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Zahid was happy that he could overcome his dilemma over applying for the position that the Job advert portrayed so attractively. The next few days completely engulfed him, giving him little time to think about his application or what was next. The nudging feeling never left him, so he was not fully convinced whether it had been the right way of looking for a career change in an MNC when he was still holding an important position in the government office. He could not share his thoughts with any of his colleagues but only with his wife.

As there was no point of return now, he wanted to concentrate on what was known as 'preparation' and he strongly felt that was logical to start with. However, he was not very sure where to begin; he had some sketchy ideas about the selection process of MNCs based on what he heard from others. He knew one definite point though - the process would be quite different than the government selection. He was very familiar with government recruitment, as he often sat as the member of the selection committee for his directorate. So many a time he was one of the interviewers and what he learnt from those experiences was that basically it landed into the 'game of wits' between the interviewer and the interviewee - how much the candidates knew about the world affairs, history, geography - name any faculty. It was as though a one-sided competition where the interviewee gets surrounded by a host of interviewers with the barrage of questions from all directions. The questions were always like: tell us the name of the capital of ..., in which year the ... revolution was fought, tell us the name of the first president of ... and so on and so forth. At times he wondered what actually they wanted to judge in the candidate. What competencies the selectors looked for, what behavioral part the interviewer wanted to know of the candidate, what evidences they searched for - those were never clear to Zahid, excepting a single track but tedious effort to know how much 'knowledgeable' the candidate was on different subjects, no matter whether these were relevant to the jobs the candidate was going to perform, if selected.

Zahid thought about the preparation again but the possibility of facing the similar kind of interview gave him an uncanny feeling. But then he thought that the nature of the selection process would be different and tried to visualize the contemporary practices. Now so many years after that interview he still could recall vividly the interview that changed his perception and his career as well. He remembered how the selectors had made him feel at home after arriving at the interview place; he was stiff when he entered the room no doubt and the interviewers could see that in his face. "I was not nervous at all but it was also true that I was not in myself" - he cited the example in one of his sessions later on. The first encounter is always very important for an interviewer for breaking the ice unless the interviewer has some other strategy. Getting an interviewee in his or her own shape has an advantage of setting the right platform. After all, it is a forum where the interviewer should extract as much information as possible from the interviewee. The forum should be a neutral one so that the interviewee does not over-play or under-perform. Both the situations are dangerous as the evidences get distorted leading the

interpretation to a different direction resulting in wrong hiring judgment.

"Mr. Zahid, how did you reach here ... was it difficult to find the place ... what was the traffic situation like?" He could feel that the questions helped him to regain his natural self with the stiffness fast fading away. Of course, the ambience of the room along with the sitting arrangement, which was different with informal setting also, had something to contribute towards that.

Knowing about motivation behind applying for the job

Now Zahid knows for sure that it is often a lot easier to teach employees new skills than to improve their motivation. This is why it is always important to hire well-motivated persons to start with. Generally, the tendency during interviews is to focus more on measuring skills and accomplishments - may be because it is difficult to measure a candidate's motivation. A classic way to get the candidate to reveal his or her degree of motivation is to ask open-ended questions.

"Mr. Zahid, please tell us something about yourself." At that moment he thought: didn't they go through his CV! He was a little bit surprised but took the question as an opportunity to highlight the portion he thought would impress them more. Later Zahid found that the interviewers were actually looking for him to go beyond the résumé and share something from his background that would give them an indication of whether he had the ability to handle the job, how organized his thought process was, what he valued about himself - just something that would give them a sign that he was focused and could articulate his strengths in a concise manner. "Mr. Zahid, tell us why do you want to work here?" He knows now the interviewers were trying to determine why he wanted that job and what was driving him to that MNC; they wanted to see the consistency in his answers. "What specific things that you want out of your next job" - they wanted him to convince them that he was seeking the responsibilities and challenges that the job would offer. They wanted to hear specific examples from the past positions that were unfulfilling and, duties and tasks that were missing from a prior position. They wanted to probe further why he believed their position would satisfy his career aspirations at that time? They also wanted to know his salary expectations; Zahid now knew they wanted to evaluate his range before they brought him to the next round of interview and whether the expectation was realistic (sense of judgment). Interviewers kept on asking different types of questions like what new skills or ideas he would bring to the job, what he would like to accomplish that he was not able to accomplish in his past job, what he learned about that MNC from employees, customers or others, why he was ready to leave his current job, what interested him the most about the job, how his career motivations had changed over the past few years - all these were directed towards revealing the degree of motivation for that job.

About professionalism and diligence

"Mr. Zahid, tell us about your most difficult work or personal experience." While reminiscing Zahid found out that the interviewers tried to fathom how he handles frustrations, whether he could acknowledge failures and talk frankly about them and the methods he used to deal with them, they wanted him to demonstrate that he was able to learn from experience and grow as a person and as a professional, and what lessons he learnt as a result of that experience. They further asked questions including examples of how he completed a project despite obstacles, how he tackled a tough unpopular assignment, how the current line manager would describe him as the type of person going an extra mile, about a time he did not perform to expectations, how he tackled criticism, whether he was a task-oriented or a concept-oriented person, what would his colleague tell them about his attention to details, how he managed stress and deadlines, what professional skills he developed on his most recent job etc.

Zahid later understood the significant difference between candidates may not be evident until the incumbent was already on the job and confronted with a major challenge or obstacle. But putting the candidate through the above questions the interviewers could judge by hearing the responses experienced during most difficult times. But this could be a different issue from judging how well they would handle their work when everything was going smoothly.

About job-fit

"Mr. Zahid, what were the most rewarding aspects of your current or previous job?" By this, the interviewers were trying to focus on his job history and find out what he considered the most appealing aspect of his last position, whether he would find the same rewards in the new job, what he would want to accomplish in his next role, wanted him to draw comparisons between his last job and the opening, and wanted to know whether his answers made

sense to the hirer or whether they could see a logical progression.

There were a series of questions that followed - what he could assume was 'job-fit' was an issue for the interviewers. He understands now that the candidate's view of what the job may entail is often very different from the realities at the hiring company. Testing a candidate's fit would help both the recruiter and the candidate test the key compatibility issues.

Knowing about accomplishments

"Tell us about a contribution you have made to a team effort and special contribution to the Company." Zahid could make out the interviewers were simply trying to look for a specific example of something he accomplished within a team environment - an instance when he helped out others to increase the overall bottom line, the example that was tied directly with his effort, what he considered important in terms of a company's bottom line and whether there was something unusual or creative about the contribution. They wanted him to break down the accomplishment in terms of people, things, resources, and ideas.

He had to answer questions like - give me an example of a time you delivered more than what was expected of you - tell us about a measurable outcome of your efforts - if we were to hire you today, what would you accomplish first. They actually wanted to see what he personally or as a part of the team could actually get done as opposed to what the job description was, whether his discussion of accomplishments was focused on what he individually achieved, or what was achieved as a part of a group.

Knowing about corporate fit

"Describe your working relationship with your colleagues." He was not very sure as to what to answer but he was encouraged to describe specific interactions with colleagues. Did he prefer a more formal, structured approach when interacting with others, or did he enjoy dropping by colleagues' offices unannounced? He could feel that the interviewers were trying to find out how well he would fit into their company. How would he prefer to communicate with his colleagues? They asked for specific instances of professional interaction and tried to determine if he could develop solid working relationships with people in the Company. All he could understand was that the recruiters saw 'corporate fit' as one of the key factors in hiring decisions.

Personal and management style

Zahid got perplexed at the questions like - "What type of management style do you think is particularly effective ... tell us about your personal management style." But now he knows exactly what these questions were meant for. They wanted him to describe the kinds of people including co-workers and line managers that he liked to work with. Did he think his manager communicated effectively on a daily basis? Did he prefer to be micro-managed or did he prefer hands-off approach? Was he more effective in highly structured, rigidly managed environment or did he prefer free-wheeling, take-the-initiative approach? etc. They wanted to find out the answers were consistent with their Company's own approach to management style.

Knowing about passion for the business

"Mr. Zahid, please tell us why you want this job." They were intently listening to him to find out whether he simply listed the job functions and responsibilities as opposed to whether he demonstrated in-depth knowledge about the position, their company and the industry. Whether he went beyond mere job description and told them why he was truly excited about the job and was ready to make an impact from the start. What was it about the position that he found so appealing or unique as compared to other positions in the Company.

Knowing about personal interests

"Mr. Zahid, what do you do in your spare time?" Although it sounded like invading into his personal life but they wanted to know what he liked to do on a typical weekend or a free day, they wanted to hear about the evidence that he could keep fresh and invigorated by participating in outside activities, so he would remain a strong contributor to their organization, whether he showed a healthy balance in his life. Strong personal interests can indicate a more balanced lifestyle and can help professionals to recharge their batteries and avoid getting burned out.

- I Personal and management style
- I Knowing about passion for the business
- I Knowing about personal interests
- I Knowing about skills and ability to do the job
- I Knowing about career aspirations
- I Knowing about problem-solving ability
- I And finally, some wrap-up questions

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