



## **PROJECTING SELF CONFIDENCE IN AN INTERVIEW, NOT ARROGANCE**

Do you remember some of those interview coaching sessions where you were taught to sit up straight, lean slightly forward, project good eye contact, and listen attentively? We've been taught to put forth our most confident, capable and polished selves during job interviews.

Businesses have many top-talent indicators that they look for, and also have several de-railers in the back of their minds. Arrogance can raise a red flag, because it affects your ability to work in teams and with lower-level employees, and may affect your ability to be customer-service focused.

There are things interviewees can do to leave the right impression. Here are seven tips to help ensure that your air of self-confidence won't cross the line into arrogance.

### **1. Talk teamwork.**

Avoid overstating your role in team projects. For some students or employees, everything is 'I did this, I did that.' It's not uncommon for it to be discovered in interviewing other co-workers, students, or in talking with your references just exactly who all was involved in a big project, and what lead each took in the project. We would suggest that an interviewee be clear about what the team accomplished and about what their role was. To be an effective person on a successful team is the best of both worlds.

### **2. Engage everyone.**

Hiring Managers often worry that highly educated employees for example, such as a high-achieving M.B.A., won't be able to engage and manage a diverse group of people, including those in the ranks below them. A key question that could be asked to an interviewee is, "when did you motivate someone who wasn't a direct report?" An ability to motivate others indicates you can get things done in an organization.

Hiring Managers also keep an eye on candidates' social interaction through the interview process. For example, the interviewee's chit-chat when the Hiring Manager is escorting them from an interview tells him/her about their social skills and whether they're enthusiastic about the company. During those few seconds of informal conversation, they will want to know what they know about the company and why they're excited about it.

How candidates interact with other employees also is telling. The administrative assistants will tell a recruiter if a person was rude or standoffish or high maintenance. Chatting with the receptionist when you arrive for your interview helps. So does returning calls promptly.

### **3. Convey interest with questions.**

Knowing little about a company suggests to recruiters you thought you didn't need to bother preparing -- a signal that you think too highly of yourself or too little of their company. Asking detailed, pointed questions about the company is a good way to show that you've done your homework, recruiters say. The questions will show when you know nothing about a company, too. For example, avoid asking questions that are easily answered by looking at the company's Web site, but you could ask to go into more detail about something of interest on that same site.

Asking questions about the company's culture indicates that you're looking for the job that will fit you best, rather than one that will provide the most prestige or biggest paycheck. A good question could be, "What would a person see when standing in your parking lot at the end of the workday? This might be a way to find out if workers would come out looking stressed or talking with co-workers, or whether no cars would leave the grounds until late at night. It is a creative way to get at the issue of culture.

### **4. Bring examples of your work or a prepared presentation**

If your line of work requires creative talent, for example as in a marketing position, bringing some ad slicks, pamphlets, artwork, or an advertising campaign will really help convey your past work. If you are interviewing for something similar, you could bring a mock up of a proposed marketing campaign. The content of the materials is not important, but the creative work that went into them is. We've seen companies move very quickly to hire a candidate because they came prepared to present, so fast that often an offer was in the candidate's hands before they left the city.

### **5. Don't fixate on your job title.**

Some interviewees can get too hung up on titles. Titles rarely give an idea of what the job role is. Take a quick look at community banks. How many Vice Presidents do you see? Does that indicate the role of the job versus other businesses with Vice Presidents? A best way to approach that is to be curious mostly about the work you'd be doing and about a likely career progress at the company.

Chances are that your job is going to change soon after you get to the company. Your supervisor could move on, the job could grow or shrink, or you'll be

promoted quickly because you're a great talent. As a result, companies like interviewees to be most concerned with how they fit with the firm in general rather than what their initial title or exact role will be.

## **6. Have realistic expectations.**

Employers want people who see themselves at the beginning of their career. The job isn't necessarily going to be at the bottom, but it might be somewhere in the middle of what you might expect.

Those who believe they'll immediately get to use the management skills they learned in a class to run a big-business division need to adjust their expectations. This is particularly important when changing careers, and especially if you're also changing industries. Just because you were a manager in engineering doesn't mean you're ready to be put in charge of one of the brands immediately.

## **7. Listen**

Listen carefully to the questions asked and answer them. Don't beat around the bush. We've seen plenty of candidates lose in the interview when they were fixated on rambling on about what they wanted to do, when the interviewer simply wanted answers to their questions. Listening in carefully means that you are respecting their position and questions they ask, even if you think they are asking the same thing over and over again. The Hiring Manager may have a reason for asking the same thing repeatedly. They may be wanting to see how many different ways you might answer that question.

In some final thoughts here, remember this important point. It could give you an edge over competitors. Looking at a resume or talking about what you have done in your career, is an exercise in history. The real important issue at hand and what the hiring manager is really trying to figure out is just what can this potential employee do for us for the future. After determining whether you may be a fit for them, they are fixated on determining your potential value as an employee. What you did in the past may lay some good groundwork to base on, but what's really important is to convey as best as possible how you can help and fit in for the future. You must sell them on your value.