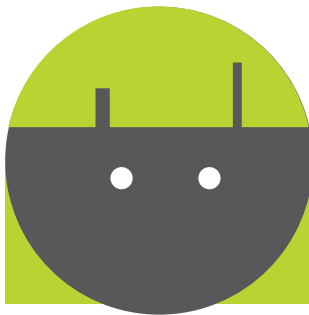
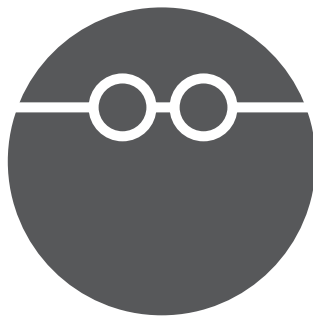


What image do you
want to portray?
Congratulations.
You have moved to
the interview stage...



When preparing for interviews and during the interview itself many candidates only focus on what they will say, yet the words themselves only have real meaning if they are supported by the appropriate non-verbal signals. For example, if you receive two competing product brochures claiming they are 'top of the range', but if one is printed in black and white on flimsy paper and one is printed in full colour on top quality card, we all know which we would choose to believe.

In face to face encounters, non-verbal signals are thought to represent an incredible 93% of our initial communication. This means that unless your carefully chosen words are delivered appropriately then they will not be convincing.

That first impression is likely to affect the questions asked (in unstructured interviews) as well as what the interviewer 'hears' from what you say. After the first four minutes, you will need to give a superb performance indeed to change the interviewer's view from negative to positive.

Creating the right first impression

This creates a 'platform of truth' in the brain, i.e. the interviewer may well make an almost instant decision as to 'this one looks hopeful', or 'this will be a waste of time'. The first impression is very powerful and will have been formed long before the conversation about you or the role has even begun. Below is a breakdown of how your image is formed by the interviewer within the first 4 minutes of meeting.

- Visual
- Words
- Auditory
- Appearance
- Body language
- Volume
- Accent
- Rhythm

The 'Position' and 'The Person'

There are two main elements - 'the person' and 'the position'. You, along with several other candidates have been invited to the interview because according to your CV, you satisfy 'the position' criteria, i.e. it appears that you have the appropriate background and experience to function successfully in the role (assuming what you have put in your CV is true!). So the interview is arranged to check out you have told the truth and to meet 'the person'.

People have a range of positive and negative attitudes and behaviours that are likely to make a huge impact on their success in the role. This is what the interviewer is trying to differentiate between candidates. Positive attitudes the interviewer may be subconsciously looking for are: confidence, enthusiasm, energy, ambition, good communication skills. Will you be a good cultural fit, will you 'fit in', will you go 'the extra mile', will you be a good team player, a leader and if put in front of customers (internal and external) will you positively influence them? Will you be dependable, flexible, and adaptable to change, are you going to be engaged in the role and deliver successfully?

So when preparing for the interview put yourself in the shoes of the interviewer. What attitudes would you be looking for? Create a list, mark the ones which you believe to be true of you and think how the interviewer is going to know for certain that you possess them. These are your 'brand attributes'.

How do interviewers make their decisions?

Attitudes are generally 'sensed' by the interviewer i.e. picked up subconsciously, although you may also consider how you can articulate examples during the interview that demonstrate all your positive attitudes. The subconscious is our main decision maker. Not many decisions in life pass through the logical processing part of the brain, including whom to employ! After checking out technical capabilities interviewers often rely on 'gut feel' to decide between several well qualified candidates who come for interview!

So what nonverbal clues, messages and approaches are there?

Think about your appearance

Physical appearance is the first 'message the interviewer will pick up. Your appearance is your marketing brochure. It can tell lots about your attitudes and is the easiest thing in the world to deal with so long as you give it appropriate thought and attention beforehand. It can also give you a huge sense of confidence when you are appropriately attired.

First understand that we are all blessed with perfect dress sense! For the interview it is essential your outfit is appropriate (for the culture of the organisation, the role you are applying for and the weather). You should choose something that makes you feel good. If you are uncertain about the culture of the company, think about standing outside the company for a while to see people coming and going or ask someone you know within the company what the dress code is. If unsure it is better to over rather than under estimate the dress code.

With the items you wear for interview, check each one very carefully for any tiny signs of wear (which will be picked up by the subconscious). Check also for loose threads, any marks (however tiny) and buttons coming loose. Ensure that items have been cleaned and pressed, are fresh and contemporary and fit you well.

The subconscious of an interviewer may equate a candidate in a 'tired looking suit' as feeling tired, run down, lacking energy, poor attention to detail and probably disorganised! So a high level of wardrobe maintenance is essential, not just for the interview, but day to day in your next role as well.

In the majority of roles these days, you should expect to be called for second and third round interviews and you need to be able to ring the changes each time. The ideal is 3 different outfits, but if finances do not permit, at least plan on different shirt and tie combinations, different tops or blouses, or add a scarf to the blouse. You know you will be attending interviews; so do plan in advance and do not wait until the interview is fixed when you will probably go out in a rush and come back with a mistake!

Your voice



Your voice

Just think of all the attitudes that each of us pick up from the tone and range of your voice. Just a few of the positive ones are: confidence, assertiveness, authoritative, approachable, energised, positive, enthusiastic, organised, friendly, interested, engaged. Of course all of these have opposites too.

Voices are like a musical instrument with the ability to produce a wide range of interesting notes, though many people have not explored much beyond 'middle C'. Most people hate hearing their voices recorded because they sound different to what we hear inside (hearing our voices through muscle and bone). Find someone you know and trust to practice! Ask them to listen to your voice and give you feedback on how it sounds and what attitudes it might convey? If it doesn't convey what you want it to then practice, practice and practice!

Nerves that are often associated with interviews lead people to breathe higher in the chest area. This will result in the voice sounding nervous or unsure, higher pitched and / or lacking in credibility / authority. If you are feeling slightly nervous concentrate on breathing more deeply and slow down!

The single most powerful part of your speech during an interview is the pause!

The pause will add emphasis to key points and enable the interviewer to take in and digest what you have said and the key facts. Obviously the words you use and the clarity of those words are fundamental but how you express them and the speed and tone will enhance your examples.

And think about your body Language

Your body language may well make or break your interview. Positive body language and you greatly increase your options of being offered the job, negative body language and it is unlikely you will be offered the post, no matter how able, qualified and keen you are. Competency based interviews, or roles that involve very little interpersonal involvement or a very high degree of technical skills e.g. I.T. programmers, might be exceptions.

Body Language is thought to have anything up to 9 times the power of the spoken word which is why the decision making interviews and important meetings are always face to face, even with people we know well.

If you approach the interview as exactly what it says on the tin – an 'inter' 'view', you will be constantly seeking the views and response of the interviewer, and can respond appropriately.

Once the questions and answers begin, it is important that you pay 100% attention to the interviewer, the questions and how you are going to respond, there is no space left in your conscious brain to be thinking about your body language. However, by this time it is likely that a large part of the decision as to whether you are likely to be a suitable candidate or not may have already been taken – so prior to this point is the time to think about your body language.

In summary

You are going to the interview to find out more about the role i.e. to have an 'inter' 'view', as well as to differentiate yourself from other candidates as a person who can successfully deliver in the role. In addition you will be able to demonstrate that you will be an attribute to the company in the way they deliver against customer expectations. Your nonverbal messages will pay a powerful part in the overall image you create. Be prepared to spend time and attention in advance to ensure that your unique personal branding messages consistently convey the right image to the interviewer.