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Treat that interview like a date, and love may bloom

By [Doni Luckett](#)

It's almost graduation time. Graduates are preparing for their life in the "real world."

If you are a graduate, remember: Your greatest tool is yourself.

"The job market is increasingly competitive," says Deborah Grayson Riegel, president of Elevated Training Inc., a national speaking and coaching consulting company. "People come out of college with education, some work experiences, and compete against like-minded candidates."

She points out that today's employers don't just want a great résumé or degree from a name-brand educational institution; they want to invest in a trustworthy candidate, someone who will stay with the company and benefit the organization.

Riegel says it's all about the interview. "It's amazing how many candidates think a good school name, a good GPA and extracurricular activities are enough," she says. "If you don't have good vocal tone, body language and vocal ability, it's not enough."

She says the biggest obstacle recent grads must overcome is a perception that someone will hire them based on credentials alone.

Candidates need to know there's no substitute to building rapport, because ultimately interviewers "will remember far more how they felt about you than how you answered any question," she says.

And that's why her company's services often are given as a gift to graduates - they need that extra oomph to get over the job-hunting hump.

For students who have a fast-approaching interview, those who have interviewed continually but haven't been hired, and parents who want to get freeloading kids out of the house, interview coaching services increasingly are in demand.

"It's not rocket science; it's acquisition of knowledge, practice and behavior modification," Riegel says. "Most interviewees spend time crafting answers to potential questions, but building rapport is the bigger issue in landing the position of your dreams."

Riegel teaches her clients the 93 percent rule in creating that first impression:

Fifty-five percent is based on appearance, including body language.

Thirty-eight percent is based on vocal ability: the tone, pitch and pace of your voice.

Seven percent is what you say, so it's even more important how you pace your answers, how you relate, how you connect in ways other than words.

Riegel offers these coaching tips for your next interview:

Look for fit: "Interviewing is a little

like dating - you don't want to come off too desperate, she says. "As opposed to going in desperation, go in thinking I want to make a good match. The impression is only as valuable as the goodness of the fit between you and the company."

Research: A good school or good grades are door-openers, they help land the interview, but, in most cases, candidates still have to prove their skills and abilities after doors are open. Rather than just focusing on selling yourself; research the industry, company and job to assess whether you even want the position. "It's the same as in the dating world; if you don't dig her, it doesn't matter how much she digs you."

Build rapport: "Your relationship with the interviewer from the first contact weighs into the decision-making process more than anything on a résumé," she says. Rapport-building will help glean necessary information to assess job fit, rather than just provide the interviewer with information about you.

Listen actively: To ensure you give accurate and informed responses, take time to absorb and digest what is said during the conversation.

"Listening isn't just pausing while the other person speaks until it's your turn again," she says.

Never burn bridges: "You can learn so much from an interviewer you didn't get a job with," Riegel says, suggesting that candidates ask for feedback on disappointing interviews. "You never want to jeopardize a relationship. This job may not have worked at this time, but if you don't ask, you won't have any more information than you had going into it."

Doni Luckett is chief executive of Divine-Basics.com, which produces lifestyle products to reconnect with moments that matter. Your questions may be addressed in the column by e-mailing enrichyourlife@divine-basics.com.



Deborah Grayson Riegel