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Authentic Interviewing: Sample scenario #2

This is an interview for a marketing position at a community nonprofit organization.

INTERVIEWER

Tell me about yourself.

INTERVIEWEE

- Open energy

(Sitting upright, feet flat on the floor, leaning slightly forward. Speaking in a confident, pleasant tone.)

- Gratitude

Thank you for having me today. My career so far has been in PR and marketing for various investment and consulting agencies. At Acme Public Relations, a highlight for me was working with clients who were at a turning point, such as Standing Forward. They are a consulting firm that partners with creative people and organizations; I helped them to create and communicate that vision on multiple platforms. They saw a 50% increase in revenue the next year.

- Evidence

- Intentionality

I would like to expand on experiences such as what I've described with Standing Forward, and continue to grow in the nonprofit arena. It's important to me to support a mission like the one in place here. (Smiles brightly.) Family is also very important to me, and joining the community here would bring my household a sense of belonging and purpose. I intend to bring a similar joyful attitude and adventurous spirit to the marketing department, if selected to join your team.

- Personable

- Service mindset

INTERVIEWER

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

INTERVIEWEE

- Learning orientation

- Compassion, empathy
- Sourcing from within, free of fear

- Perception checking

- Responsive, discerning

- Gratitude

That's a question I've been asked before, and it gives me a chance to appreciate that some of the strengths I rely on now were once struggles for me.

For instance, early in my time at Acme, I noticed that some of my client contacts seemed to prefer to deal with my colleagues rather than with me, when talking on the phone or in person. This was puzzling to me, since I was able to conduct business over e-mail quite successfully.

I asked a few colleagues, including my manager as well as two clients, if I what I was perceiving was accurate. They shared that I sometimes spoke too quickly, which may have been difficult for our international clientele to interact with. Once I learned to be more deliberate and clear in my speech, while retaining my high-energy personality, I became the "go to" person. Now I enjoy using communication skills to develop ideas and strategies with clients and with co-workers.

INTERVIEWER

Where do you want to be five years from now?

INTERVIEWEE

- Honest, genuine

- Learning orientation

- Intentional, accountable, connected, open, optimistic

I can't claim to be able to predict the future, though I'll share some intentions I've been working with.

For example, I would like to be supporting the mission of this organization in new ways in the coming years. It seems like the marketing campaigns that are already in place would be a terrific training ground for me to learn as much as possible about the specific programs in place right now. I can see myself taking on progressively more significant roles, as new responsibilities and projects become part of my portfolio. More importantly, I see myself becoming integrated as both a professional and as a member of the community. In effect, I'm more interested in "moving in" than in "moving up." This is the essence of why I am looking to pivot from the private to the nonprofit sector. I'll continue to bring my creativity to business and marketing projects, and will seek out ways to improve in all these areas as part of the terrific team that is here.

INTERVIEWER

Please give me an example of a time when you had a problem with a co-worker, and how you approached the problem.

INTERVIEWEE

- Staying in own “business”

When a new colleague joined our office as receptionist, at first I had a hard time communicating and collaborating with him. It seemed to me that his ideas for changing our office messaging and supply procedures were inefficient, and I noticed that others also mentioned having trouble with the changes he suggested.

- Perception checking, learning orientation

I had invited the new receptionist out to lunch during his first week of work, which helped us in establishing a collegial relationship, independent of what was going on in the office. So, when I brought these concerns to his attention, we were able to have a productive discussion. I realized that his ideas were indeed more efficient, once I got his perspective. With our manager, we partnered to communicate the positive effects of the procedural changes more clearly, and they were implemented successfully.

INTERVIEWER

Why are you leaving your current job?

INTERVIEWEE

If I’m not invited to join your team, I would be fine with continuing in my current position, because I’m able to learn in almost any situation and context.

As I’ve shared, I feel connected to the mission of this organization, too, and see many ways I could both learn from, and be of service to, the marketing department. I am fortunate to be in such a win/win situation.

Questions excerpted from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/01/11/how-to-ace-the-50-most-common-interview-questions/>