

Communication Skills: Lecture No. 22

Module 8

Lecture 1

INTERVIEW SKILLS



This is a very interesting module, and probably, the most practically useful of all the modules of this course on *Communication Skills*. This module is the longest one in this course containing seven lectures; the length should indicate to you the significance attributed to *Interview Skills*.

The overall scheme of the module is given below.

| In this module, you will learn about— | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Misconceptions about an Interview | |
| What is an interview | |
| Preparation for an Interview | |
| Keys to Success in Interviews | |
| Attending an Interview | |
| Closing an Interview | |
| Post Interview Functions | |

Particularly, in this lecture, I will start clearing up some misconceptions about an interview, then proceed to describe an interview and tell you how you should start preparing for it.

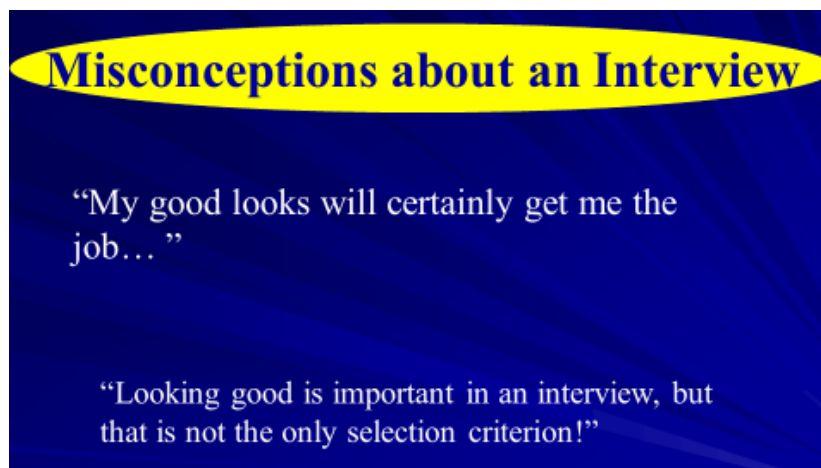
MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AN INTERVIEW

Misconceptions about an Interview

“Possessing an impressive résumé, ensures success in Interviews ...”

“I can get professional help in writing a résumé, to get the best job in my area ...”

People think that merely *possessing an impressive résumé ensures success in interviews*. Similarly, they also think that they will get professional help in writing résumé which will ensure them to get the best job in their area. These are misconceptions because neither of them will ensure success in interviews. Ultimately, it is your *performance* in the interview that gets you the job! A résumé at the most can ensure only a call letter to the interview. The rest depends entirely on how you present yourself in the interview. Despite the best CV, your interview performance can make or mar your career!

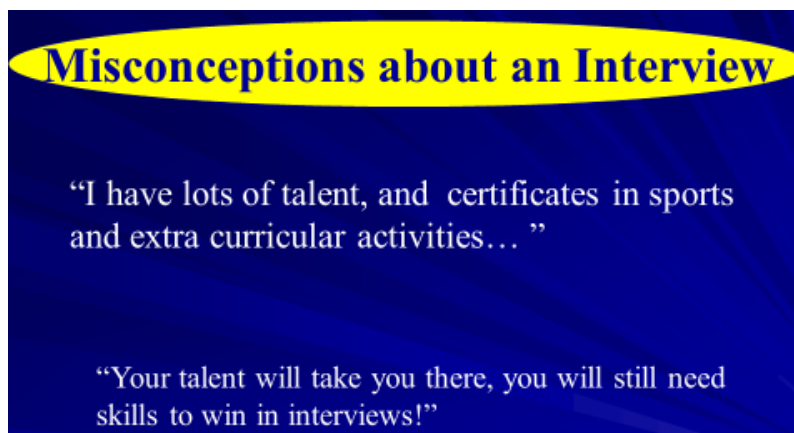


Misconceptions about an Interview

“My good looks will certainly get me the job...”

“Looking good is important in an interview, but that is not the only selection criterion!”

Some people believe that their good looks will certainly fetch them the desired job. Looking good is important in an interview, but that in no way guarantee you success.

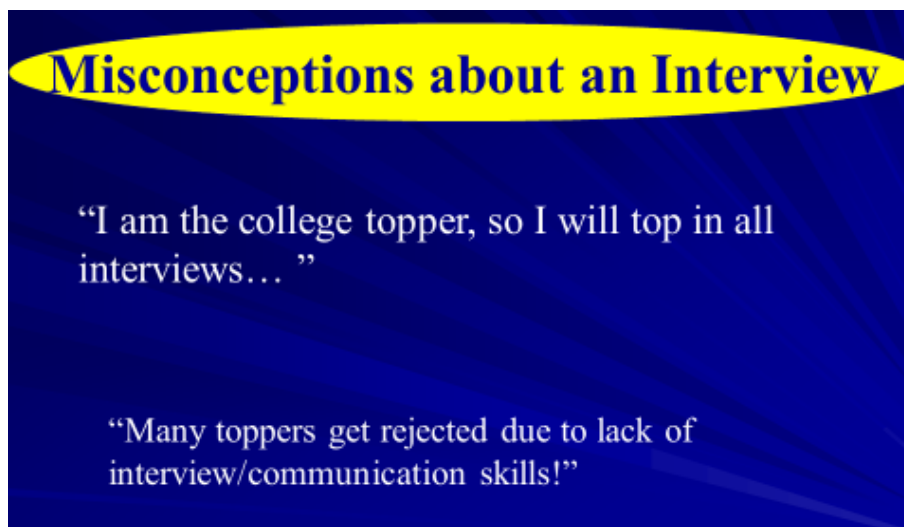


Misconceptions about an Interview

“I have lots of talent, and certificates in sports and extra curricular activities...”

“Your talent will take you there, you will still need skills to win in interviews!”

There are others who do not have looks but have lots of talent and trust that their certificates on extra-curricular activities will get them the job. This is another misconception because *your talent will take you there but you will still need skills to win in the interview!* Extra-curricular activities are only like the topping of a cake, mere possession of them will not ensure success in interviews. Talents are to be backed up by strong academic credentials. Yet, interestingly enough, academic credentials need to be backed up by effective interview skills. Look at the next misconception—



An erudite student who tops his institute might think that his top score will secure him automatically a good job. This is also a misconception because there is no such guarantee, or corresponding assurance that if you are the topper, you will top in all interviews. Topping in examinations call for *examination skills* but topping in interviews demand *interview skills*. That is why, a ten pointer in IIT with no interview skills can be beaten by an eight pointer with excellent interview skills. Therefore, many toppers get rejected by the panelists due to lack of interview/communication skills.

THE BEGINNING

How and when do you begin the interview? The beginning of an interview is not exactly the time mentioned in your call letter, but much before it. Often it involves months of planning and preparation. Once you have decided to dedicate your time and efforts for ensuring success in an interview, you need to begin with the right frame of mind.

■ **Begin with the right frame of mind**

Even if people around you doubt your credentials and wonder how you got the call letter, you should not lose faith in your abilities. Set aside nagging self-doubts such as the fact that your friend with better marks and talents did not get it. The right frame of mind is to realize that you have the potential for the job, which your employer has perceived in some form or other.

■ **You have a decent chance, once you have got the call letter**

Since you believe in your potential, you also understand that you have a decent chance to win in the interview and get the job.

■ **Do not waste a single second after getting the call letter**

The next thing that you should do is not to waste a single moment till the interview. You should completely immerse yourself in all preparatory steps to be taken for an interview.

■ **Neither get over-excited, nor get frightened!**

Keep yourself in a balanced state of mind: neither get over excited nor get frightened.

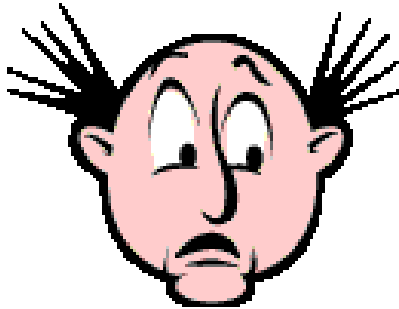
■ **Be Calm and Collected**

Collect the best part of yourself and stay calm. Don't get too nervous; because it will terribly affect your performance. Nonetheless, minimum amount of nervousness and anxiety is normal, and you shouldn't be worried about it. In fact, some amount of initial nervousness will naturally help you to focus and prepare well for the interview. Just keep nervousness under control by approaching it positively and by confronting it with your systematic and thorough preparation. When you can keep your fear in control, you are sure to win. As Ernest Hemingway succinctly puts it, "Courage is grace under pressure." Similarly, over-estimating your credentials can also be dangerous. As the popular saying goes, "pride goes before the fall." If you are proud of your accomplishments and presume that you are the greatest, you will delude yourself into the belief that the job awaits you and it's for you to take. It will blind yourself to look



into your limitations and work on it. Remember: no job will be a cake walk! Whatever appears to be an easy victory will have a lot of persistent work in the background.

WHAT MAKES IT FRIGHTENING?



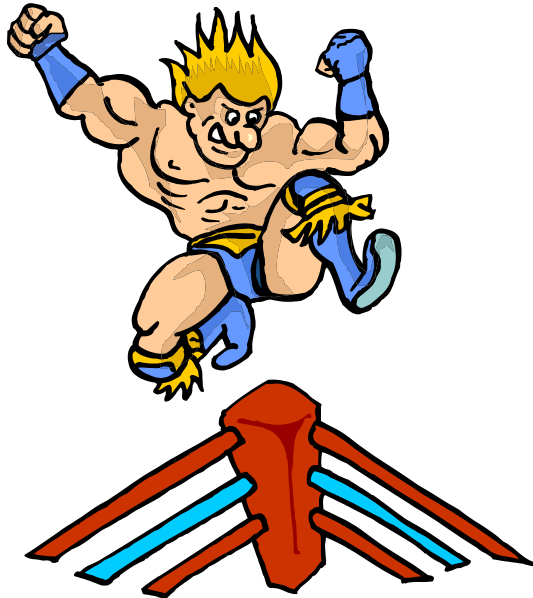
Compared to giving a talk or participating in a debate, what makes a job-interview so frightening? It is the 50:50 factor of success or failure. When you are successful in an interview, it can alter the course of life. Life changes dramatically as in a fairytale. You will live happily ever after:



life becomes a fragrant bed of roses, you can afford to buy whatever you want in life and marry the person who you wish to. So success brings you so many things like money, prestige, recognition, wish fulfillment, happiness, and prosperity. However, what makes it actually frightening is the fact that you can miserably fail in an interview. When you fail, it can leave you in the depths of despair. There are some people who take their failure seriously and go to the extent of committing suicide. *The stakes are very high: it's a life or death situation.* Hence, any interview is intimidating as it pushes you willy-nilly to a *fight or flight situation*.



FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE



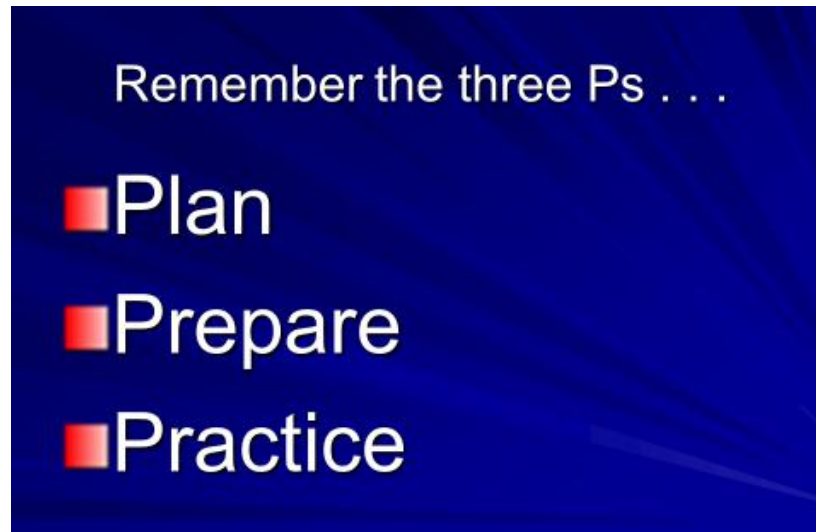
Fight or flight response is your body's reaction to a perceived threatening situation like when you suddenly see a poisonous snake moving so close to you. Similarly, when you are so afraid of facing an interview board, your body might respond to it either by making you flee or deciding to face it. Interestingly, in both cases, the body will trigger secretion of hormones like adrenaline which will give you boosted up energy to deal with the situation. In an interview, it will be wise to use the extra energy for facing the panel boldly. Either you get better or you get worse. You should make it better by fighting it out even if it appears to involve high risk because only then you can expect high returns.

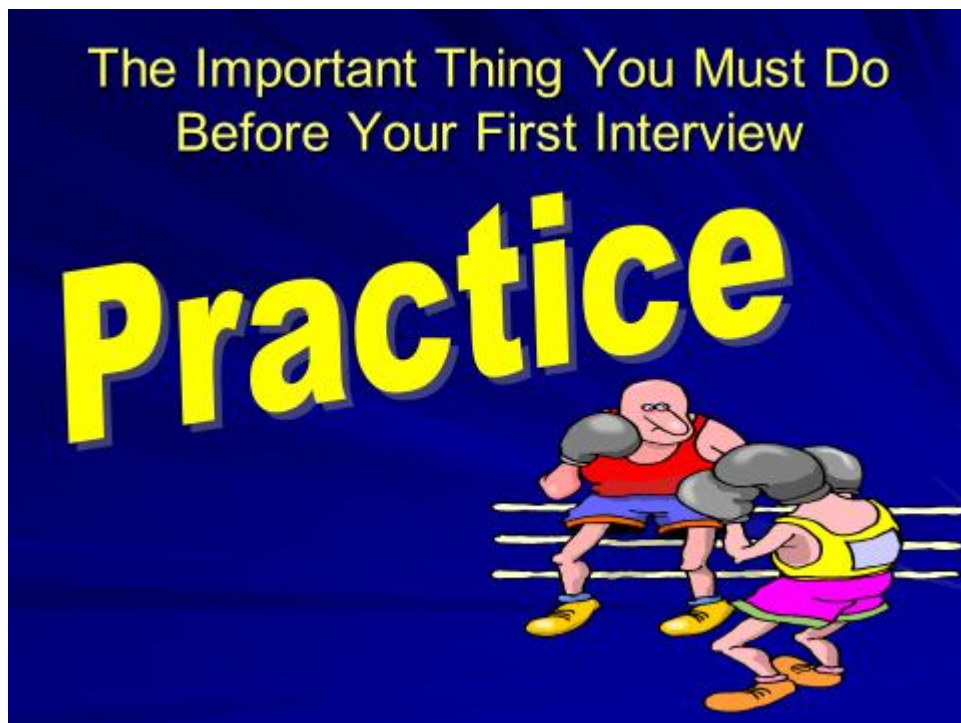
THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYABILITY

Willing to take risk, you should go to face any interview with killer instinct. If you go with that frame of mind, you will soon realize that there is no scarcity of jobs. There are decent and lucrative jobs waiting for even a 5 point somebody—with a low score. In a country like India, strictly speaking, we don't actually have the problem of unemployment, we do have the problem of *unemployability*.

What do I mean by unemployability? Despite accumulation of degrees and other qualifications on paper, candidates lack in-depth knowledge of a subject. Many lack even the fundamental skills that they may have studied during their courses. Lot of money, time and efforts are invested in trying to get the best candidate. However, on occasions, the interviewers do not find the candidate suitable for the job, and hence, employers decide to keep the post open rather than filling it with an incompetent person. Before I conclude this lecture, I want you to keep in mind the three Ps of an interview.

REMEMBER THE THREE PS





Plan, Prepare, Practice

***"FIRST COMES THOUGHT;
THEN ORGANIZATION OF THAT THOUGHT,
INTO IDEAS AND PLANS;
THEN TRANSFORMATION OF THOSE PLANS
INTO REALITY.
THE BEGINNING,
AS YOU WILL OBSERVE,
IS IN YOUR IMAGINATION."***

Napolean Hill

Let us look at these three Ps in the next lecture in detail.

FURTHER REFERENCES

Further References

- Dana Morgan, *10 Minute Guide to Job Interviews*. New York: Macmillan, 1998.
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- Julie-Ann Amos, *Handling Tough Job Interviews*. Mumbai: Jaico Publishing, 2004.
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