

Transcription - Interviewing or Being Interviewed

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we're recording in a quiet place. We're in the State Library. Well, it's lovely spot to be but it does mean that we're sitting opposite one another across the table, which we don't normally do. So you'll have to bear with me. If this, when you hear it, sounds like there's lots of cuts in it, it is because I might have to do a lot of editing as it's quite distracting looking at the glass window. You can't hear anything, it's really quiet and they can't hear anything of what we're saying, but you know what Fulyana's like, I've just got to keep her on track.

She said to me, before we started recording, I don't know what I'm going to say today. And I thought, well, when has that ever stopped you? But we might get on to the actual topic today. We're going to talk about interviewing, the interview process and interviews generally. We're going to look at it from both sides of the table so it's probably good that we're sitting this way. We have both had a lot of experience in interviewing people. We have had probably a bit less experience in being interviewed, although we have both been interviewed quite extensively, both for jobs and for other activities. So that might be something interesting that we can talk about as well. Why do we look at a job interview being different to an interview about a project?

You know, if we're talking to the media or we're talking to a client group or another team leader or another organisation, I know from the public speaking side of things, I actually don't look at it as any different. I consider all of those activities to be public speaking activities and you need to prepare for them. But that's a whole other topic that we're going to talk about at some later stage when I'm going to talk about opportunities for public speaking and for presentations and what you need to do and how you need to focus. Today we're going to get back to the topic, eventually, when she stops talking about interviews.

Okay. Well, I think we're going to talk about the job interview situation. There's many, many articles about it by people as well, so I'm not going to go into the general. I'm going to talk about the essence behind the interviewing process. The focus by both the interviewer or the interviewing committee and the interviewee. So if I start off with the people interviewing, they're obviously trying to attract the best into the organisation. I think that's really important, to think about the total hire and not specific, not to talk about, I need this person to believe in this. That in itself is not enough because it can lead to maybe not the right hire. If you're talking about getting someone to do a task, the specific hiring with a specific technical skill or a need for a short period of time, if you're looking for someone to work on projects for the organisation long term or to join the organisation as a potential retention issue where you want to keep that person and make them part of the organisation, then the culture of fit is very, very important.

I think by the time you get to interview, you've gone through a fairly extensive process. That process can be the filter. We saw, in our time, in mainstream recruitment, that there was a move from just the standard, here is a job and you apply for it and you throw in your resume, to jobs where the selection criteria was very clear and you had to address your application and your resume and your experience to the selection criteria in order to help the employing organisation filter out the people that they felt were going to be the best fit for them.

I think when you get to the point of the interview, you don't need to be overwhelmed by how you can impress the interviewing committee or the people interviewing you, with all of the things that you've done. Really, you're at the point where they know all of that or they've taken all of that into consideration. You're at the point where you need to be in the moment and listening to what they're asking you, and not have the rote answers that you think they want to hear. This is the topic that we really need to explore quite extensively because if you start saying the things that you think they need to hear and they're not related to what you do or how you work or how you think, then it's not the right fit. You're not going to be happy. They're not going to be happy. But let's look at it from your point of view first of all, you're not going to be happy. You're looking at seeking a position for a whole range of reasons. Think about that, you really should have a list of the reasons that you're looking at that position and the things that you think it will give you. If that hasn't been clear to you before you get to the interview, then the things that you are asking at the interview to make sure that you are on the right path. Further down the track in this discussion, we'll probably talk about what you do if you feel during the interview that it's not the right place. Do you pursue it and hope that you get it or hope that you don't get it? But we'll talk about that a little bit later.

So let's be at the beginning where we've been through the process. We've been shortlisted. So it's been an extensive, these days are quite extensive pre-interview activities. We've done all of that and we still feel like it seems like it's the right sort of a job. We've been shortlisted for interview. What do we do next?

I want to talk about respect, both parties respect. I often hear other companies or individuals saying, this is a horrible experience. Now, I think we need to show respect both ways. Somebody went to the trouble of applying for a job that you advertised. You're a panel or a member of the panel. Give that person the right and the courtesy to be understood and have questions to ask them. Be on time. Sometimes it can't be helped, but as a committee, you've got to show that this company cares about people. So therefore, be on time. Be presentable. I really doesn't matter what industry you're in. It might be very casual start up with young, dynamic people. It's not as fun, but this is an interview, so make the effort because I'm going to say exactly the same thing to the person applying. Show respect the other way. They took the time to invite you for an interview. Don't be lazy. Be prepared. Understand what that company is. There's plenty of public material these days. There's people who work there, so you can reach out. Find out, turn up on time and be dressed appropriately for an interview. Again, some of you might think, oh, you're going too far and that's all the fashion. I'm not telling you what to wear. I'm just saying, be appropriately presentable and respectful for the environment that you're going, which is a job interview. It's a formal process. It's business is business. You are presenting yourself as someone who's going to be an addition, a positive influence, on this particular organisation. If you're not dressed appropriately to reinforce that message, then the first 90 seconds, regardless of how much we train ourselves, the first 90 seconds is when we judge people. You need to know that that first 90 seconds is going to help what you want to sell of yourself. Or you want to present of yourself.

There's many things that you can bring to the interview with you in your mind and be prepared. The most important one for me is to come saying what is your pitch? Have that or your audio logo. In this case, it's something you're communicating, it is why you, and why you

for this job and why you for this organisation. That's a no-brainer. You have that done in a way that is truly reflective of you and truly communicated, easily understood. So very plain. The other one is come with examples. We've all heard the term, behavioral event of interviews. People want to know a bit. Anybody can ask a question and anybody can answer it. But when they say, "Tell me about a time when?" Don't get flustered because you think, I've been working for so many years and there's about a hundred. Have some in your filing cabinet in your head, where you can say, "All right, this about teamwork?" I have three examples in my head and depending on the interview, think, "Which one I'll drag out?" If it's about leadership, if it's about dealing with conflict, if it's about the unknown as a progress situation, how do you keep calm, how do you come up with solutions? Have examples where you were at meetings when that happened without betraying confidentialities, you can communicate it.

As a panel, you will always want to know, in real life, how to perceive it. That's why you do that when you ask referees later on. You don't just say, "What's he or she like?" You say, "Can you give me an example where he didn't agree with you as the manager and how did he handle it or how did she handle it?" That sort of thing. Being prepared is one of the things that is important with everything at hand, so that you're not sitting there getting flustered. I think you don't have to think, of course, nobody is going to say, you know, immediately, but it's better if you prepare because you feel calmer and you feel that your best example is on hand.

Be positive on both sides of the table. Be positive without being aggressive or assertive but just be positive. If that means, I know that it's a nervous time for most people because they're on show, you need to have a routine that gives you a positive frame of mind. I'm not talking about going in and smiling and cheering, but about having your mind set so that you are in a positive frame of mind, so that you are empowered because if you're not positive, then you are not empowered and you want to present yourself the best way possible.

Another angle is not to bring baggage with you, both ways. So now what that is, we do know that it takes a while to get a job because, depending on the market and the market can be really tough and people, you know, fantastic people are out there competing for the same job. So you, as an applicant, may have had not so good experiences whereby you were not treated with respect, nobody came back to you and you know, you had experiences where they've just gone through the motions or whatever, whatever. Don't bring that to this meeting because this is not where you've been. These are not the same people. Don't put a big label on it saying, 'Corporates don't care'. It will come across. You will be coloured by that. Likewise as a committee, saying, 'There's so many good people out there. We shortlisted out of thousands and we used the agency and everything. What sort of candidate is this? I'm sick of wasting my time looking'. This is not the person you interviewed before. This is a person you haven't met before, most of the time. So don't bring that baggage with you. Treat it open and fair.

You just reminded me that the other part of respect is about after the interview and it's about, from the committee point of view and from the interviewee point of view as well, you both need to thank one another for the opportunity. Committee needs to thank you for the opportunity of talking to you and you need to thank the committee for giving you the time to express your interest in their position. It doesn't need to be a big email. It doesn't need to

be a major event. It just needs to be an acknowledgement that both parties spent time and both parties had an opportunity and they should appreciate that opportunity. Then further down the track when a decision is made and perhaps in that email or that communication, the interviewing committee can give an indication of how long a decision might take. Nobody wants to give bad news. No one wants to say no, we're not going to do this. We're not going to go any further. It wasn't you, whatever else it is. No one wants to give the bad news but you've got to have some sort of template ready so that you don't have to think about it, you just send it out. This is, again, we thank you for your time, on this occasion we have whatever, or that you are unsuccessful. You know, just make it simple and please, please don't put at the end of it, even though you weren't successful this time, can we keep your details on record? From the receiving person's point of view, they don't see it. They don't read it. They don't think it's genuine. So don't ask. If you want to keep their details, there is nothing to stop you within your own regulations to keep that information. It's personal information. You've got to keep it on file for an X amount of years. You can re-contact them at some later date if you need to and say are you interested in this or we thought you might be suitable for this. Certainly say no but don't rub salt into the wound when you're giving bad news by saying, "Oh, but you know, we still want to keep you on board." Because what is the meaning of that?

This is my principle for either side of the table, put yourself in the other shoes. If you put yourself in the other shoes, would you like to get it? Would you really believe that that was going to be the case? And if not, then don't put it in your communication. I also believe that it's your brand's image as an organization. Whatever you do, however you handle it, it is about your brand. So that person may or may not get the job. But if that person goes around thinking about your performance as an organization, rather than just individuals interviewing and how they communicate that, I went for an interview and what? It depends what they say after that, that's key. If you treated someone with disrespect, if you gave them a nonsense reply, you know, a letter to say, "Sorry", and give them the sort of things that Kim was talking about, you can personalize it. I know it's a lot to ask, but it's a good investment. Your reputation, and your image and your company's image, to give them something back about, if possible, about why and what could they do differently or better? It might be about the interview itself, that's only one part of the process we know about. It might be about the skill set, but exactly what? And whatever it is, if you can give them feedback, that's only going to make them better, it's better for them to learn from it. Also for you, because two things, one is that person might be exactly what you need next time, and you want them to be one of the people that apply, two, you might even be in that organisation yourself, and you're someone else. Your life will cross paths again, and you've done the right thing.

We're running a little bit out of time, because we've talked quite extensively. It's probably a topic that we haven't touched on, so we might have to revisit it a few times. But the underlying principle that I talked about where you put yourself both sides of the situation, I want to talk a little bit about the interview process these days that I'm hearing about, in that unusual questions are being asked.

There's questions that are not to do with the job, not to do with work, not to do with your background, your experience, your knowledge, all those sorts of things. Things like, I know that I think I might have mentioned in your previous podcast, that I had someone tell me that

they went to an interview, or a discussion, it was, for a senior position, and they were asked to tell a joke. How relevant is that?

Well, I wonder why, I wonder what the thinking was behind it. Was it to see what they're like, thinking on their feet? Was it to see whether, you know, perhaps in the interviewing panels idea, it was to throw something unusual, something out of left field at them, to see how they reacted. Maybe it was to see whether there was some underlying character that they weren't seeing at the interview, that they perhaps had anything else that they had heard about, whatever else it was, or perhaps it was, and this is what the person's concern was, that perhaps they had gone to their Facebook page, and seeing what they talked about on their Facebook page, and were a bit concerned about whether they were seeing all of the person that was being presented to them. He said that on the spur of the moment, he couldn't think of anything, and that had he been in that position again, he thought it was a good question.

On reflection, he thought it was a good question, because it put him on the spot, it made him think, it made him wonder all of these things, and to a point, be concerned about the image that he was presenting that people could access without talking to him, which was the social media sort of things. So he tidied that up, it was a good thing that had happened, but he felt that it was probably something that he would use in interviews, because of all the reactions that he had, but he couldn't think of a joke, and so he said to them, he said, "That's a very unusual question, and I am lost for words, and I'm not usually one who is lost for words, but I am lost for words on this occasion, because I can't really think of a joke, that I could relate to you, that I would be able to do justice." And so in his answer, and in thinking on his feet, and in saying that sort of thing, it was all about he was saying, no, he couldn't, he wasn't just going to think of something, so that told them something about his thought process, he told them why, he related it to him, he didn't try and bring it down to a level of, you know, you probably wouldn't like my joke, he didn't make it too close, he still maintained a distance, and so I felt that that was probably a very good way of resolving it, and in fact he did get offered the job. He didn't take it, but he did get offered the job, and I thought that also was a very good resolution that he had. He didn't feel like that was one thing he had fallen down in the interview process.

The only thing I would add to that is that if I was on the panel, and because of all those, why did they ask that question, and there's so many, I would have no problem if they asked me about a joke, and I don't know how I would handle it. That would be joking, but I might handle it the same as this other person, but what I would have really liked is at the end of that is for them to say no, we asked this question because that will give me learning as well. Again, if you're on interviewing panels, make sure that you discuss with the rest of the panel what questions you're going to ask. I know that when I was very involved in the interview process, we used to have set questions that we asked everybody, and no one could stray from those, you couldn't try and find out a little bit more information if the answer wasn't what you wanted. It was just, these are the questions we ask so that we ask the same. Sometimes everybody on the panels were each given one of the selection criteria and they could ask their own question and they could be different each time. So you need, as an interviewing panel, to talk about how the interview is going to run, who's going to ask which questions and how you're going to handle dissent amongst the committee when you're not comfortable with the way the interview is going.

One of the things that we did touch on briefly at the beginning was about what to do when you feel either as the committee or as the interviewee, that it's not going well, that you're not the right fit. Do you cut it short, do you say, "Oh, this is just not working for either of us, we better just not waste any more time, what do we do now?" That's one approach, but the other approach is throughout that, if I'm the person being interviewed and I realise that it must be something drastic because I would have done my homework, if that happens, I will not terminate the interview, I will not lose interest, I'll continue to be engaged and do what I can, only because it's my reputation, it's my presentation, it's my opportunity to meet these three people or four, whatever it is. And for me to leave it, it's later on whether they offer or before they offer, I'll think about how I can and not waste time. So, look, let me clarify something because if this is my understanding and based on that, I don't think I want to go ahead and that's fine, but for the interview itself, I will not and I will stay engaged. And that's important because otherwise they read things in, not knowing that it's not for me.

Yes. As a panel, again, if you thought the person is not the right person, again to be consistent if you depend on your process, it will be consistent, let the person have the full opportunity to clarify their own interest. You just said that you worked, you did an identical job for like this and you gave us three reasons why you hated it. Could you please again tell us why you applied for this one? If it's something like that, clarify and then based on this, we might have to leave it there and you can do that.

I think we might call a halt to this particular discussion. Obviously, it's one that we will talk about again because we've talked for quite some considerable time, but for now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.