

Interview vs in the view

Today lets rhyme `in the view of the interview`. (Deliberate tongue twist)

Human Resource in Kenya is yet to evolve to match other countries. Lets take recruitment as an example. From what i observe interviews in organizations have become so cliché that before an interview we can actually predict what questions are going to be asked. In turn the interviewee can practice on how to answer the questions in advance. By default people already have leakage before they even attend the interview. And in essence, organizations are inadvertently hiring the best actor or the most confident person among. Question arises is he/she the best among? Is it a no brainer that extroverts are advantaged naturally? Or are we turning even the organisations of choice into '*empty debes*'?

I have witnessed interviews which the interviewee is clearly averting the question asked but is SO CONFIDENT in his wrong answer that the interviewer is left doubting whether that was the question asked or what he thought he knew he didn't.

Well perhaps for a sales job, sly outsmarts shy. But for certain positions, is it wise to stomach the lying piece of sh... eer confidence?

And as interviewers are we asking questions just to show how smart we are so that this character does not think he is wiser than you and take over your job? Primal instinct seems to extend to organizations now and the interviewer will often search for the hardest questions he can find on a certain topic (which before he was oblivious that such a topic exists) just so that the interviewee, sweaty, embarrassed and apparently not a good orator, gets it wrong.

Eloquent vis-a-vis erudite, are managers confused as to who they want to employ?

If I was to task you write now to tell me the questions that they will ask at any interview, we would probably harmonize in thought.

- Tell us about yourself
- Why would you want to work for us
- What changes do you want to bring into the organization

With instinct, anticipation and wit on high gear, the magsmen already have a rejoinder to every question hurled at him/her.

Any new phenomenon, as often the case with organizational change, for example regarding recruitment and placement, the alien ideology of the wild card interviews, attracts no following. The dogma concerning interviews is beyond comfort for both the interviewer and the interviewee.

Is it not high time that organizations devise new ways of conducting interviews? As consultant, I once chose to deviate from tradition and advised the CEO of a certain corporation to dress up as a watch man and let the interview start from the gate. This was for the management to know what personality they are hiring. It is no lie that in Kenya we tend to stiff our bodies and clasp our behinds maybe to ensure that Authority does not smell any flatulence, I really don't understand the habit. Coin flip, and

as group dynamics would have it, we tend to be free when we are around colleagues and/or subordinates.

Not to digress too much, I ruminate and admire the Muslim teachings when the faithful stand in prayer. At the mosque, a king or president is not considered more moomin than the beggar outside the mosque. If the beggar comes early and fills the line behind the imam, the late arrival of the Caliph will comfortably place him on the empty line behind the pauper with no reservations as to the matter.

Interlude over, let's go back to the interview, so the CEO reluctantly agreed to dress as the guard at the gate. A strategy was devised. Each candidate was to be frustrated one way or another and see how they would react.

The big day finally arrived, the CEO was to act his role, another interviewer was supposed to play the role of an interviewee at the waiting room. Long story short, everyone had a role to play including me being tasked with the role of playing security guard in the control room. My conscience had never been that confused before. There I was an HR professional, acting the role of security but yet feeling like a mad scientist watching reactions behind a lens. Well, at least after it was all over I could add acting skills to my curriculum vitae. Anyway forget about it. Let's go back to the raised curtains.

Before the interview, I humbly asked the CEO to choose who he thinks is the best candidate just by looking at the CV. After scrutinizing a few he picks one.

Alhamdulillah the sun rises on the day of the interview. In comes the first interviewee, (coincidentally the same candidate the CEO had gambled would emerge top). A young, well dressed lad in a crisp suit. *Prima facie* this chap was it! He could easily be mistaken for the CEO himself. Possibly threatened, the CEO leisurely approached the man, feebly having watched a certain TV show character who played the same role. Although the CEO could never fill those particular shoes, the late Charles Bukeko definitely mentored many Kenyans. May his soul rest in peace.

"Hakuna harusi hapa. Suti imepigwa pasi mpaka inakaa mbao." tormented the CEO. Unimpressed by the comment, the interviewee lashed back on how the `guard` could not afford such attire plus a few other profanity that I cannot echo.

The CEO dumbfounded and clearly stricken by `Mr. Pottymouth` who although had an impeccable CV on the CEO's table, had threatened to show him where he will shove his shoe (not before announcing the price tag)

One after the other the candidates arrived and were not let past the main gate or near the compound until at least five minutes prior to their scheduled time. I need not say that the distance from the main gate to the interview room was at least 15 minutes apart. By design all the candidates were to arrive late and hurriedly whisked into the interview room where they found the interview panel who were coached to show no discernible facial expression apart from the discontent that the candidate had arrived late. For those that were unable to contort such a facial expression, from my monitor, undeterred, I could see them gnaw a slice of lime first.

Well in this particular instance I will be true to my roots. Typically, one never gets to find out how they did or who finally got the post. It is only in a company called Malam Limited where I am sure one gets communicated to within stipulated timelines.

Question arises as to how effective are interviews today? Are we rest assured on hiring the best among the rest? Let's put it to the test.

In typical Kenyan scenario, end on end, both seat, interviewer and interviewee at loggerheads, but surprisingly on different ends. The interviewee desperate and determined to get the job and the interviewer determined to prove that he is the best at his job.

The interviewer flaring hard questions to make sure the hot seat is properly (aerated) to keep it hot. The interviewee cooling the interviewer's ego using a cool sheen of sweat.

Hark back to the perspiration adolescent boys' break in a schmoose with the girl of his dreams. Statistically most youngsters have to fib to get the girl. The truth of the untruth spoken to appear true. If you think looks can deceive, then you should listen to the normalcy of deception. Impression matters a lot in the animal kingdom especially in while courting. As hominids, only humans seem to feel the need to use speech as an illusory to the perfect illusion of self. The need for the gorilla to chest thump when faced with an adversary (or a female), the need for the bird to perform an impressive dance to sway the female, only some the examples that are considered natural. In comparison, we are all animals yet those who we consider 'animals' although voiceless, more unpretentious than us.

The unspoken function of the voice is to convince. Why not to impact?

If we focus temporarily on the Muazin who calls the Muslims to prayer. Is he using his voice to convince the pious? Calming to most then again it's more to *remind* not really *convince* the virtuous.

So what exactly should we focus on during an interview? Have we lost focus using the outmoded way of firing questions and listening during interviews? Perhaps. Or perhaps we should just.... **FOCUS**.

So let us not turn a blind eye to the tell-tale signs for there is no second chance to a first impression.

As an HR practitioner myself, I would strongly advocate for HR specialists to train in Kinesics. We forget that we are also animals and the body as a whole communicates much more than the voice. After all, the law of nature is sometimes stronger than the law of the land. Defamation can be manifestation when lying to/ about oneself. Not touching on perjury in this instance. But as long as we are touching on one's right to a fair trial, we may note that the police interview may sometimes infringe on this right. The standard way of the police interview is quite similar. Questions are asked and the answers given. As an illustration, considering two suspects who have been interviewed, the one whose only crime being that he could not express himself well when questioned will probably end up in remand or jail. The one who although may be guilty but has mastered the art of expressing himself will probably be let scot free to further practice in an organization's interview which will probably hire him/her.

In an interview, it's all about selling the thorns on the stem and convincing the "panel" that the fragrance of the flower is worth the investment. Often when we try and sell ourselves we use elements of persona and drown the shadow which inevitably surfaces with time.

It is important to plan for the interview both for the interviewer and the interviewee. For example one needs to plan on the type of interview. A choice of one on one or panel perhaps. A panel interview preferred by most but one should also consider that for the panel, if it is to be fair, it should be like closing their eyes, told to touch an elephant and describe it. Each should have a different explanation

according to where they touched. A panel that comes into the interview room with an already pre conceived or pre discussed notion negates the fairness parameter.

Interviewers! For the interviewee the interview is mostly taken like a chance to advertise oneself and most don't declare truth for their goal is to get the job. According to them, the ends justifies the means

Interviewers! If you rely on questions only, then more often than not we end up hiring a plethora of extroverts. I believe that a somewhat balance of both introverts and extroverts is necessary towards the pursuit of the organization's goal. Extroverts are hired to maintain the corporate image whereas introverts, are hired to propel the corporate image. Introverts, esoteric, behind the scene get things done. Extroverts, vanguard, are the ones who show how things are done. Such rapport necessary and evident in every successful organization.

Interviewees! *Mumefikiwa!* The way you express will ultimately impress. Be careful what is not verbalized can communicate more than what is. The CV for example says more than you think to the professional HR. Under Hobbies and Interests for example, some people just write to suit the job but honesty is key.

If you enjoy reading you are probably an introvert. So the need to tie your goals and accomplishments in your cv body is significant. For a professional eye one can easily know if you lied or not in your CV. A champion of the debate club whose hobbies hint more on timid and reserved as opposed to more pronounced activities and interests ... eyebrows may be raised for the keen eye.

Perhaps you should try a different approach when recruiting and be at rest that you are going to hire the best from the test. After all, why should your organization be grouped with the rest? Stand out, stand tall. That is all.