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## Wrong answer

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In a job interview, it's bad enough when a candidate tosses an f-bomb or cries like a 7-year-old watching the end of "Marley & Me." But employment pros say such behavior is nothing compared to the real Hindenburg meltdowns they've seen.

To enlighten and amuse, we collected tales of some of the battiest behavior New York job interviewers have encountered.

And, no, none of these candidates scored the gigs.

\* You want to sell yourself in an interview — not give yourself away. That distinction was lost on a woman whom recruiter Bruce Hurwitz interviewed for a gig as a special-events coordinator. From Jump Street, the applicant was hitting on him, brazenly enough that his colleagues couldn't fail to notice. (Sample: "If you take your jacket off, I'll take off mine.")

Adding to the weirdness, a few days later, Hurwitz interviewed a man looking for a fund-raising job. The name was familiar — and so was his address, says Hurwitz, who realized he was the amorous applicant's husband.

"He spoke about his pride for his wife and his children," Hurwitz recalls.

\* Although many employers like to say they're looking for "warriors" who will fight for their businesses, physical combat is generally frowned on in the workplace — and in interviews.

That didn't stop a client of recruiter Roy Cohen from going mano a mano with a hedge-fund hiring manager who questioned a decision the client had made.

"He said that anybody who made that decision was a moron, and that suggested that my client was a moron," says Cohen, author of "The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide." "He became defensive. And at some point something else was said, and before they knew it, they were going at it," he says. At least one punch was thrown before the client was told "to get the (bleep) out of the office."

\* The first sign of trouble for recruiter Tyson Spring was the IM he got from his receptionist telling him that the candidate for a general-counsel position for a major media company was combing his hair as compulsively as Rapunzel with OCD.

"He had a beautiful set of gold locks," says Spring, "like the guy in 'The Greatest American Hero.'"

Other assets were less evident. When he wasn't hitting on Spring's female colleague, the lawyer — a Yale grad who was at the top of his law school class — would open his briefcase to refer to what Spring, a VP at Élever Professional, assumed were relevant documents. Until he noticed that the briefcase was empty — save for the lawyer's tattered hairbrush.

\* Ask any publicist: If you want to scale the heights of the p.r. world, it helps to be able to speak English.

A Korean candidate for an internship at p.r. firm Ruder Finn didn't let petty language issues get in the way of his ambition to secure an entry-level internship promoting books, recalls ex-Ruder publicist Dennelle Catlett, now a senior publicist at Crown.

"It was pretty quickly apparent that he wasn't answering questions fully," says Catlett.

Or at all. When queried about what sort of books he liked to read, "He looked up, nodded at me and said, 'Mmm-hmmm,'" says Catlett.

"We held it together," she says. "It was very, very difficult."

\* Kids like puppets. Job interviewers don't.

That lesson was lost on a woman whom Tracy Brisson — then director of teacher recruitment for New York City's public schools — interviewed for a music teacher's position.

When the woman was asked the first question, she whipped out a puppet and let it answer. A bit cute for an opening gambit, but it got worse, as the woman insisted on answering every question in the same bizarre fashion.

"I think she thought it was making her stand out," says Brisson, who now runs the coaching firm the Opportunities Project.

Mission accomplished.

\* A little décolletage is one thing, but fashion industry recruiter Kate Benson recalls a chat with a jewelry designer that turned into a "Girls Gone Wild" outtake.

"She had a beautiful dress on — haute couture," says Benson. "Japanese-inspired — with big arm holes.

"I noticed it was kind of revealing."

And how! When the woman showed her portfolio, her womanly assets lay as bare as Sylvia Plath's soul.

"Something like that is not easy to overcome," says Benson. "You're not Jennifer Lopez going to the VMAs."

\* Nothing lets a boss know that a candidate personifies grace under pressure better than sweating like John Goodman running the Boston Marathon.

A candidate for a six-figure job at a media firm came into his interview sweating, and the waterworks continued from there, says Caroline Ceniza-Levine of the career coaching firm SixFigureStart. To staunch the flow, the applicant used soft tissue.

Big mistake.

"He left little pieces of tissue on his face as he was daubing his face," she says. "He'd daub his face and he'd leave one. And he'd daub his face again and there'd be another one."

By the end of the interview, his face looked like it had been caught in a spitball blitzkrieg. "And at the foot of his chair, there were little tissue shavings," she adds.

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