

# Job Interview Survival Guide

BY FRANCES COLE JONES



*Everything you need  
to know for your  
next interview by  
best-selling author  
Frances Cole Jones*

## The essentials to acing the interview...

**There are numerous ways—large and small—of knocking yourself out of the running for your dream job. Since I would hate to have even the smallest misstep undermine your hard work here's a down-and-dirty list of things to know before your next meeting or lunch:**



**1.** It seems insane that I have to put this in writing, but experience has proven I must. Wash your hair. Clean your nails.

Do not chew gum. (Altoids are great to ensure fresh breath before you arrive, but they need to be gone before you go through the door). If you shave, shave properly, and that morning.

**2.** That cleanliness advisory given, I wouldn't recommend turning up smelling so strongly of scent that it lingers after you do.

**3.** Please do not wear your sunglasses, either on your face or on your head. Unless you're talking through the deal points of your new record contract at the Urth Café on Melrose (or a professional poker player,) you look foolish.

**4.** Do not have MP3 player headphones hanging out or visible (much less in your ears.) The same goes for

wireless earpieces for your cell phone – take them off and put them away.

**5.** If you carry a briefcase, make

Despite what you may have been told, chivalry's not dead. In fact, it's welcome wherever this **wow**-expert goes.

sure that it isn't overstuffed and chaotic looking: remove all candy wrappers, old sandwiches, etc.

**6.** While I have no objection to the flaunting of chest hair or cleavage on



Visit my website at [www.FrancesColeJones.com](http://www.FrancesColeJones.com) for more information, free downloadable resources, and to sign-up for the Wow of the Week.

your own time, it needs to stay under wraps in a business setting. I would also recommend covering any tattoos you might have, at least until you get a sense of the environment or culture. The same goes for ankle bracelets and visible body piercings.

**7.** When arriving at or leaving the building remember that you don't know who's on the elevator with you—or who might get on. Don't be the guy with the phone against his head yakking about what's just about to— or what just did—happen.

**8.** The same is true when you're in the Ladies or Men's room. Again, as bizarre as it may seem that I have to write this down, office and restaurant bathrooms are not extensions of your home bathroom. This is not the time to make personal calls, do a complete makeup or wardrobe overhaul, or settle in with a magazine or book.

**9.** Political buttons, religious pins, Star Trek badges, etc. have their place, but not in interviews or on business occasions. No matter how committed you may be to a cause, these topics are potential minefields; best to keep your affiliation decorations for personal occasions.

**10.** Should you need to blow your nose during the meeting or lunch, please excuse yourself to do so. If a sneeze catches you unaware—and unprepared with a handkerchief— please excuse yourself to wash your hands.

**11.** If they take you to a restaurant, you can be pretty sure that they're checking your table manners: now is not the time to order dishes that you adore but are hard to eat neatly. (Save spare ribs and lobster for your celebratory lunch after you get the job.) In the same vein, don't be too picky or fussy about the food when presented with the menu — your primary objective is to make a good impression on your future employers, not show them that you are a gourmand (unless, of course, the job involves food.)

**12.** Aside from the fact that my mother always impressed on me that

salting your food before tasting it was an insult to the chef, I've heard that those in the business world view it as indicative of poor impulse control—you may make judgments without having all the facts.

**13.** Don't drink, even if they do.

**14.** Nobody—and I repeat nobody—is so important they need to check their PDA during a meeting or lunch. The people with whom you're talking need to have 100% of your focus. If you can't give them this when you're sitting in front of them, why would they believe you can give them this when you aren't?

**15.** I would also request that you refrain from looking at it in between standing up from your table in the restaurant and exiting the door, or until you've left the building in which your meeting took place. You need to give your goodbyes the same attention you did your hellos.

**16.** If you are with team members, again, do not discuss your meeting in the elevator. I would also not recommend debriefing it within a two-block radius of the building or in any nearby restaurant. You don't know who's listening.

**Alternatively, there are a number of things you can do that will contribute to your confidence, reassure others, or just flat knock me out with their fabulousness.**

Following a few of those:

**1.** Should you have to ring a doorbell or buzzer that someone answers (as opposed to “buzzing” you in), take one step back from the door after pressing the button for entry:

you'll look better to the person answering the door at that distance.

**2.** As you know, when you step in from being out in the cold, it's almost always necessary to blow your nose. Knowing this, step into a nearby store, or arrive at the venue a few minutes early, and take care of this—repeated sniffing as you're being introduced is as hard on you as it is on those around you. How to Wow offered the rule of thumb “Two is one, and one is none”: this is never more true than for handkerchiefs/Kleenex.

**3.** Conversely, if it is hot, leave extra time to get there so you're not rushed, and carry a handkerchief to clean up (i.e. mop your brow) before going in.

**4.** If you wear glasses, clean them thoroughly before going in. It helps you see, but it also helps others see your eyes, which builds trust (I know of one man who was offered a cloth to clean his glasses halfway through an interview because the interviewer found them so distractingly smudged.)

**5.** Despite what you may have been told, chivalry's not dead. In fact, it's welcome wherever this wow-expert goes. One of my most elegant male friends collects all the coat check stubs from his lunch partners, retrieves their belongings and has small bills at the ready to tip the attendant.

While many of you are likely to have had the majority of this information at your fingertips, I'm hoping there were one or two things that were new information—or, at the very least, made you laugh. On that note, one of the greatest compliments you can offer your interviewer, meeting attendees, or lunch partners is your enthusiasm. Bearing the above in mind—and coupling it with genuine enthusiasm for becoming a part of the group—is sure to net you the offer or deal you are looking for.



# Here's What Others Have Said...

**Jeffrey Gitomer, Author of The Little Red Book of Selling**



"Wow is not optional. Neither is this book. Buy it- Study it. Put it into action. And Wow your bank account!"

**Stephen Key, Licensing Expert, AllBusiness.com**

"Frances has put together the best information and tips imaginable to help you succeed in any meeting or presentation. Pick it up today. It will change your thinking."

**Dr. Dennis Gross, Founder of Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare**

"Frances Cole Jones teaches and refines the art of interpersonal communication. After reading her books, I feel equipped with better skills to project my strengths and talents. How to Wow and The Wow Factor have brought out the best in me—the concepts she teaches are literally second nature to me now."



**Scott Kavanagh, The Art of Productions Inc.**

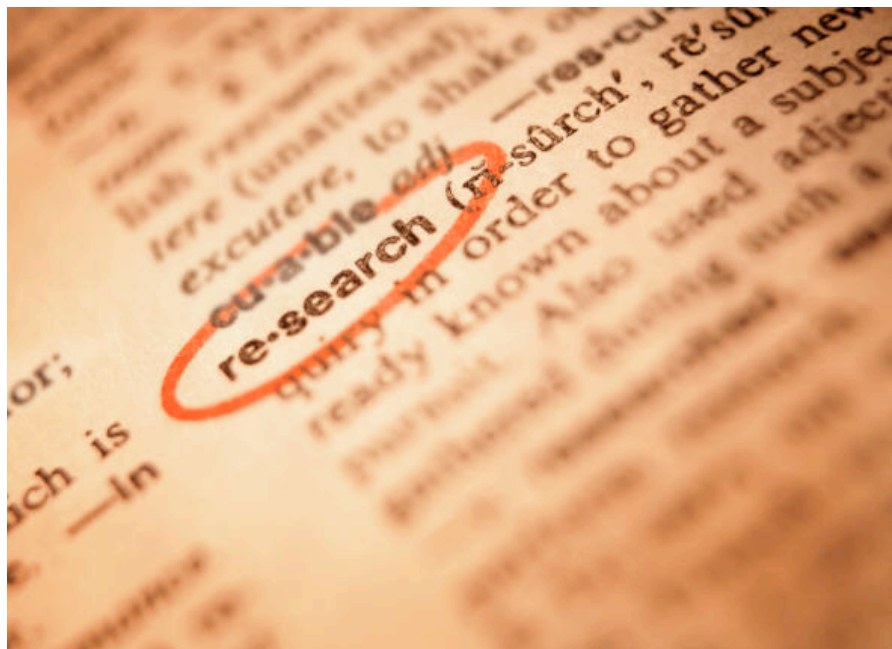
"I just wanted to thank you again for the incredible job you did speaking at The Art of Sales in Calgary and Vancouver. You were excellent. I have heard numerous comments from attendees on how much they enjoyed your presentation."



**Keith Ferrazzi, Author of Never Eat Alone**

"The invaluable advice in *How to Wow* guarantees your success in any situation."

# Pre-Interview Research Roundup



*Know what you need to know before your next interview. Research, research, did I say research?*

**I've talked a lot about doing your background research on the company, and many of you may be thinking, "Well, that sounds great in theory, but what specifically am I looking for?"**

At minimum, I recommend always having answers to the following:

## **1. Why you want to work in the industry.**

This is an often-overlooked softball question. For example, if you're talking to Citibank, it's possible they will begin with, "Why do you want to be in finance?" A question that almost demands a story along the lines of, "From the time I was X years old..." includes a precipitating incident, and concludes with, "and I've been passionate about it ever since." This answer is particularly important if you

are changing sectors (i.e. moving from garden design to retail fashion). You must have a reason beyond "I need a job." — even if that's true.

## **2. Why you want to work for that particular company.**

Here is where you speak to their mission, their corporate values, their vision, etc. and then position yourself as being able to contribute to furthering their goals, enhancing their status, or plugging the hole in their offerings via skill sets and ideas that are unique to you — how do their goals mesh with yours? As in a good cover letter, this is a chance to speak about their needs in terms of your abilities. (Cover letter side note: the basic opening theme of cover letters should be "My understanding is that your company needs X, Y, and Z" i.e. open with what you know about THEM and what you believe are their needs. You can then move on to why you can meet those needs, "especially because this has been a lifelong goal," etc.... The point is, you want to open by talking about them and their requirements, and then show how



# “...as much knowledge as possible on your interviewer’s background.”

well you match. Do this, and they’ll be pleasantly surprised.)

## 3. What their best selling product is and why.

If it is a consumer product, it would be great if you’ve actually tried it (if you haven’t.) At bare minimum, make sure that you’re not wearing, carrying, driving, etc. the competition. One consultant that I know who worked in the telecoms industry was smart enough to keep three brands of cell-phones in his briefcase. Before meetings, he would move SIM cards from phone to phone as appropriate. He started this practice ever since potential clients at Palm commented on the Blackberry he was carrying. One MBA student that I know borrowed a friend’s Ford to attend his interview there – when he got the job, he sold his Toyota before reporting for work!

## 4. In this vein, know who their competition is, and why.

If they are not a consumer brand, or you are new to the industry and aren’t quite sure, Hoover’s ([www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)) is a big help for this, as are stock reports on

the company or industry which can be found from brokerages like Charles Schwab. ([www.charlesschwab.com](http://www.charlesschwab.com)) What I’ve discovered is that even if the company I am interested is not publicly traded, the broker will have reports that explain in laymen’s terms the big players in an industry, how the companies in it have been doing lately, all the latest important news about the business, etc. And unlike looking at whatever Google throws up that day, you can also be sure that this industry information has been sorted and sifted for relevance and (relative) even-handedness.

## 5. How many employees/offices they have (and the locations of those offices.)

## 6. Knowledge of any and all subsidiary brands.

## 7. Knowledge of any industry infighting.

This last can be tough and so, is often overlooked even by the best of us (as those of you know who remember when Tiger Woods thanked Arthur Andersen—as opposed to Andersen

Consulting—for sponsoring a golf tournament when he was on Andersen Consulting’s payroll, the partners were in the audience, and the two were in the midst of a bitter corporate divorce.) That said, they don’t call it the World Wide Web for nothing—do take the time to check beyond the first five entries Google throws up. (If nothing turns up by entry twenty, you’ve likely done your due diligence, however.)

## 8. As much knowledge as possible on your interviewer’s background.

While you don’t want to walk in with a creepy level of detail, you should know where he or she went to school, how long they’ve been with the company, etc. Questions about their experience with the company—what do they like best about the corporate culture, etc--are also a nice thing to ask should they inquire, “Do you have any questions for me?” (“Do you have any questions for me?” is also a good time to ask about their company’s plans for growth over the next five years.)

## 9. The general salary range for that position within the industry.

You won’t want to bring up a number unless they do—but should they ask what your proposed salary might be, you don’t want to be able to give them a range that’s in the industry ballpark.



## About Frances Cole Jones

**Frances founded Cole Media Management in 1997** to help clients identify and cultivate their inherent strengths and, through these, develop the powerful communication skills that enhance personal and professional performance. Writing **The Wow Factor** and **How to Wow** has been her way of reaching a wider audience, “My goal is to have every person who picks these up, put them down feel more confident in their ability to present their best self --in any situation.”

Prior to founding Cole Media Management, Frances worked at St. Martin’s Press, Viking Penguin, Doubleday, and Broadway Books as an editor. The experience of helping authors translate their ideas into books that retained their unique voice is what makes her valuable to her clients. As President of Cole Media Management, Frances’ clients have appeared on The Today Show, Good Morning America, Oprah, C-SPAN, CNN, Larry King Live, The Discovery Channel, The BBC News, E! Entertainment, Access Hollywood, Project Runway, Top Chef, ESPN, The View, and others. Clients’ print interviews have appeared in many publications including The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Forbes, Newsweek, Vogue, W, O Magazine, Harper’s Bazaar, to name a few.

The scope of their work includes preparation for television and print interviews, IPO road shows, meetings with potential investors, and internal meetings with partners, sales staff, and in-house personnel. They also provide presentation skills seminars and speechwriting for clients.

Frances also writes for [WomenOnBusiness.com](http://WomenOnBusiness.com), [Intent.com](http://Intent.com), [DivineCaroline.com](http://DivineCaroline.com), and [ExecutiveTravel.com](http://ExecutiveTravel.com).



# Job Interview Timeline

**Once you've got the job interview, it can suddenly feel like there are any number of things you need to tackle immediately.**

In order to help my clients prioritize—and keep from becoming overwhelmed—I put together the following job interview timeline:

## 72 hours before:

Start your research. As noted, this is something you need to do yourself.

Decide on what you will be wearing and take anything that needs to be cleaned to the drycleaner.

## 48 hours before:

Put together your list of potential questions and answers and practice out loud. If at all possible, have someone you trust videotape your Q & A, watch it with you, and offer constructive feedback.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating, make sure that you have a work-relevant, crisp response to that hardball interview question "So, tell me about yourself..."

## 24 hours before:

Pick up the dry cleaning you took in two days ago.

Check the weather report and make any necessary changes or additions to your wardrobe depending on what you discover: umbrella, different shoes or jacket, etc.

Map quest your route or program your GPS: it's not enough to have a general idea of where you're headed.

Know where are you planning to park, and how long it will take to get from there to your interview. Many big companies

have multiple entrances. HR departments are pretty good about specifying these, but be sure you know the one to which you're headed. On some corporate "campuses" there is even an internal shuttle bus for you to catch once you are on their grounds. (I have seen this at both software companies and pharmaceutical companies). Again, HR is usually pretty good about preparing you for this, but it's important to be mentally prepared.

Print out two copies of your resume: one for you and one for your interviewer. I can't tell you

how often I've heard stories of interviewer's not having a client's resume in front of them. Having two gives you the opportunity to help them look better when they're shuffling through

the papers on their desk saying, "I know I had it right here..." (That said, don't make a big deal of handing it over. An easy, "Oh, I brought an extra," is perfect.)

Polish your shoes. If you have "Edge Dressing" or "Scuff Cover" – two truly miraculous shoe-maintenance products--be sure to detail the edges. This is what the professionals do.

Polish your briefcase or portfolio and make sure it is loaded with a pad, the aforementioned two resumes and two pens. One big caution: buff these carefully when you're finished – the last thing you need is black polish from your lovely-looking portfolio ending up on your slightly sweating palms, freshly laundered shirt or trousers, etc.

If you're a smoker, you might consider getting a nicotine patch (not gum) to help with your nerves that day.

## Day of:

Don't brush your teeth in your interview outfit. (Do brush them, however.) The last



thing you need is a big blob of toothpaste, or a water stain, on your freshly ironed shirt.

Double check that you have picture ID with you in case you have to identify yourself to security.

## 15 minutes before:

Be outside the building. If you do want or need something to eat or drink, please don't choose something that might stain (coffee, tea, etc.) or explode (Yes, I saw that happen with a jelly doughnut.)

## 10 minutes before:

Be in the lobby. This will give you time to clear security if necessary; wander into the wrong elevator bank and correct your course, stop on multiple floors if you happen to be coming in at the beginning or middle of the day, etc.

If there is a parking ticket to validate, get this done now. You don't want to have to come back in sheepishly after a triumphant exit. In any case, never ask the executive or the HR people to do this for you if you can avoid it.

## 5 minutes before:

Be in front of the receptionist. Please be sure to greet this person courteously both on your way in, and on your way out, of the building. Remember, he or she will likely be polled as to what they thought of you.

# Announcing THE WOW FACTOR *On Sale September 1!*

## The 33 Things You Must (and Must Not) Do to Guarantee Your Edge in Today's Business World

In today's volatile business world, success requires an edge—a factor that sets you apart from the crowd. Corporate coach Frances Cole Jones understands that challenging times demand immediate solutions, and *The Wow Factor* provides vital information that will help you rise to the top—fast.

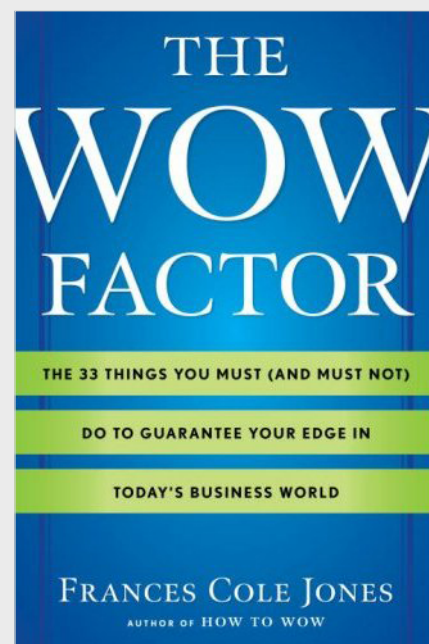
### Who needs the Wow Factor?

Executives seeking to reinvent themselves, recent graduates facing fierce competition, entrepreneurs looking for funding in a world where funding is seemingly nonexistent, or anyone who has been downsized, outsourced, or simply blindsided by harsh economic realities. In her proven “Search and Destroy” format, Jones shares thirty-three things you must (and must not) do to survive in a moment that demands solutions, shortcuts, and less sugarcoating. **You'll learn how to:**

- identify and transform the qualities that dull your edge
- restore your confidence in these days of “look hungry, go hungry”

- target your dream job, outprepare your interviewer, and get your résumé to the top of the pile
- fine-tune the “soft skills” that will amplify your network
- perfect your written communications—text, email, snail mail
- follow the “Do It, Delegate It, or Delete It” Rule
- get the ten worst business sayings out of your vocabulary
- implement “the Six Layers of Why” for maximum impact when interviewing, branding, or selling
- leverage the value of timing, silence, and the verbal one-two punch

Through critical, perfectly timed advice, amusing anecdotes, and proven strategies, **Frances Cole Jones gives you the tools you need**—daring, fluidity, and mental strength—to stay afloat in a sink-or-swim environment. *The Wow Factor* will help you ensure that your ideas and skills remain both timely and timeless, so that you'll have the confidence to wow everyone, every time.



*“Whether you’re starting out, or starting over, *The Wow Factor* delivers.”—Keith Ferrazzi, author of *Who’s Got Your Back**

ON SALE SEPTEMBER 1, 2009

PUBLISHED BY RANDOM HOUSE'S  
BALLANTINE BOOKS

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS  
ARE SOLD

amazon.com

BORDERS

BARNES & NOBLE  
www.barnesandnoble.com

soooooo read

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE WEBSITE AT

[www.FrancesColeJones.com](http://www.FrancesColeJones.com)

OR CONNECT WITH FRANCES ON

**Twitter** [twitter.com/FrancesCJones](https://twitter.com/FrancesCJones)

**Facebook** [facebook.com/FrancesColeJones](https://facebook.com/FrancesColeJones)

**Blog** [didtheywow.blogspot.com](http://didtheywow.blogspot.com)