

## **What your body language says about you**

Pictures speak louder than words.....This is particularly true in an interview situation where body language plays a significant factor in determining whether an employer sees you as a trustworthy, confident, capable individual who has a future with their company. Interestingly, research has shown that words by themselves account for only 7% of the impact of your message, a hefty 38% of the message is transmitted by tone of voice and the remaining 55% is communicated by body language.

As most of us have no idea how we are perceived by other people we underestimate the significance of non verbal forms of communication and how it can lessen the impact on what we are saying. I have highlighted below, the four most common pitfalls for interviewees. By modifying your behavior in these areas, you will dramatically increase your interview performance and your ability to influence the final outcome.

### **Va Va Voom**

Many jobseekers, forget to show any real interest or passion for the job. Even those who have prepared for the interview and have anticipated questions that might be asked, often give their responses in a muted, monotone voice. In an interview setting, an employer has only sixty minutes to judge you and will be using all tools at their disposal to assess your abilities. A lack of passion in the interview will be interpreted as a lack of enthusiasm for the role and a warning sign that you may have low motivation and energy levels.

How do you overcome this? Far from having to take a course in amateur dramatics, simply reflect on how you communicate when you are talking to a friend about something that really interests you. This could be the GAA, cinema, cooking, gardening – anything that completely absorbs you. Notice how your voice modulates, how your face suddenly becomes more animated, how you speak in a louder voice which is full of conviction. You need to bring this same level of “engagement” into the interview room. The more interested you are in what you are saying, the more interested the interviewer will be in listening to you.

### **Say it with a smile**

Once an employer has decided that you can do the job, the next most important thing for them to ascertain is if they can work well with you and if you will be a good fit with the team. By smiling in the interview, you are presenting yourself as a positive, “can-do” individual who is likeable and would integrate well with an existing team. If there is a choice between two equally qualified candidates, an employer will naturally go with the person they like best.

### **Eye contact**

It is important to keep strong eye contact during the course of the interview. It gives an air of self assurance and confidence and helps build a connection with the interviewer. It shows that you are listening intently and implies that you are a trustworthy individual with nothing to hide. By maintaining good eye contact, you will also pick up on cues from the interviewer – you will be able to interpret if you have lost their attention, or if they are fully engaging in what you are saying.

### **Grand Entrance**

When you enter the interview room, walk in with a confident stride and don't be afraid to fill your space. Employers need to know that you are a competent individual who can quickly master the role and what better way of translating this than displaying self confidence when you are being introduced to them. Follow this up by a firm handshake and a smile. When seated, try to hold an energetic posture as this will help inject energy into your voice and body language.

## **Body Language in the Sports Field**

You need look no further than the sports field to see the importance of body language. Sports psychologists have long identified its importance in giving athletes an edge in a competition. Professional tennis players are trained to use body language to their advantage during tournaments. Everything on the court counts – from the moment they walk onto the court, what they do between points, how they react when they are behind in a match.

## **Conclusion**

Seriously consider using the services of a professional interview coach. They will be able to identify weaknesses in your performance and will help you carefully construct your answers and guide you on how to deliver them with maximum impact and effect. By using *all* the forms of communication at your disposal (body language, dress code and what you say) you are significantly strengthening your message and consequently increasing your chances of securing the job offer.

## **About the Author**

**Laura McGrath** is the owner of Interview Techniques, a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with Irish Jobs and the Sunday Business Post.

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