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CAREERS

The most important part of the job interview (that you're probably forgetting)

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If you're at all interested in getting a given job, you prepare thoroughly ahead of time, researching the company and position, doing practice interview questions, even choosing your interview outfit with special care. But there's one thing you probably aren't doing, and it might be costing you the job: odds are, you probably haven't given a thought about how to close the interview.

And we do mean "close," in the *Glengarry Glen Ross* sense of the word -- sort of.

"There always seems to be a big debate on whether or not a candidate should try to 'close the sale' at the end of a job interview," writes Lisa Quast at *Forbes*. "My answer is

"Yes' -- but you need to close the interview with class."

In other words, you can't ask outright, "So, did I get the job?" Nor should you pressure the hiring manager to tell you the precise time, down to the hour, when you can expect to hear from them. Instead, use your "closer" to find out if there's anything lacking, so far, in their picture of you as a candidate.

For example, Quast suggests asking something like, "Based on my background and the skills and experience we discussed, how well do I fit the profile of the candidate for which you're looking?"

There's no guarantee, of course, that the hiring manager will be forthcoming if he doesn't think you're a good fit, but you're more likely to get a straight answer if you ask the question. After that, you can follow up by asking about the next steps in the process, and reiterating your interest in the position.

That's the way you close a job interview. No Alec Baldwin impressions required.

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