

What Turns Job Interviewers On—or Off?

A recent nation-wide survey of leading personnel executives should interest anyone about to interview for a job. The study, designed to reveal factors which can determine whether an interview will be successful, was conceived by Robert Half, Inc., the world's largest financial executive, accounting and data processing recruiters. Burke Marketing Research, inc., an international research firm, conducted the study for the Half organization.

Of the 100 personnel directors and managers surveyed, half worked for Fortune 500 companies, and half were selected from the "Who's Who in the American Society for Personnel Administration" directory. The study revealed the following points:

- *Interviewers attach great importance to good grooming and appropriate dress.* It is clear that no matter how qualified you may be, you do yourself a great disservice by not giving adequate attention to your personal appearance; your clothes should show a businesslike demeanor.

- *Interviewers like candidates who are enthusiastic and responsive.* Let the interviewer know that you are genuinely interested in the job. If you are non-attentive, withdrawn or passive during the interview, the assumption may be that your on-the-job performance will reflect the same negative qualities.

- *Ask questions about the job.* If you don't show serious interest in the position's duties and responsibilities, the interviewer will probably not consider you a serious candidate.

- *Don't ask direct questions about salary or fringe benefits at the beginning of the interview.* If you do, you prove you're more interested in what the company can do for you than what you can do for the company.

- *Even if you need the job desperately, don't convey it.* An overwhelming number of personnel experts feel that candidates who call attention to their dire straits are less likely to be hired. A sound hiring

decision should be based on ability, experience and attitude.

- *Don't exaggerate your skills or accomplishments.* Most interviewers believe stretching the truth is detectable—it deals a severe blow to the candidate's chances of employment.

- *Interviewers are more favorably impressed by candidates who look them in the eye.* People who avoid eye contact either have something to hide—or lack conviction and self-confidence.

- *Interviewers prefer the candidate to know about the company.* Do some homework prior to an interview. You can't be too convincing when you claim you really want to work for a particular company, when it's obvious you don't know anything about them.

- *Candidates who appear to be overconfident are much more likely to favorably impress interviewers than those who act shy.* There is a vast difference between being self-assured and coming across as arrogant, boastful or smug.

The recruiting firm noted that, while heeding the findings of the survey would not guarantee a position, candidates who keep them in mind during an interview will significantly increase their chances of landing a job.

For additional information, contact Robert Half, Inc., 522 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10155.

"For Adults Only"

Chip Bell, Fred Margolis and Larry Nolan Davis have formed Andragogy* Press, a publishing company created exclusively to develop and market short, packaged training programs designed to address key interpersonal skills needed by employees, supervisors and managers in today's organizations. As Davis, the firm's managing director, said, "Ours is an uncanned approach to packaged training."

The programs are conveniently short—approximately three to three and one-half hours—and are designed

for 12 to 20 participants, which is optimum size for this type of learning situation. Because the programs are modular in design, they can stand alone in meeting a specific training need or may be used in combination with other Andragogy Press programs. They may also be used with already-existing programs to form comprehensive supervisory and management development programs.

This modular approach allows an organization to buy the most relevant programs when they need them, rather than purchasing expensive management or supervisory courses which may contain unusable segments.

*An-dra-go-gy (an dr go je) n. The art and science of helping adults learn, frequently associated with the works of Malcolm Knowles.

The Andragogy Press approach to published training is new. First, it is andragogical, which means it honors and builds on the participants' experience. It allows participants to adapt key concepts to their unique situation and the realities of the organization rather than attempting to indoctrinate or sell participants on a set of rigid rules or practices. This is particularly important in today's complex organizations where choice and judgment are crucial and where ardently applied procedures will no longer do the job.

Second, where some packaged training programs end with the session, Andragogy Press programs include structured, on-the-job application and follow-up activities and guidelines. These form an essential part of the learning process and are fundamental to the goal of performance improvement.

Andragogy Press programs are complete. They include step-by-step trainer instructions with study text for lectures and plenty of other background information and materials when greater depth is needed. Transparencies are also provided for visual assistance.

In a short audio cassette tape, program authors provide additional coaching to assist the trainer in con-

ducting the session. Participant notebooks (16 copies are included with each program) contain structured activities and space for notetaking, as well as concise summaries of key concepts in a format convenient for review.

The first three programs are:

• **MATCHMAKING: A Program for Improving Selection Interviewing** by Chip R. Bell and Fredrick H. Margolis. Perhaps the single action which will most improve productivity is making the appropriate match between jobs and people. *Matching* is a training program for improving the decisions made in the employment selection process, making those vital matching decisions in organizations. This program is designed to help supervisors and managers make sharper, more accurate employment decisions, and helps them to interview applicants more strategically.

• **STRAIGHT TALK: A Program for Improving Communication** by Larry Nolan Davis. Effective communication is crucial in modern organizations, particularly as we seek to improve productivity. Acknowledging the abundance of communications training which emphasizes technique improvement, this new program emphasizes improving the communication strategy. Its purpose is to help participants successfully meet their needs in written and spoken communications.

• **FEEDBACK: Making Your Comments Count** by Fredric H. Margolis and Chip R. Bell. Accurate information about job-related performance is central to employee development and improved organizational performance. To be successful or progressive, information provided as feedback must be heard, accepted and used. While many training programs have addressed such procedural issues as the most effective feedback style, setting, mannerisms and the like, Andragogy Press sees the need for its feedback program to help develop the advance-work upon which successful feedback depends—the concepts, strategy and skills. Participants in the *Feedback* program learn to plan a standards-based performance strategy and effective feedback statements as a basis for performance improvement.

For more information on these new programs, write Andragogy Press, Dept. M.P.O. Box 5690, Austin, Tx. 78763; or call toll-free, 800-531-5255 ext. 809.

Advice to Women on the Move to Management

As today's working women seek to move from typewriters, telephones and filing cabinets into management, it takes more than a tweed blazer, a Gucci briefcase and a manicure to win the position—and it takes a good deal more than simply being excellent in the work. According to William T. Mangum, president, Thomas-Mangum Co., a West Coast executive search firm, "To qualify for management, a woman needs to show more evidence of capabilities than a man, although she does not actually need to be better for the job." This "evidence" shows in what Mangum calls a *leadership* presence.

A woman must be aware of her total impact. Dressing for a management role is a must. In addition, she must be aware of her total communications pattern.

Communications skills must be developed beyond simply speaking and writing well. It means cultivating a communications process that succeeds. It means being aware of speech patterns, choosing words carefully, knowing when to talk and knowing that well-timed silence can be eloquent. It is knowing when to disagree with your boss—during the meeting, in front of others, or later. It may mean coming into work early, but not staying too late so that a sense of organized application is communicated. It means knowing that communication is going on all of the time in hundreds of ways. Speaking and writing well are just two of them.

Women need a fundamental "tough-mindedness" or a company-first, business-first attitude. This means developing a concern for, and an understanding of, the larger picture and seeing oneself as an important part of it.

A sense of priorities is vital. This means more than knowing what to do and acting on it. An aspiring woman candidate for management must assure her boss that she is working on projects of top priority. Other priorities, no matter how well-conceived, are ill-fated.

In looking toward management, women must exert a willingness to work that "extra mile." A woman

must "own" her job, do some extras and present herself as a valuable company member.

In addition to developing the qualities that signal leadership capabilities, a woman aspiring for management must look for a job that will offer her a "track of opportunity." She should shop for her job and should select the work environment carefully. Before taking a job, she should look to see if there are women in key positions. If not, then the promotion opportunities for her will be slim. The lack of women in these slots can point to company policy, unwritten and unspoken, but can reflect the attitudes of top management. Unless a woman sees herself as a missionary for the cause, there may be little sense in spending her time trying to knock down obstacles when companies with women in key positions will give her a chance.

She should select an industry that offers opportunity. Data processing is wide open with a real shortage of talent. Public relations, advertising and personnel also offer opportunity. Though law, accounting and auditing are traditionally men's areas, they are attracting women in large numbers because they offer clearly delineated skills to be learned. Once she learns a skill a woman can exercise it to the best of her ability to gain recognition.

Women can liberate themselves from the front desks, but to climb the ladder they must place themselves in a position where recognition is possible and must define themselves as leadership material. This learning process must be continually nurtured and refined.

Demand For Technical Training Increases

Demand for technical training of workers to design, build, sell and service high-technology equipment is booming, reports the Heathkit/Zenith Educational Systems Divisions of the Heath Company. Heathkit/Zenith, a leader in technical skills training, estimates the market at \$1 billion.

"Technology is the key to improving productivity and product quality

for many companies," says Douglas Bonham, director, Educational Products, Heathkit/Zenith. "The importance of technical skills training is growing as new technologies are introduced and spread throughout industry. Now and for the foreseeable future, technical skills training is one of the fastest growing and most critical areas in American business."

Bonham identifies four key trends in industrial training:

- Self-study courses are a cost-effective alternative to traditional training methods. Paying the travel expenses of workers separated by distance, and the related costs of holding workshops and seminars, make such meetings prohibitive.

- Students would rather have practical, hands-on training than listen to lectures. Self-study programs are also effective learning techniques for adults motivated to continue their education for job-related reasons.

- Subject matter is shifting from basic mechanical and electrical engineering disciplines to high-technology subjects, such as microprocessors, advanced electronics and computers.

- There is a growing demand for customized training programs to meet specific needs. These types of programs replace the general theory training of some years ago. This means more corporate training takes place in-house with internally designed programs or highly specific courses designed by companies such as Heathkit/Zenith.

Managers Should Adapt Skills, Practice Individual Approach

Training programs designed to teach managers "one best way" to work with people are doomed to fail because they ignore an organization's individual norms and values. That's the conclusion of a University of Utah study by Miriam Y. Lacey, who recently received a doctorate in educational administration.

By querying managers in five different fields, Lacey found that what is considered effective management behavior differs from organization to organization and doesn't necessarily conform to the ideals proposed by behavior theorists.

"Most theorists agree that a per-

son's ability to work effectively with others largely determines career success and affects an organization's effectiveness," Lacey notes. "The ability, called 'Interpersonal Competence' or IC, is particularly important in white collar and managerial positions where most work hours are spent working with others."

Lacey therefore asked school principals, mental health directors, bankers, federal government administrators and nursing directors to rank in order of importance the following behavioral skills needed for success in their fields: managing conflict; listening to others; receiving feedback; giving feedback; showing consideration; expressing warmth and concern; expressing self; sharing feelings and assertiveness. Lacey found that each field had its own definition of IC and that it differed from field to field.

Her study also found the same behavior means different things in different fields and that the same behaviors can be valued by different fields for different reasons.

Principals, for instance, ranked conflict management highest because they usually viewed themselves in conflict with students, parents, teachers, staff and combinations of those groups. Federal government administrators also listed this ability as most important, but for other reasons. Nursing and mental health directors and bankers all cited listening to others as the most important success factor in their fields, but their reasons were extremely diverse.

While IC theorists have insisted that sharing relevant feelings is important for managers, managers in Lacey's study consistently ranked it as least important and even inappropriate. Lacey concludes that ideal IC models, pushed by theorists and used in training programs, have little practical value in the real world of work because the needs and values of organizations are so diverse.

"Training programs that have been viewed as a solution to management ills simply don't work with every company," she says.

If programs to improve IC are to be lasting and effective, says Lacey, they must look at what the company regards as ideal IC. Otherwise, she says, an organization isn't likely to

support behavior changes advocated by training programs and may even punish those who try to change their behavior.

GM Now Offering Translated Training

General Motors now offers foreign language translations of selected training programs. This move to expand the line is prompted by a continuing demand not only in the United States and Canada, but worldwide.

"Financially Speaking," "Housekeeping Management" and "Safety Matters Series" are available in Spanish, while "Participative Problem Solving Skills" is offered in both French and Flemish.

The Corporation will also negotiate with organizations interested in translating other programs in a cooperative arrangement.

In addition to these translations, GM's management and organization development department provides a wide variety of training materials in management, technical and other specialized areas. In instructional technology and delivery systems, media include color videotapes, audiotapes, films, narrated color filmstrips, liberally illustrated workbooks and manuals, reminder devices, etc. All offerings, where applicable, make extensive use of such proven training techniques as role playing, in-basket exercises, simulations, quizzes and related interactive devices. Many are available in self-instruction format, and step-by-step leaders guides are provided where appropriate. Items range from off-the-shelf, self-contained, inexpensive, soft-cover workbooks to extensive, multi-media, video-based programs.

General Motors operations worldwide successfully use these offerings in a variety of applications. General Motors began releasing selected programs for the world market in 1975, and additions will implement the theme, "Sharing Ideas With Business, Industry and Government."

For further information, contact Anthony Sakey, director, management and organization development department, General Motors Corp., 1700 W. Third Ave., Flint, MI 48502. Telephone 313/762/9867, toll-free: 800-521-5850; Michigan only: 800-482-6976.