

Receiving feedback can be a valuable learning experience. The information is customized, it's spontaneous and it's really the only way to delve into the perceptions that others might have about you. It can help you uncover some of your "blind spots."

Feedback provided at the conclusion of an interview can be especially helpful. Not only is it a barometer of your performance, but once you are armed with the feedback you can potentially glean some insight into the interviewer's thoughts, the firm's decision criteria and it might even give you the opportunity to recast any objections that the interviewer might have about you.

There are three components to a successful feedback session. Each step must be handled with skill and composure in order to make certain that you turn the feedback session into a positive experience for you and the interviewer.

## 1. Ask for feedback

This is different from expressing your interest in the job, which is considered to be a customary closing remark from the candidate following an interview. You want to know how you performed and how you compare against other candidates—and it won't be shared unless you ask for it.

"From the interviewer's perspective, they are evaluating the candidate on several levels," says Carole Martin of Interview Coach.com. "They are wondering if you can do the job, will this person fit in, can we afford them and lastly what are the 'red flags' that I should be aware of."

There are several ways to ask for the interviewer's opinions. By first stating why you are asking for the information, you might be able to get the interviewer to feel at ease and consequently they will be more candid with you. Try opening up with a phrase such as, "I'm always trying to improve. Can you share any feedback with me about my interviewing skills?"

Martin says to select questions that get to the point, but won't make the interviewer uncomfortable.

"'Do you have any doubts that I can do this job?' is one question that I might ask that will help uncover objections or concerns that the interviewer might have," says Martin. "Another would be, 'On a scale of one to ten, how do I rank against the candidate profile you are looking for?' This might reveal how you stack up against other candidates for the position," says Martin.

Requesting criticism facilitates growth and the opportunity to separate yourself from the crowd.

## 2. Handle the feedback appropriately

If you intend to ask for feedback, you need to be able to accept what you are told without becoming argumentative or defensive. This is actually the most vital step in the entire process, because you may win over the interviewer with your poise and professionalism. If the interviewer offers positive feedback, simply thank them by saying, "Thank you for sharing that with me." The same advice is true if they offer negative feedback that you don't think you need to refute for example, "Yes, I know that I have a tendency to ramble on a bit when I'm nervous and I'm working on it. Thanks for sharing that with me."

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Remember to watch facial expressions and body language when you are receiving feedback. Practicing in front of peers and family members can help and the more you get used to the process, the more comfortable you will become with it.

Understanding that much of the selection process is not directed at you personally will help you keep your emotions under control.

“It’s important to keep in mind that interviewing is a lot like dating,” says Martin. “The department may already have several very quiet people for example, and maybe they are looking for someone more outgoing. If you are more reserved it’s not a bad thing, it just means it’s not a fit for you.”

### 3. Addressing concerns

If the interviewer offers a concern or some negative feedback that you want to address, listen very carefully to what they say to you, and then follow this three step process when responding.

- ✓ **Restate what you have heard and clarify the real objection with the interviewer.** This step is vital because you want to make certain that you address the real issue. “So if I’m hearing you correctly, you are concerned that I don’t have project management experience, is that correct? Why is that a concern?”
- ✓ **Clarify the objection.** “Oh I see. You were hoping that the new individual would be able to handle some managerial duties within six months because you are growing rapidly.”
- ✓ **Offer proof of your capabilities.** “I actually have six months experience as a project manager on a contract basis. If I share that experience with you now and provide you with a reference, do you think it would eliminate your concerns?”

Now it’s time to close with a phrase such as, “Ms. Interviewer, have I addressed that concern to your satisfaction? Wonderful, then I hope I’m your first choice because this seems like the ideal job for me.”

This formula for handling objections should be used no matter what type of comment the interviewer has for you whether it’s lack of experience, lack of job stability or poor personality match. It’s not wise however, to offer an answer to an objection if the job really isn’t a good match for you, or if your lack of experience might cause you to fail. If you are naturally shy and they need someone who’s out going to balance a quiet team, ask if there might be another opportunity that would better suit your style, or inquire if the interviewer knows of other positions for someone with your experience level.

Learning to ask for feedback and accept it graciously can improve your communication skills and help with your personal and professional development.

“It’s important to take any rejection as a learning experience and don’t dwell on it,” says Martin. “Remember, sometimes the interviewer isn’t as adept as they should be either because not all interviewers are created equal.”

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