



Next Move Group

We Are Jobs Podcast

with Special Guest: Alex Metzger

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Welcome to this episode of Next Move Group's We Are Jobs podcast. This is Chad Chancellor, co-founder of Next Move Group.

Alex Metzger: This is Alex Metzger, co-founder of Next Move Group.

Chad Chancellor: So you're getting two of us today. So, you got both the co-founders of Next Move Group today. That's because this is an important topic. Today, we're going to talk about interviewing tips and really the biggest mistakes that we see people make.

As many of you probably know, we have an executive search division of our company and it's really taken off and grown fast. It's grown so fast that I'm handling some searches, Alex is handling some searches. Most of the time, we're not both doing them together. So, we're both-- we've each got our own stories when it comes to mistakes that we see made.

So, today we're not going to pick on any candidates with any strange mistake. We're going to tell you mistakes that we see made over and over again so the next time you have a job interview or you got a job you really want to pursue you can be prepared and ready to go after it. So, that's exactly right.

Alex Metzger: I would say in the last year, we've probably interviewed a hundred, two hundred people, Chad, between the two of us and it's amazing how many times the same issues or the same mistakes are made in the course of the interview.

Chad Chancellor: Over and over and over.

Alex Metzger: Exactly. So, how do you want to do this? You want to break this up and--

Chad Chancellor: Let's do it-- let's talk about the kind of mistakes we see people make during the interview, but then I see people lose their job often before the interview ever starts or after it's over with. So, I want to talk about that too, but I imagine the thing that people are most interested in is-- would be to hear what are folks messing up with during the interview. In your opinion, what's the number one mistake you see made when they're sitting there in an interview, in a boardroom type setting?

Alex Metzger: I would say the biggest mistake and the biggest issue is right off the bat. The first question you are going to be asked in any interview is to tell us about yourself. This is really just an intro in a segue way into the interview. I mean, such committees have tons of questions that they want to get to very specific to the job and their community.

So, when you take up 15 minutes of 'tell us about yourself', it's really getting off to the wrong foot. You want to keep that answer to about a minute and a half to two minutes. You can rehearse it. It's very important not to start off the interview rumbling for 10 or 15 minutes about your history, growing up to high school, different things in your career.

You really want to hit the high points and realize that they already know the answer to these questions. It's really just a segue way into the interview.

Chad Chancellor: Don't start, "In the first grade, my teacher was Miss. Sullivan and then in the second grade, my teacher was Miss. Mills..." and on and on and on. You need to tell people about yourself what's going to pertain to this position or anything interesting about you in this geography. Don't give your whole life story. I agree with Alex. 90% of people mess this up. 90% and so you need to really sit and think about telling us about yourself.

I'll tell you something that I've seen really bother committees. I have had-- I don't know if you have, I have had multiple candidates enter a room and not shake everybody's hand in that room. Sometimes it's really not their fault because the way the room is set up, there's a table in the way and you can't really get around there, but I have had interviews end and as soon as the candidate leaves I have heard a board member say, "I don't care what anybody thinks, we're not hiring that person. He or she didn't even come over here to shake my hand."

This was before 'tell us about yourself' ever comes up. So, you got to remember you make an impression when you walk in that room and when you walk in a room, you need to go around that table and you need to shake everybody's hand in there. I don't care if you've got to crawl over that table, how you're going to do it--

Alex Metzger: You make a very good point there. Sometimes the setup is not conducive to that. Sometimes some people that are interviewing they won't stand up and so you skip that person, but no matter how awkward it is, you're exactly right. Make sure you shake everybody's hand, look them in the eye and go round the room even if it's not conducive to do that. That's a very important first step.

Chad Chancellor: Also, I would say for men out there, I'm going to pick on them. Put a tie on, shave-- in the last probably two years, I have seen, and I guess it's just a culture now, I have seen more men not wear a tie to an interview. I've seen more men come not clean shaven, you know with heavy beard or mustache or what not.

Maybe I'm a little old fashioned in this regard, but where I'm from, if I really want a job, I'm going to put a tie on. Listen, I hate wearing a tie as good as anybody, but when I really want a job, I'm

going to put a tie and I'm going to shave. Just like if I'm after a big sale that I want for our company, I'm going to put my tie on whether I like it or not.

So, I really think that men, we've gotten lazy in this regard and most people if they're hiring you for an economic development CEO position, you're going to be expected to be able to put a tie on and present to city commissions and present in front of corporate boards and what not. So, people want to see you in this regard. I just say to the men out there, let's up our attire game and our appearance game if we're interviewing for a job.

Alex Metzger: Well, I do know you always dress to impress, Chad.

Chad Chancellor: Oh yes, I do.

Alex Metzger: Another thing, passing out items during the interview.

Chad Chancellor: Very risky.

Alex Metzger: Yes. I've seen this work occasionally. Probably 90% of the time it backfires. I would recommend you not to pass out anything. If you have something you really want to pass out, wait till the very end of the interview. When you pass something out during it, people are passing it around. They're reading what you give instead of listening to the question.

It can really break up the flow and the momentum of the interview. I have rarely seen this work fluidly and positively and shown in the good light. So if you have something you want to pass out, I would wait until the very, very end or better yet don't do it at all.

Chad Chancellor: Which makes your life easier. You don't have to worry about bringing a bunch of stuff. He is exactly right. By the time you pass it out, if there are eight or nine committee members, by the time it gets around to the ninth one, somebody's asked you something. Now they're not paying attention to you. You've T-totally ruined the momentum of the interview. I agree-- that's probably right up there with 'tell us about yourself' with mistakes you can make.

A mistake I see people make and it starts with 'tell us about yourself' is you talk so much the committee never gets to ask enough questions. If when that interview ends you get up to leave and they've only asked you three or four questions, you have lost. You might as well not even wait on us to call you. You might as well not wait for a letter, nothing. You have lost.

You've got to let an interview breath and if you're sitting there, you almost need an internal clock. If you're sitting there 30 minutes in and they've only asked you two questions, you need to just rein yourself in and give them time to ask you more questions.

Alex Metzger: Again, they're going to have specific questions they want to hear answers to and when they don't get that, when they are comparing you to another candidate, it's going to show when you didn't get the question 5, question 7 that was really important to them because they don't know your thoughts on it.

Another thing I would say is give a little pause before you answer. Not a four, five-second one, but wait a second. Take a breath. It really shows that you are thinking specifically about the questions you were asked. So I think that's another good tip.

Chad Chancellor: Going with that is be sincere. If they ask you something that you don't have an answer to say, "I'm going to be honest with you. I have to think about that. That's too big a question for me to sit here and answer and give you all bad advice. You're going to have to let me think about that." Be sincere in your answers. I find that oftentimes that's a great answer, "I don't know," especially after everybody else comes in professing to know everything. This could be a great answer.

Alex Metzger: That's true. Real quick, I want to talk real quick about energy level. There's a happy medium here, but I've seen people come in who are definitely on paper the most qualified candidate, have no energy and it comes across like they don't want the job. Even if you're introverted, I would have energy in your answers, I would act excited, I would be cognizant of how much energy you're bringing on the table.

I've also seen people come in with too much energy. So, there is a happy meeting there, but it really shows no matter how qualified you are. The search committee wants to feel like you want to be there. They want to feel like you want this job and that can come out with how excited you are to answer their questions.

Chad Chancellor: A lot of times the person who acts like they want the job they most get it. Most of them they weren't the most qualified--

Alex Metzger: That's exactly right.

Chad Chancellor: --if they act like they want in-- and you mentioned resumes. A resume is the most overrated thing in this world. Once you get the interview, your resume is the last thing you need to be worried about. People are hardly even going to look at it anymore. They may glance down at it while they are interviewing you, but you've already-- that resume is getting your foot in the door.

Once you're there interviewing with the-- I've had candidates ask me, "Now, are you going to give them my resume? Did you give them all of the references that I had? Did you..." This is your time to shine. It's not about what's on a piece of paper anymore. When you get invited to that interview, you got to carry the day.

Don't worry about your resume anymore. We always provide it for our clients and I'm sure other search firms do too. So, when you interview with us I'd rather you just show up and not have anything in your possession but your purse or your satchel.

Alex Metzger: This is more about interviewing topics, but a quick resume tip. A resume is a sales piece, not an encyclopedia.

Chad Chancellor: I agree a thousand-- it just aggravates me to death when I get these encyclopedias.

Alex Metzger: Keep it to a page and another thing; if you've landed projects promote the projects. I've seen so many people talking about their CECD and the schools they went to and you can't even find the projects they've won, which is what the resume should be about.

Chad Chancellor: You've got to remember when you're putting a resume in you're competing with other people. So, if you're going to list things that a lot of other people are going to list, you're not going to stand out. If all you're talking about is the CDBG money that you got there on a waterline, hey that's great. All our seek and our develop people get it.

But you're not going to stand out over the next candidate they were interviewing because if we're doing a search or any search firm, we're going to have multiple qualified candidates. So, the fact that you got a grant to run internet or infrastructure, everybody else probably is going to have similar experiences. Even if you have a CECD you need to put there, but that can't be your whole sales pitch.

Committees want to see that you know how to close deals. That might not just be a manufacturing deal. Closing a deal might be for some communities getting a thousand tourists in here for some festival or redevelopment main street. They want to see in you this person can take a project from home plate and carry it all around and score the run. That's what they want to see. You've got to think to yourself, what have I done that really shows that I can take a project from start to finish? Get that on your resume. You're going to be far better off.

Alex Metzger: That's a very good point. Since we've kind of segue wayed into stuff to do before the interview, which resume definitely falls in, let's talk about some other mistakes that people have made before the interview has even begun that got them off on the wrong foot.

Chad Chancellor: I've had a lot of candidates that never read our job profile and the reason being they knew somebody that got them in the race. So, they just showed up to the interview and they never read our job profile. All executive search firms and most communities are going to lead you in their job profile to what they want.

In other words, when we first started everybody it seems like wanted somebody to recruit manufacturing. Well now, unemployment is low, you've got more and more people that are interested in recruiting workforce. You've got people interested in creating incentive zones, TIF districts and high-end retail and restaurants. So, I'd say no matter how you get yourself in it, let's say that you know the mayor and the mayor got you the interview, don't just show up.

You need to read that job profile because most people have thought about what they want to put in there even to the point of putting in exceptions. We typically say that you can't hold elected office if you're going to get one of our jobs reason being an economic development CEO position is a full-time job and you're going to have to deal with multiple elected officials. If you're seen as too political, it can be risky and usually the boards ask us to put this in there.

We've had people apply who are school board members and nothing in the world wrong with that. We need good public servants. We've had people apply who are city commissioners, state legislator, but you need to read this profile and if that's in there you need to know if I'm offered this job, am I prepared to resign my other-- you need to have an answer for that question. Else you're going to waste your own time as much as anybody else's.

Alex Metzger: Not only that but the job profiles that we build and I'm sure other search firms they have a lot of hints in them. You can really read that and study about the community and get a good idea of what questions you're going to be asked. So, that's a good way to prep for the interview, not only when you're deciding to apply but bring that thing back out before you go to your interview and study it because there'll be a lot of tips and hints in there to the questions that you're going to be asked and it'll help you prep for them.

Chad Chancellor: I would advise before an interview, whoever is your contact setting everything up, act as an executive would act. I have had candidates ask too many questions. You never want to say don't ask questions, but I've had candidates who want to see financials and by-laws and all of this kind of stuff before the interview, when we're interviewing ten people, not when they're a finalist.

Typically, we'll share that with you if the board wants us to at an appropriate time, but don't ask so many questions leading up to it that you seem antsy or you seem like you don't have anything else to do. I have heard board members say, "I like that person, but I don't feel they were executive-enough-like because of some of the mundane questions they asked."

You want the details, but the details come later. You need to have a big picture approach at the first and if you're asking small details like who appoints your eight board members, sometimes I've seen board members say to themselves, this person is not that executive-like. We would rather them be worried about how much sales tax collection are we going to get from this new company coming to town.

So, you've got to be real careful. You want to ask enough questions. Where am I supposed to be? What's kind of the content of this interview? How long is it going to last? This type of stuff, but I wouldn't get into too many details until after the first interview. Then if you get called back, then you get into all the details.

Alex Metzger: Background checks: we usually run those for every candidate that we bring in to interview. Other search firms just do it when you're a finalist; you're being offered the job. Either way, you need to let people know if anything's going to show up there. It's not a big deal if a DUI shows up from 5 years ago. Probably one in six, one in seven forms that we run have something like that.

We just need to know it off the start so we can contact the search committee and see if they still want to bring you in and they want to ask you about it during-- So if you know something's going to show up in your background check, a) I would let the search committee know or the executive search firm, but I would also be prepared to be asked about it during the interview because most of the time, in our situations at least the searches I've done, they'll still bring you in an interview, but they do want to make a question or two about it and get your side of the story. So, be prepared for that.

Chad Chancellor: Not only criminal background checks but credit checks. If you've had a bankruptcy, you probably need to tell us because we're going to figure that out. I've had some committees who are very sensitive to that and say, "We don't want an economic developer who's had a bankruptcy because we're doing economic development. They're going to be charged with growing the economy and we've had other ones that said, "Life happens, everybody gets a second chance of that spot."

We won't judge you for it, but we're going to find it out, so you might tell us through the process so we can coach you because you don't want to waste your time. If that's going to be a deal killer, let us find out from the committee and then we can tell you so you don't go through the effort and the emotional stress of preparing for this interview and not really having a good shot at it. That's to help us move the process along and not waste anybody's time as we go through it.

Alex Metzger: What would you say about after the interview? You ever had anybody lose a job after the interview?

Chad Chancellor: Oh yes, for sure. We have had people when the interview is over the next day go visit board members at their office because they hadn't heard yet or to thank them. A lot of people send emails and thank you cards and all of them and that's fine, but we've had--

Alex Metzger: And you should.

Chad Chancellor: We've had people physically show up. We've had people show up in our offices, if they were hired, they will be and then introduced themselves to the staff and they hadn't been hired yet. The staff's like-- a lot of times the staff don't know who we're interviewing and this person has shown up. That happens a lot.

Listen, we're not telling you anything today that's happened once. These are common things that we see happen. We literally have had people where we say we're not going to be in touch for a week because we have some candidates that we're bringing in next week. I have had them then call the administrative assistant and ask if they know anything.

If you're going to worry anybody that you meet there, worry us. Worry us because we're getting paid to handle and we're sort of used to this. Don't worry the chairman. Don't worry the administrative assistant or the staff at that organization because it's going to give them an uneasy feeling. A lot of times they may not have made a decision, they may not know what's going on.

If you're just dying for an update, call or email us, but I would not press for an update from the committee because oftentimes that seems antsy and you never know why this thing's dragging out. There are times committees aren't quite sure what they want to pay and so they've got to get that in order before we make an offer. There's always things.

It's not always just we didn't like that person or whatever. Sometimes we're bringing in people from outside. We just did a search where we had a candidate from London, England. She actually grew up in the United States, but she was in London so we had to coordinate getting her over here.

Just don't be antsy. Listen to the search firm through the process and we'll tell you just as soon as we can because we're ready to finish the project ourselves, so we're not going to drag you out for no reason.

Alex Metzger: I think that's a great point. As a rule of thumb, I think you should always send a thank you letter within an hour or two after you're done interviewing. If you don't have the emails of the search committee or the board, send it us or the search firm. We'll forward it on, but as a rule of thumb, that should be your only contact with anybody on the search committee.

Chad Chancellor: An advice I would give is don't take it personally if you don't get the job. Don't take it out on the search committee. Listen, I'm as competitive as anybody. When we're after a sale that we don't get, I'm miserable. I don't even sleep good.

So I get it but don't-- we represent multiple people and so if all of a sudden you're telling us off and then you're mad and this and that and other, we might not want to put you in the next one

because we don't want to deal with that again. Probably almost half the time the search committee ends up not hiring who we tell them is maybe the number one choice.

Alex Metzger: That's it. It's more than half.

Chad Chancellor: It's up to them. It's not up to-- we tell a search committee our job is to bring you multiple people that can do this job and you guys pick out of them. Usually, we'll have our internal rankings. I've had many search committees not even want our ranking, so they may never even ask our opinion.

Sometimes when we're calling you to tell you you didn't get it, in our heart of hearts we think you should have got it. Don't take it out on us because we're going to be representing other people and that's going to make an impression with us and certainly don't take it out with members of that search committee because you never know. They may be in the market again real soon.

Alex Metzger: Meal setting: let's talk a little bit about that because I know part of our process is we like to put you through a meal and some people do interviews at a meal. Chad, you ever seen mistakes at the--

Chad Chancellor: I've seen more mistakes at a meal than I see anything else. We require when we're hiring somebody through our process that the search committee or some committee eat dinner with our potential hire.

Alex Metzger: Or lunch.

Chad Chancellor: Or lunch, yes. Usually, it's dinner, but it could be lunch based on the schedule, but we actually require it. An economic developer has got to function not only at the head of a boardroom table, but they've got to function in social settings for a variety of reasons. We want to see-- it is a test. Don't think you're just going to have a nice meal. It's a test and you need to have a game plan when you go there.

I often see people talk so much that they don't eat their food and so you need to be aware of this. If you look around your table and everyone else at that table-- let's say you get a salad first and they've all eaten their salad and you're sitting there and you haven't eaten any of yours, they start getting antsy. It's just an uncomfortable feeling.

Alex Metzger: It's a sign you're talking too much.

Chad Chancellor: They want you to eat it and they want you to enjoy yourself. They want you to feel like you're enjoying yourself and this dinner. So, you're absolutely talking too much. I've had it happen to where the waiter or waitress did not know because you haven't eaten your salad and everybody else has, they don't know should I pick it up and get it out of their way to bring the main meal?

So, it's dragging out because you're talking so much they don't want to interrupt you because you're interviewing. They've got a sense this is serious business. So keep up with the meal.

Alex Metzger: Another tip I would say is definitely read the room especially when it comes to alcohol. If they go around the drink order and nobody orders a drink, don't order one yourself. On the same token, if everybody's ordered a drink, make sure you order one even if you're not a big drinker, just sip on it or take one sip and leave it sitting there. But that is definitely a test in different communities depending on the culture.

Chad Chancellor: Well, I agree. Whatever you do, don't get so drunk that you're not representing yourself in a fine manner. We have had occasions where the committee ordered a drink and the candidate did not order a drink and that turned the committee off because they said if we hired this person, are they going to be able to take clients out and drink with them or is this going to be a problem?

It's never really a deal killer, but it puts a question in their mind and so I would always at least order a drink even if it's something very simple and I only sipped one or two sips out of it.

Alex Metzger: Unless it's a breakfast. I probably wouldn't do it in that case.

Chad Chancellor: Well, I don't know. If the people have ordered Bloody Marys you might. But even if they-- I may disagree with you because we do this differently. If nobody orders a drink, rather than me just saying no, I don't want one, I would make a funny joke. I will say well, I'm not dare going to be the one at this table to drink. I don't believe in drinking alone.

That way it's funny and if somebody-- it may be a test to see how you're going to handle if none of us drink and you do. Then somebody else may go, "You know I'll have one with you," or

everybody may just laugh and then nobody drinks. I have had some people test you by not ordering to see what you would do when it got around to you.

Alex Metzger: Another thing in these meal settings, I have seen search committees, now this is nothing that Chad and I would ever do, have the server mess up your meal on purpose just to see how you handle that. Just remember that everything during this meal setting is a test and is part of the interview process. Nobody is really going to remember what you say. I don't think that is important, but how you act, how you conduct yourself, make sure you're eating on time. It's the little things in the meal setting that are important.

Chad Chancellor: Well, if you think about it, we've talked about keeping up-- if you're eating on time and we've talked about the interview; you don't want the interview to end and only be three questions. All that's about pace. You need to give real thought before you enter an interview of the pace of this interview. How are you going to keep this interview moving? It's your job to keep it moving.

Don't think it is the search firm's job or the committee's job to keep it moving. They got questions for you. If you talk all day, they can't keep it moving. As the candidate sitting there, you got to keep the interview moving. You got to keep the pace going. So you need before you go in if you know you like to talk too much, have a little talk to yourself and say okay, I'm going to keep this stuff short. Let them get in the questions they want. Good interviews by the end of it turn into a natural conversation.

Alex Metzger: Right.

Chad Chancellor: It honestly does. They never start that way. Listen, the search committee's usually as nervous as you are. They don't sit around and interview people all day every day. We do, so we're not nervous, but they're sitting there-- It needs to turn into a conversation. If you talk too much that typically does not happen.

I will tell you usually at the end of an interview, you'll be provided an opportunity to ask questions of the search committee. The best question that I have ever seen asked was a candidate said, "Well, my question would be is there anything in my background that you have questions about that would

make you think that I'm not the person for this position that I can address while I'm sitting here in front of you?"

Alex Metzger: It's a great question.

Chad Chancellor: I thought that was a heck of a question. Why don't you want me? Let's address it right here. I just thought that was a great question. Have you a question or two in mind for when it comes around and make it a big picture. Where does this organization want to go? Don't make it, "Can I see your audited financials from four years ago?" Make it a big picture type question.

Alex Metzger: Well, I don't think we can give a podcast about being a concise communicator and keep rambling on ourselves. So, is there anything we haven't gotten to?

Chad Chancellor: I don't think so. I think this is one of the-- probably most enjoyable parts of the business to me. When we started our business, we really got three different divisions. We'd do some site location work and we do some economic development products and executive searches and so I don't know that I ever thought I would know what I would enjoy the most, but I think it's this. I believe in giving back to the profession, which is why we wanted to do this today.

Interviewing is an acquired skill. If you get asked in an interview and even if you don't want--

Alex Metzger: Do it.

Chad Chancellor: --the job, as long as you can keep it confidential, I'd probably do it because it is an acquired skill. You don't roll out of bed being good at it and the more of it you do, the better off you'll be. I think I will leave folks with that as my maybe my final tip.

Alex Metzger: Couldn't agree more right there. The more you can interview, the better you get at it and the better jobs, the more money you make.

Chad Chancellor: All right. Well, Alex, thank you for joining me today letting these folks see that there are two co-founders of Next Move Group. It's not always my podcast. I appreciate having you.

Alex Metzger: Glad to be here.

Chad Chancellor: I want to thank the University of Southern Mississippi's Masters of Economic Development program for sponsoring today's podcast. We work with Southern Miss a lot and they do tremendous research for us whether we're working with a site selection project and we need Southern Miss's help to understand labor and the market around that area, transportation they do a lot of research in or whether we need talent from the University of Southern Mississippi.

We have hired-- their students actually work for us as both interns and full-time employees. So, you can get a Master's degree in Economic Development from the university. They have two options to do that. One is mostly an online option where you go in a few weekends and one is the more traditional classroom option.

So, whether you run an organization and need talent or whether you run an organization and need research, you should really consider the University of Southern Mississippi's Masters of Economic Development program.

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