

CENTER STAGE

Your talent won't speak for itself. To land the job, you'll need a little showmanship

Nailing a job interview is about more than just listing past accomplishments and experience. In today's job market you need to wow the interviewer with equal parts grace and charm, or as some like to put it, with showmanship. According to Alan Fox, a marketing and public relations professional, it's not only possible but also advantageous to use secret tricks of the show business trade in a job interview to land the job.

"Every interview is about showmanship," says Fox. "Every person who walks into an interview is operating at a level of showmanship. The only question is whether you are aware of it and whether you follow the principles of good showmanship."

Knowing the principles that good show people know can be the difference between getting hired and getting rejected, says Fox.

"Showmanship is about real principles and real skill," he adds. "And they work beautifully when you marry them with your career-building. Showmanship is not about method acting, it's about wisdom."

Charm and charisma

In showmanship, these two qualities are commonplace; all great actors and performers are able to charm the pants off

their subjects. Taking this into an interview can give you a great advantage and Fox says that most people don't realize that charisma can be taught.

"In theater and film this is called 'turning on your headlights' and in comedy clubs it's called being 'on,'" he says. "You should never interview at the energy level that you live with."

One way to showcase your charm is to stand up and acknowledge the interviewer as you meet them.

"Many times we're sitting in the lobby waiting for HR to greet us," says Chris Zefferys, founder of Jetfessional, an employee-training organization in Seattle. "When you see them approach you, stand up and greet them. Never give a handshake while seated. Also, every time a different interviewer enters the room, stand up to greet them through a handshake so that you make them feel comfortable."

Fox points to former presidents Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan to prove his next point: you are the message.

"Turn on a video of either of them and turn off the sound," he says. "The message comes through loud and clear even to a deaf audience."

Giving off your message means also listening carefully to what the interviewer is saying. Zefferys calls it listening visibly.

In addition to listening visibly, be sure to ask questions of the interviewer as well.

"People like to tell their story, so get the interviewer talking," says Zefferys. "When you meet with an interviewer ask them how long they have been with the company, where they have worked previously, and what they enjoy about their job."

Have a theme

All good showmen have a theme when performing their act and you should too. In a job interview your theme is your focus.

"In a job interview you may be up against nine competitors," says Fox. "Be ready to state your focus more clearly than your nine rivals. Know your focus or get beaten by your competition that knows theirs."

Since the best theater or performance is stripped down and left without any extra parts, be sure your theme is refined as well.

"Strip away everything that is not absolutely essential to your focus," says Fox. "At the start of almost every

interview the interviewer will ask, 'what do you do?' Go directly into your focus."

One you have your focus, turn that into three reasons why they should hire you. According to Fox, three is the magic

number — plays and films are set in three acts with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

"Great show people think in those terms," he says. "So determine what they need to know about you and your focus, but limit yourself to your three best reasons. Less than three and you'll come across as too limited. If you do more than three, the interviewer will start to forget some of your reasons."

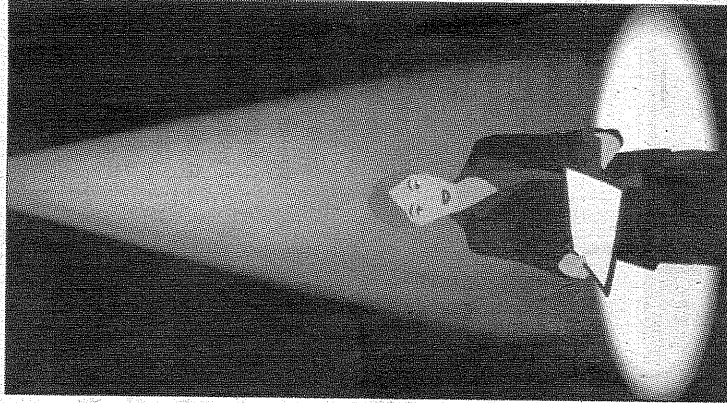
Don't forget the basics

While showmanship is an important element of the job search, in the end it won't matter if you don't come to the interview prepared.

"Showmanship may be the latest buzzword in HR, but it will never win out over someone who's well-prepared," says career adviser Mario Almonte. "Job candidates need to come into the interview armed with the greatest weapon of all: knowledge and enthusiasm."

Almonte adds that the most impressive thing to an HR professional is a candidate that obviously has studied up on the company.

"You should come in loaded with information and ready to get down to business," he says. "If you're not well-prepared, you won't get the job no matter how charming you are."



"People want to know that they are being listened to," he says. "Show you are listening through head nods, direct eye contact and one-shot words like 'yes', 'okay', and 'uh-hum.' And of course, extend a slight smile when listening too."