

Interview Mistakes to Avoid

A Modern Guide for MSL Candidates

Our team has helped thousands of MSL candidates as they prepare for interviews. And just as importantly, we've helped hiring teams understand why someone didn't move forward. This guide covers common (and avoidable) mistakes we see across both in-person and virtual interviews. Whether you're meeting via Zoom or across a conference table, avoiding these pitfalls can make the difference between a good impression and a great opportunity.

Showing up/logging in late

Test your setup early, especially for video calls. Confirm your time zone, check your camera and audio, and join a few minutes early to show you're reliable and prepared.

Being too casual in tone or appearance

Even if the company feels laid-back, it's still an interview. That means camera on, good lighting, and dressing professionally. First impressions are still formed in the first few seconds - even on screen.

Not doing your homework

Don't wing it. Know the company's products, pipeline, culture, and recent milestones. Read up on your interviewers if you have names ahead of time. Showing up informed signals interest, and respect for their time.

Rambling or over-answering

Keep your answers structured and to the point. Practice the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) and aim for clarity. If you feel yourself drifting, pause and check in: "Would you like more detail on that?"

Not connecting your experience to the role

Don't assume the interviewer will do the work of making connections. You need to draw the line from what you've done to what this team needs. Show them how you'll bring value.

Lack of energy or curiosity

A neutral tone can come across as disinterest. Let your curiosity and motivation show - through your voice, your questions, and how you speak about the role and company.

Sounding too rehearsed

Yes, practice is key, but avoid sounding like you're reading from a script. Your answers should feel thoughtful and authentic, not over-polished.

Oversharing or getting too personal

Interviewers may be warm and casual, but don't mistake that for a coffee chat. Avoid personal tangents unless it's relevant or prompted, and even then, keep it brief.

Talking negatively about a past employer or manager

This can be an immediate red flag. Keep it professional. If you left a role due to challenges, frame it in terms of what you learned or what you're seeking next, not what went wrong.

Asking about salary, benefits, or PTO too early

If the recruiter or hiring manager brings it up, great. Otherwise, save those questions until the later stages of the process. Focus first on value and fit.

Not asking any questions

Interviewers want to see that you're engaged. Come prepared with 2–3 thoughtful questions about the role, the team, or the company's direction. Don't pass up this opportunity to learn more, and to show them you care.

Forgetting to follow up

A brief, personalized thank-you email goes a long way. Reaffirm your interest, reference something specific you discussed, and close the loop professionally.

FINAL THOUGHT:

You don't need to be perfect, just prepared, professional, and present. Show up with curiosity, connect your value to their needs, and don't be afraid to let a little personality through. That's what builds trust. That's what builds relationships.