

Communicating In your Interview

First Impressions

Interviews quickly force you to make a good first impression. You should show enthusiasm, practice good eye contact, and be prepared to start off your interview with confidence. Use your natural tendencies to see if you can direct the interview. Try asking questions early. Use a joke or prepare a 'small talk' conversation-starter, and state the interviewer's name.

Remember, before you go to an interview, try to learn about the company's culture. This, will help prepare answers to their questions and help you know how to engage your interviewer.

When answering questions one good rule of thumb is to communicate using the STARR model.

- Situation: Describes the Event
- Task: Explains the task you had to complete
- Action: Describes the actions you took to complete your task
- Result: The outcome of your work
- Relevance: Try to prepare answers that are relevant to the job, or let the interviewer know why you think your story is relevant to the job

All of these tips will help you to engage the interviewer right from the start.

Now, lets take a look at 3 different job applicants answering questions in an interview setting.

While you watch, think about what you like about each person's interview style? And, how you could adapt your own style?

This activity features very common interview questions that are likely to be asked in any field. Let's get started.

Tell Me about yourself.

- The first interview candidate Jen, answers this question with high energy, at a quick pace. She talks about her work experience, education, adds some personal adventurous things she has done in her life.

- The second interview candidate Moe, is very direct and to the point when talking about himself. He uses stats and figures to justify their effectiveness in the jobs, and grades he has received
- The third interview candidate Cam, answers calmly. They discuss school and work experiences, as well as professional certificates, clubs and committees they have been a part of.

The next question...

What are your greatest strengths?

- Jen, discussed three main strengths all of which use examples from personal life and interesting events. She uses an example about the time she planned a wedding in a foreign country and coordinated 200 guests
- Moe, answers the question by discussing three strengths of his that again, are very fact based and related to work specifically. Moe uses a specific example of a time he prepared critical, statistical reports for upper management. He then mentions that these reports added a 10% growth for the company.
- Cam answers this question with two professional strengths and one personal. They talk modestly about their strengths. Their answers are positive ones about communication skills and problem solving. Cam is very humble with their answers.

For the next question...

How do you prioritize your work?

- Jen is excited about this question, because she has lots of different methods for prioritization. However, she uses elongated, broad answers and rushes through the specifics of her answers.
- Moe on the other hand has a short, quick response. He takes tasks and creates priority list and then scores them based on importance.
- Cam responds to prioritization by talking to colleagues and supervisors to find out what they think they need most. Then, they organize the work to be done based on what others have instructed.

The next question in the interview is...

What type of work environment do you prefer?

- Jen talks about her love of an active work space, with lots of collaboration, and working with others
- Moe prefers space where he can concentrate on work. He thinks that this type of work environment is best to bring high levels of success to the company.
- Cam enjoys a combination of both. An active work space for collaboration with others, but also time and space for quiet focus.

And finally the last question is...

Tell me about a time you made a mistake?

- Jen answers with a personal example and not a professional one. However, it is still a strong answer.
- Moe, talks about a work related mistake. He quantifies the error, and clearly states how he grew from it, and how he won't make the same mistake again.
- Cam, talks about a work mistake, but doesn't really indicate the repercussions of what that mistake meant. They mention what they have learned and how they have grown from it. However, the interviewer senses that they are misleading about their growth, based on their verbal and body language cues

Now that the interview is over, what were the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate's communication style?

In your opinion, which one of these styles seemed most like your own?

What do you think you can do to continue to master your communication style?

Can you think of ways to improve your style, to reach a broader audience?

Remember, no approach is ever perfect, but knowing how you communicate will help you be more comfortable in an interview and contribute to your success.