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## Great shakes: Group interviews are in vogue at Cold Stone Creamery



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(By Micah Kelley) — "Our milkshake brings all the tips to the jar,  
"Sheridan's ain't better than ours,  
"Maggie Moo's ain't better than ours,  
"We could serve you but we have to charge.  
"Thanks for the tip."

Here's a tip: If someone were asked to sing these words to the tune of Kelis' song "Milkshake" or any other song during a job interview, this person is not at a normal job interview.

When I went job hunting on Kansas City's Country Club Plaza in late December, I stopped by Cold Stone Creamery to see if it were hiring. I had no idea the employees sang for tips.

At the end of January I was called back for an interview on a Saturday morning, before the store was open.

Inside, seven or eight chairs were lined up in the front of the store. When everyone had arrived, I thought the owner, Michael Schramm, was going to take us one by one somewhere and interview us.

That didn't happen - this wasn't an interview; it was an audition.

This interview-by-audition process was started five years ago, at the opening of Cold Stone in Town Center, Schramm said in a later interview. At the time, that store was overwhelmed with applications and the one-on-one interviews didn't work.

"This process came out of necessity," he said. The Cold Stone crew came up with this idea because they were able to interview so many people at one time. But afterward Schramm continued the auditions because he thought it helped him and managers at each store select the right people.

"We're looking for energetic type of people," Schramm said. "You can see really quickly who's not afraid."

The audition contained four parts. First was "break the ice," where you had to say why you wanted to work at Cold Stone and give some information about yourself.

Next came time to "bust a move." You had to get up and do any movement you wanted to. You could run around in circles, do the splits or do a dance. One guy shook his butt like Shakira. I did the "lean with it, rock with it" dance.

After that each person had to sing a Cold Stone jingle, which is a popular song with new lyrics about Cold Stone and ice cream.

Finally, we split into groups to sing a jingle with choreography. Each group had 10 minutes to come up with a song, whether it be one of the Cold Stone jingles or a song we made up. Along with the singing, the choreography could be any kind of dancing we wanted it to be. Two months later I visited the Cold Stone auditions at Cold Stone at The Legends in Kansas City, Kan.

At The Legends store, when it came time to break the ice, I noticed everyone said the same things that were said at the audition I was in: "I would like to work at Cold Stone because it has good energy ... it's fun ... " Blah, blah, blah.

Next came time to bust a move.

A guy in a yellow shirt, who I assumed would be quiet, ran from his chair and jumped up on the counter where the cash register was and jumped right back off.

Some of the employees who were by the cash register were a little freaked.

Along with the counter jumper, someone else sat on the floor and put his foot behind his head. The employees joked about him serving ice cream with his feet.

During the individual singing, these potential employees had more creativity than all of us at the Plaza.

A few people sang songs they created. One girl sang "Ice Cream," by JS while another boy sang, "I got 32 flavors of that scrum-delicious ice cream ..."

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ll the songs were interesting, but it was nothing like the group performances.

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t the Plaza audition, nine of us were separated into groups of three. We were given 10 minutes to work with. My group came up with a Cold Stone remix to Chris Brown's "Yo."

When we finished creating the song, I tried to come up with choreography like spinning or the three of us rocking in the same direction, but the guys in my group weren't thinking of any dance moves.

After our preparation time was over, we sang the song, but very poorly. I tried to sing loudly, so the managers could hear me. But the only dancing we had was me clapping my hands and moving around a little bit because I really wanted that job.

At The Legends auditions, everyone was set up into four groups of four. The most energetic group called itself the "Scoop of Tears." The group performed to a song it called "Scoop Wit It, Dip Wit It," the remix of "Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It." Toward the end of their performance they started doing the "Walk It Out" dance.

When the auditions ended, Schramm told everyone he would be calling the people he wanted to hire.

What some of these people didn't know was that if they scored a "goose egg" or 0 at some point when they didn't participate in one of the parts, they were automatically out.

A week after my audition at the Plaza, I was called back and given a job. The auditioning process, it turned out, helped me a lot because when I started the job, singing in front of customers didn't seem like a big deal.

After getting through the first day of work, I knew that Cold Stone was the job for me.

#### COLD STONE AUDITION SURVIVAL TIPS

1. When they say to bust a move, you don't have to dance like Usher. You can run around in a circle or wave your hands in the air.
2. For the jingle, if you are shy, sing the song you know best. And if you mess up, ask to sing another song. (That's what I did.)
3. For the group performance:
  - a. Pick a song everyone feels comfortable singing and dancing to.
  - b. Make sure everyone in the group does something.
  - c. And if everyone in your group does nothing, don't let their stage fright be the reason you don't get the job. Just do your part.
4. And if you do all of these things, you could be the next "Cold Stone Idol."

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