

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

THE STORY OF TWO INTERVIEWS

Imagine there are two candidates, let us call them Anthony and Mark. Imagine they have been both called for an interview. This, I have seen happen..... Mark arrives 15 minutes late, 'blaming the jam', Anthony is 15 minutes early, so has time to compose himself. Mark is wearing a brown suit and unironed pink shirt, he has obviously dressed in a rush because his socks don't match and his shoes are unpolished. Anthony has taken the time to choose his clothes carefully, and freshen up, wearing his special interview suit and tie, and those shoes would make kiwi burst with pride. Mark has his papers jammed into a used brown envelope or 2002 desk diary, whilst Anthony has a neat black paper folder.

When called into the interview room, Anthony remembers to smile and offer each interviewer a firm handshake whilst looking confidently into each person's eyes saying 'pleasure to meet you'. Mark shuffles into the room to grudgingly offer a limp sweaty palm whilst staring at the floor and mumbling about the jam. Anthony sits down confidently, whilst still smiling, and attentively forward in his chair without overconfidently draping himself over the back of the chair as if watching TV. Mark, however, decides to cross his arms across his chest, bend double into a foetal position and looks as if he'll burst into tears if you ask him a question.

The questioning begins. When asked what do you know about our organisation, Mark answers "I never heard of you guys until I saw your advert, but I decided to apply because my uncle says you pay very well. On the other hand, Anthony can tell you about the organisations' background and products all the while sounding very enthusiastic about joining. When asked why they consider themselves relevant to the position, Mark harps on about the certificates he has taken, whilst totally forgetting to mention his personal attributes and ability to perform. Anthony answers are all results focussed and he can give concrete examples. On the question of how would you describe yourself, Mark can only think to say "hard-working" (which is what all other 20 candidates so far have said), whilst Anthony has some serious thought into this God send of a question, but sticks to the 30 second rule rather than waffling on for 30 minutes in answer to each question. Anthony answers are structured and to the point, referring back to the question. He makes lots of eye contact with everyone. Mark tends to hunch down, even covering his mouth with his hands, whilst not speaking clearly enough and is still refusing to make eye contact. When asked about their weaknesses, Mark claims that his only weakness is that he is a 'perfectionist', but when asked to elaborate he can't even define the word. Anthony can openly and honestly say that his long term planning for instance, is something he has realised he needs to work on, and can give you examples on how he plans to do that. That said, he just gives one that needs improving, without horrifying the panel by giving them a list of his weaknesses'. A tough question next – what salary are you expecting? This seems to be the only question Mark has given thought to, as he stops waffling for a second and says 'I want a 100% increment on my present package, full family medical, education for my 5 children, a fully maintained car, 15% non-contributory pension, entertainment and mobile allowance." This stuns the panel into silence. When asked the same question, Anthony replies "I'll be honest with you, I'm looking for a change, a challenge, and if pushed, all I can say is I'll consider something between X and Y figure".

The interview ends by them asking the candidates if they have any questions. Mark says no at first, and then "err – I was wondering how many days leave a year I'd be entitled to" whilst Anthony has some insightful questions on career progression, major targets his performance will be assessed on, and such like. The interview suddenly turns into a simulating two way discussion, with Anthony focussed on how they plan to work together in the future.

So, dear reader, who do you think gets the job?

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