



Q & A

# The impact and value of a bad interview

 7SHIFTS

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It all started with a LinkedIn post about people's experiences with bad interviews. The post created a flurry of responses from individuals who talked about questions unrelated to what the position was about, including being asked about attire, personal relationship status, age, race, religion, and more.

There are many articles about interviews, but not many discussing the impact of a bad interview. We had an opportunity to talk about this topic with McKenzie Hunter, Director of People & Culture at 7shifts. We asked her 7 questions:

**Q McKenzie, 7shifts is a tech company which simplifies labour management and improves performance for restaurants and has grown rapidly in the past 5 years. With that growth, can you talk about any changes in the interview process that 7shifts made as a result?**

We have always placed importance on making sure every candidate we talk to doesn't just feel like a number and that we have a warm, human approach. When our hiring efforts really started ramping up, we began generating an automatic reply email that each applicant would receive after they submitted their resume. It confirmed that we received their application and also detailed our entire vetting process, outlining exactly what they could expect from our end.

During initial interviews, we walk through timelines and when candidates can expect to hear back from us so they're not left wondering what the next steps are. It's an awful feeling putting yourself out there only to be ghosted. One of our most recent changes, which I'm most proud of, requires hiring managers to offer feedback to any candidates whom we've interviewed but didn't make the cut. We've had so many people take us up on this offer and they have been really grateful to hear about ways they can improve before interviewing with other companies. I think these approaches ultimately stem from embodying 2 of our 5 core values: "make every experience an 11", and "be radically candid."

**Q We'll come back to bad questions in a moment, but in general, what can candidates do to prepare for an upcoming interview?**

I think the most important thing is to research the company before an interview and really get a feel for what they do and what they're like. It's exciting to interview someone who is familiar with your product, your culture, and is genuinely excited about the opportunity. On the flip side, you can tell when someone has been mass applying and seems willing to accept just about anything without being passionate about the problems the company is trying to solve or aligning with the team's values.

It's great when candidates feel comfortable enough to interview hiring managers throughout the vetting process as well. We spend so much time at work, and it's great to know that the candidate is taking the search seriously and is also doing their due diligence and finding the right fit. I recently came across an [article](#) featuring Adam Grant (the author of "[Give & Take](#)") who suggests that candidates should ask interviewers to tell a story about "something that happens in the organization that would not happen anywhere else". He added that using this specific question is more useful than just asking hiring managers to describe the culture, because they're going to say things like, "Oh these are our values", but it doesn't tell you anything about what it's like to work there. But when they tell a story, then you can start to see a pattern.



People want to know the types of stories that get told over and over again and what they reveal. For example: if this is a place where you have a sense of psychological safety, where you can trust people, where your voice is heard, etc.

**Q What do successful interviews have in common?**



I think coming prepared and being passionate about the company itself, agreeing with their mission and vision, and the problem they're trying to solve are really important. It's also great when candidates have a few key questions they'd like to ask at the end that signal that they're being really intentional about where they work next.

**Q What are some factors that can cause an interview to go sideways?**



I think it's really important that the interviewer strive to make the candidate comfortable. It's hard putting yourself out there and thinking on the spot though I find that the more comfortable and relaxed someone is, the more genuine their responses. I always think that if someone's nervous, it means that I'm not doing my job properly.

I also think that interviewers should take a few minutes to prepare before the interview starts—really read the person's resume and cover letter. Pick out things that are interesting or unique and take interest, ask them to share more about it or ask how it worked. I find that if people sense genuine interest, they'll get excited and spill their guts! Those are the funnest types of interviews because you feel like you really get to know a person. At the end of the day, I always say that you just want to hire someone who yourself and the other team members would want to go for lunch with.

**Q Even with the best preparation, not everyone is going to get the position and there will be some disappointment. What advice can you give people who don't get the job?**



You will never regret being gracious and taking the time to thank those you have connected with throughout the process. You never know if the final decision was between yourself and another candidate so leaving the conversation on good terms makes it even more likely that they'll either consider you for future roles, or connect you with a contact who may be looking for someone with your skillset. It's always a nice touch when candidates follow-up on a conversation by sending a thoughtful note after their interview.

**Q Even when the interview doesn't go well, what can people learn from it?**



Like many things in life, there can only be one "winner". Sometimes that's us, sometimes it's not. Ultimately, it's great to practice focusing on the things we can control, treating others with kindness, giving ourselves grace, and viewing each interview as an opportunity to learn something new.

**Q We're starting to talk about resilience now, and the ability to recover or bounce back from a difficult situation. What qualities do you think resilient people have? Why do you think being resilient is important?**



I once heard someone say "if it's meant to be, it's up to me" and I really liked that saying. Resilience is an incredible quality to have. I think resilient people are humble, confident, and self-aware. They trust in the skillset that they have and have the ability to reflect, learn, and move past disappointment. Resilient people are special because they also have a great amount of empathy for those who are experiencing challenging times and haven't yet come through the other side.

**Q Let's go back to the beginning. Sometimes, with someone's best efforts and preparedness, they have a bad interview that simply was not in their control where they met up with a series of inappropriate questions or behavior. It can be a crushing experience. What advice would you give someone in this situation?**



I think when someone shows you who they are, you should believe them. While it's easy to ignore warning signs when you have your attention focused on achieving a goal or a specific outcome, it's important to intentionally look for strengths vs. lack of weakness. If something isn't sitting quite right in your gut and your instincts are telling you something's off, it probably is. Joining the wrong environment is just not worth it given the amount of time and effort we spend at work.

If someone has a negative interview experience, although disappointing, I'd encourage them to be glad that they found that out early on while it was still easy to opt out of the process. It's so much harder to remove yourself from bad situations once you're in them. Money will always come, so be authentic, be picky, and strive to find a role with a company that ultimately excites you!

**And this takes us back to your response on resiliency. It is about remembering the "skill set we have, and an ability to reflect, learn and move past the disappointment". Every disappointment comes with something learned, allowing us to adjust or adapt, and to move forward in the labour market. Many people will have experienced a setback at one time or another, and your positive thoughts on resiliency come at a challenging time when people need to be reminded that one set back isn't an end to a job search, a goal, or a career.**

***McKenzie, thank you so much for taking some time to share your insights with us.***

