

## *Always Ask for the Order*

**A**t some point in the interviewing process, you must ask for the job if you want to be hired. Asking to be hired is equivalent to a salesperson asking for the order, asking to close the sale. Asking for the order is one of the most important factors for sales success, yet it is estimated that 95 percent of all salespeople never ask for the order. Consequently, the simple act of asking for the order, asking to be hired, is itself a point of difference.

Put the crucial importance of asking for the job in context: If you are trying for a job and there are nine other candidates, not one of the other nine will ask for the job! “Ask and ye shall receive,” sayeth the Good Book. Heed the Russian proverb, “To ask is no sin, to be refused is no calamity.” By asking for the job, you increase your odds of being hired by your target company by more than 50 percent.

Asking for the order is not necessarily easy. It is a difficult act for many people; however, it is a critical job-getting requirement. Be aware of the reasons why people don’t ask for the job. If you know the reasons you can guard against them. You can avoid kidding yourself with some socially acceptable rationalization for not asking. If you know the reasons why people don’t ask for the order, you can face the reasons squarely. You can plan an asking, or closing, approach and then do it.

Here are some of the reasons people don’t ask for the order:

- Fear of rejection. People don’t like rejection. People especially don’t like it when, as in being rejected for a

job, the rejection feels intensely personal.

- Believe asking is beneath them. Some people believe that asking for the sale is undignified or that what they are selling is so obviously the answer that there is no need to ask.
- Believe asking is impertinent. These people think that asking a question puts the other person on the spot, and makes them feel uncomfortable. But that is only true if you ask an embarrassing question.
- Don't know how to ask. Asking questions means asking, not telling. And it means waiting for the other person to answer. Too many people talk over their own questions.
- Think they don't have to ask. Some people believe they already know the answers, whether they do or not.

Despite the reasons, you must ask the hirer for the job. It may be your only chance. What do you have to lose? If the hirer is favorably impressed, your question may help the buyer favorably decide. If the hirer doesn't like you, you aren't getting the job anyway. If the customer, the hirer, is neutral—weighing your case against others—and you ask and the other candidate does not, you will get the nod.

Asking for the job can be done directly, but an indirect approach also works. For example, you might end the interview by summing up your understanding of the job, and then saying, “Based on my understanding of the job requirements, I am confident I can do what you want. What do you think?”

Or you might say, “I understand that experience in the industry is important to you and I don't have such direct experience, but I have a proven record of learning other industries quickly. I have successfully managed salespeople for five years. And I know how to

sell to your customers. Do you think that these other skills outweigh the one issue, and make me an acceptable candidate?”

In your follow-up letter, sent one day after the interview, you will restate your case and add that you doubt the company will find a more interested or dedicated candidate. Close your letter with a benefit you will bring to the company. For example, “If Steelton Corp. wants to dramatically improve customer service, I can make that happen. Thank you.”

Know this: Buyers expect to be asked and want to be asked. How you comport yourself in the hiring process signals to the hirer how you will act on the job. If you ask for the order before you are working, then you will ask for the order while working. Companies want people who ask for the order. Listen and learn from John Fogarty’s great song “Centerfield” when he sings, “Put me in, Coach. I’m ready to play. Today!”