fact, you've probably seen it yourself on several occasions. It looks like this:

## **Skills + Attitude = Success**

If we wanted to express this another way, we could simply say that to get ahead, you need two things – to know what to do (skills), and to go about those things in the right way (your attitude). It's a simple idea, but the more you think about it, the easier it is to prove. Every truly successful person you know has the magic combination of both skills and attitude.

Assuming you understand this, let me ask you a bonus question. What do you think is more important to your job-hunting success: skills or attitude? Most students and recent graduates, when asked this question, will answer that skills are more important. But they're wrong.

There's a very easy way to prove this. Think of a handful of people who you really admire and look to as exemplars. Then, write their names down on a piece of paper and draw two columns below – one for skills, and one for attitudes. Start making a list of the things that have made them successful, putting skills (things you can learn) on the one side, and attitudes (behaviors and character traits) on the other. What you will quickly find is that attitude is far more important to your success than skills. You can always learn additional skills, but having the right attitude will push you to succeed.

In this e-book, I'm going to show you why attitude plays an extremely important role in your job search as a new graduate, and what you can do to develop and project the mindset of a winner. Once you have that down, you won't just have an easier time getting hired, you'll have the tools you need for a great career.

## DON'T **SKILLS** COUNT FOR SOMETHING?

Lots of students have a hard time understanding how their attitudes can be so much more important than their skills. Haven't they just spent years, not to mention a lot of money, improving their business and industry skills? And isn't it important to know how to use computers, decipher a balance sheet, and understand how a business plan works?

This kind of thinking is half right. If you can't perform basic business tasks, then it is going to be difficult or impossible to find a job. That's why so many people who fail to finish high school struggle to hold down regular employment – managers just aren't convinced that they have the tools to do their jobs. Once you've completed college, however, recruiters assume that you know how to do the basics. The fact that you have a degree, or soon will, gives them the evidence that you can read a manual, find your way through a profit and loss statement, and so on.

So, recruiters already know that you, like all the other candidates for the position, have the basic business skills required. Anything else that you need, you'll learn on the job. Nobody shows up ready to contribute on day one. Your new company expects to train you in what you'll be doing - they can do that for anyone they interview - as long as you have the right attitude to learn.

Because your attitude plays such a crucial role in determining whether you will be successful or not, recruiters look for it, more than anything else, when they consider you as a job candidate. Still don't believe me? You don't have to take my word for it. Warren Buffet, one of the world's richest and most successful men, echoed the sentiment of hiring managers everywhere when he recently told an interviewer that his number one recruiting rule was "hire for attitude, train for skill."

## WHAT **RECRUITERS** WANT

If it isn't skills that recruiters are looking for, then what is it they really want? How can you show them to you have the right attitude to work for their company? Well, the first thing you can do is to make sure that your resume stands out by showing that you've been involved with a number of group activities. Hiring managers can't really figure out much about your attitude from your resume alone, but they can find clues. So, if yours reads like you've been busy doing positive things, you're likely to get asked in for an interview.

Once you get there, realize that you've already won half the battle. Lots of young people tend to think that interviews are a grueling process designed to weed candidates out. That's far from the truth, however. The reality is that recruiters want to find someone great for their open position – they actually want and hope that you'll give them a lot of reasons to stop looking and hire you. In other words, they've already screened you based on your resume; now they just want to see if your personality can put you over the top.



We're going to spend the rest of this e-book going over ways you can show them that you have the right attitude for the job, but for the moment I just want you to stop and reflect on the two main points I've made so far, because they're so important to your success: *your attitude is more important than your skills, and recruiters are looking for reasons to hire you.*

If you can keep those two facts in mind as you go through the job search and interview process, you're always going to start on the right foot. The one thing any hiring manager loves is an easy decision. Stand out as the clear choice for their job opening, and you won't have to wait long to be hired.

## GIVE A LITTLE **ATTITUDE**

So, if the interview is really designed to uncover your attitude, and you need to show the right one to be hired, then which one will get you the job and make your success? By far, the number one trait that recruiters look for is a quiet confidence. The best professionals don't just know what they're doing, they also want to pitch in and help. They have what I like to call the personality of a "servant leader."

What does this mean, exactly? It means someone who is a very strong candidate, and knows it, without coming across as cocky or arrogant. One of the biggest challenges in hiring is integrating new faces within an existing team. The last thing any hiring manager wants is someone who's going to upset or irritate the current staff. That's why you not only need to have attitude, but the right one to get hired.

When it comes to demonstrating this in an interview, do the easy thing and take the interviewer's lead. People are naturally attracted to individuals who have similar

personality traits. That's the reason that so many couples or groups of friends seem alike. It's also the reason, in sales circles, it's a known fact that people will usually buy from other people that they like. We all have an innate desire to surround ourselves with other people who share our ideas and values.

Make it easy for the interviewer to buy you. Mirror their body language and speech patterns, and look for similarities in your views or backgrounds. Doing so helps them to be at ease with you, which paves the way to a job offer.

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

We've all heard that people make snap judgments about your personality and worth within the first eight seconds of meeting you. What a lot of people don't realize, however, is that those assumptions turn out to be right at least 90% of the time. That is, if someone decides they really like you right away, then they're probably always going to think that way. On the other hand, if they aren't comfortable with you, you're going to have a very difficult time changing their mind.

With that in mind, it's important that you start off each interview with the right tone. Spending time on greetings, handshakes, and small talk can often seem overly basic, but I've been through too many interviews that were ruined right from the start by the way the candidate carried him or herself. So, let me give you a quick overview of what should happen in those first precious few seconds, along with what you can do to make stand out.

The greeting and handshake are simple, but all-important. It goes without saying that you should be smiling when you meet your interviewer, and shake hands firmly, but without a death grip. You want to come across as someone who is enthusiastic and excited, not a person who's afraid to touch a stranger's hand. And while you're at it, be sure to meet your interviewer halfway; they shouldn't have to walk all the way across the room to meet you.

Once you've both introduced yourselves, the interviewer will likely break the ice with a few small questions. They're not looking for specific answers here, just a sense of how comfortable you are in your skin. It's normal for anyone to be a little nervous at the start of an interview, but do you seem like you can handle it? Is the pressure of just being in the room too much for you? The tone you set in the first few moments gives insight into how you'll be throughout the interview – and even on the job itself.

The first few seconds of an interview are all important, but as long as you give off a little bit of confidence and a positive attitude, you'll be off to a massive head start.

## SIDESTEP THE **PRESSURE**

If there's one thing new graduates hate about interviews, it's the tough questions. And with good reason. Sometime after questions about the weather and your background, your interviewer is going to start throwing some curve balls. Whether they're the old classics like "tell me about your biggest weaknesses," or something more along the lines of "how are your interviews going?" they're not going to be easy to answer. But, I'm here to tell you that you can set yourself apart from nearly every other candidate if you'll just follow a simple three-step process.

The first step is simply to stay calm. As I mentioned earlier, interviewers don't want you to fail. They're actually hoping to find someone they can recommend for the job. So, your mission is to take the question for what it is – an opportunity to let the interviewer find out that you're clearly the best person to hire.

The second step is to think before you speak. What is the question really after? Oftentimes, the interviewer is

just hoping to find out whether you'll give them a stock answer, or go out on a limb and share a little bit about yourself. Maybe they just want to see if you can think on your feet. Either way, it's perfectly acceptable to take a couple of seconds to think about your response before answering.

And finally, you'll want to stay nimble. A lot of the toughest questions focus on negatives – parts of your personality you'd like to change, the most difficult person you've ever worked with, and so on – and so the tendency is to respond in kind. Resist that urge. Try to take every question and turn it into a positive by explaining how a situation changed you, or ways you're trying to improve yourself going forward. Recruiters love positivity, and putting a good spin on a negative question is a great way to show it.

# TURN THE TABLES

I'm going to let you in on a little interviewing secret: most of the men and women who conduct interviews don't do it full-time. They are either managers or employees who have been asked to evaluate candidates on behalf of someone else. In other words, they are almost always as new at it as you are. And just as you don't want to say the wrong thing, they don't want to make a mistake and end up with the wrong hire.

Because of that, one of your strongest interview strategies is to turn the tables – that is, to ask some questions of your own and get the other person involved. For instance, suppose you're asked where you see yourself in five years. You might answer the question and then turn it around and ask your interviewer how they got to be in their position. Most people are their own favorite topic, and by getting them to open up, you not only put them at ease, you also gain valuable insight into the way the company works.



If you don't have that kind of opening, it's a very good idea to ask questions at the end of the interview. Come prepared with a list of things you might think to ask, like:

What would be my next step in the interview process?

What advancement potential is there with this position?

What do you think is the best thing about working for your company?

And so on. Questions like these work well because they get the interviewer talking, rather than just asking, and set you apart as a dynamic candidate. Remember, the recruiter has just seen probably a dozen or more young people who've done nothing more than sit there and let the questions come at them. Make the effort to show them that you're different by turning the tables.

## BUILDING **CONFIDENCE**

You've probably noticed by now that a main ingredient of the job-hunting success formula is confidence. Everything starts with the premise that you are the absolute best person for the job, and all the things that happen along the way – from the interview onward – are designed to show that.

For that to work, though, you need to feel secure in yourself and your own abilities. And since confidence usually comes from experience, students can find themselves in a tough position: they need to act confidently to get the job, but they don't feel confident because they've never been through the interview process, much less worked at a company.

So what's the answer? To practice in a safe environment. Just as a professional football team doesn't hit the field running plays they've never tried before, you shouldn't show up to an interview without having practiced through it at least a few dozen times. Start by staging mock interviews with your friends and family, and

when you feel comfortable with that audience, move on to professors or job center counselors (who are fantastic about this, by the way). They'll ask you more challenging questions. You might feel nervous or awkward at first, but after a few attempts, you'll start to find your comfort zone. When you show up for your actual interview, you'll be in known territory, just be running the same plays you've handled so well in practice.

With that in mind, here comes the best piece of advice in this e-book: A positive attitude – the one thing that can guarantee you success in your job search and career – can be made stronger and more evident through practice. Make a point of cultivating and showing off your attitude, and you'll quickly become a recruiter's favorite.

## ABOUT THE **AUTHOR**

Joe Mayne is a professional speaker and author from Minneapolis, Minnesota. For more than 15 years, he's been teaching college students from hundreds of campuses across North America how to stand out in the job search process.

From the beginning of his career, when he was hired by a Fortune 500 firm before he graduated college, Joe has been intrigued by the dynamics of the job hunting process. Later, in his work as a recruiter, manager, and consultant, he conducted thousands of interviews and learned how to evaluate candidates from an employer's perspective. He continues to gather and share those insights today through his books, articles, and keynote speeches.

Joe's articles and e-books have been featured nationally online and in the print media, and he continues to give dozens of presentations to colleges and universities each year.

You can find out more about him and his work at [www.MayneSpeaker.com](http://www.MayneSpeaker.com)

