



15 Red Flags

Warning Signs You're About to Make a Bad Hire

Spot them before they cost you \$17,000

By David Lee Jensen
Author of *The Naked Interview*

1. They badmouth their previous employer

They'll do the same to you. Candidates with integrity describe challenges without assigning blame.

2. Vague answers to behavioral questions

"I'm a team player" means nothing. If they can't give a specific example, they probably don't have one.

3. They can't explain why they left their last job

Hesitation or inconsistency here is a major warning sign. The real reason matters more than the polished version.

4. Gaps in employment with no clear explanation

Gaps themselves aren't red flags — evasiveness about them is. Honest candidates address gaps directly.

5. They oversell themselves without evidence

Claims without proof are just marketing. Push for numbers, outcomes, and verifiable accomplishments.

6. Late to the interview without acknowledgment

If they can't show up on time for the most important meeting, imagine what Tuesdays look like.

7. They ask about salary and benefits first

Compensation matters, but when it's the first question, it tells you what they value most — and it's not the work.

8. Their resume doesn't match their story

Dates that shift, titles that inflate, responsibilities that grow in the telling. If the story changes, trust the paper.

9. No questions for you at the end

A candidate who asks nothing isn't curious, isn't engaged, and isn't picturing themselves in the role.

10. They take credit for team accomplishments

Listen for "I" vs. "we." People who can't share credit are difficult to work with and impossible to manage.

11. Inconsistent references

When the candidate's story and the reference's story don't match, believe the reference.

12. They seem desperate for any job

Desperation hires become regret hires. You want someone who wants THIS role, not just A role.

13. Poor communication during the process

Slow responses, missed follow-ups, or sloppy emails during the hiring process are a preview of their work habits.

14. They can't describe a failure

Everyone has failed. People who can't admit it lack self-awareness — one of the strongest predictors of long-term success.

15. Your gut says no but you can't explain why

Don't ignore it. But don't stop there either — dig deeper with structured follow-up questions until you can name the concern.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SEE RED FLAGS

- ⚠ Don't dismiss a single red flag — investigate it with a follow-up question.
- ⚠ Two or more red flags on the same candidate? That's a pattern, not a coincidence.
- ⚠ Document every red flag. If you decide to hire anyway, you'll want the record.

Spotting Red Flags Is Phase 8 of a 10-Phase System

Knowing what to watch for saves you from bad hires. But interviewing is just one step. The full system covers everything from writing the job description to onboarding your new hire.

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