



Interview Pressure

His name was Dan Norman. He was 22 years old and a fresh grad being interviewed for his first job by his first employer. I was sitting on the other side of the table. I along with two of my colleagues was doing the interview. He was polite, he was eager and there was something about him that was very likeable. But, he was nervous, very nervous. The biggest tip off to his nervousness was he must have said he was nervous at least 5 times in the first 10 minutes of the interview.

We were looking to hire someone to take the lead on recruitment for a high school business leadership conference we were running. For some reason, there was a perfect storm that day that had poor Dan go through the interview ringer. One of the first questions we asked him, “Dan, you are on the phone about to speak to a high school principal, keep in mind one of your goals is to recruit students to attend this event, he or she picks up the phone, what do you say? Go ...” Dan freezes like a deer in headlights.

“Dan, what would be your strategy to recruit students to attend the event?”

Dan nervously responds, “I’m not sure. I’d need some time to think about it.”

“How much time? An hour? A day? A week?”

Again Dan goes back to his nervousness comment, “I don’t know, I’m sorry. I’m just really nervous.”

“Why are you nervous?”

“It’s just ... well ... there are three of you and only one of me ... and I really want this job ...”

My colleague steps up the pressure, “I’ll make this really easy for you. You don’t get the job!” He then gets up and leaves the room.

Poor Dan isn’t quite sure what happened. He pauses a bit and says, “So? Should I go now?”

Knowing where my colleague was going with his train of thought I throw Dan a bit of a floatation advice. “No, you don’t need to go. You said you were nervous about being interviewed by three people and about getting the job. What my colleague tried to do is relieve both of these stresses for you. Pretend you don’t get the job, now there are only two of us. So, now let’s talk.”

Dan probably stayed another 15 minutes and left. I am sure he was thinking that what kind of a train-wreck of an interview was that? I'm guessing that 99% of the population would run as far away from that interview as quickly as humanly possible and never look back. I expected Dan to do the same.

That afternoon Dan called us back and said, I have written out a strategy about how I would implement the recruitment process for the event. We hired him on the spot!

As a 22 year old, Dan understood that just because things may seemingly be going the wrong way, you still have complete control of how you chose to act or react. We can't change the past but we can direct the future. What we say, think and do constantly shapes our upcoming opportunities. Dan knew he wanted this job and he knew he would do a great job with it. Dan joined our team and led a very successful event. We had 600 students and rave reviews.