

# PREDICTING THE LIAR

“Tell me something about yourself”, “Take me through your career graph”, “Let us begin with your detailed introduction” – this is how majority of the personal interviews start and we as interviewers make at least 50 per cent of our mindset about the next part of the interview where we say: “Nah, this candidate is not what I am looking for” or “Yes, this is the kind of professional I was looking for”. But beware, even potential candidates know that this is the question they would be asked and they come well prepared for it.

By Barkat Charania

The progress of every organisation depends upon its employees and that is where the Human Resource (HR) department comes into play. Hiring, training and retaining an employee is crucial but more important is avoiding to hire a wrong candidate since one wrong hire may do disasters to the welfare of an organisation. Though the HR department diligently completes the interview process along with the line managers and business head according to the seniority of positions, we still situations when we end up hiring the wrong person. In fact, many organisations nowadays do a thorough background check and psychometric analysis of candidates depending upon the seniority of the position. Having said so, we still say that attrition in retail is very high and also the cases of wrong hires. A lot of research is being carried out on these topics and one very important aspect to focus here is the non-verbal communication of the candidate.

It is believed that body language accounts for up to 55 per cent of how we communicate, but reading non-verbal cues is not just about finding the cues. The same gesture can indicate a number of different things depending on the subject matter. Many people have a tendency to lie. These are not big lies but very small ones, which are said in order to skip a particular topic or to show some differential opinion. As per one of the findings on this topic, one would lie in the first 10 minutes of having a conversation with a





stranger. While talking to a stranger, it is easy to judge if the person has good command over language and can speak well. However, the human body speaks up everything and it is difficult to hold or hide one's emotions. This is where reading the human body creates its own space in finding the truth and it is very useful especially in the interview process.

Judging someone by body language is again helpful but, with the emergence of technology and Internet being so easily accessible, even candidates on their part come prepared on how to use body language before the interview; they try to maintain a certain decorum, which can confuse the interviewer. Prospective candidates often use a deceptive type

traditional interview process. They state how interviewers unknowingly end up favouring candidates who are attractive, presentable, sociable, and articulate with excellent personalities. They even are tricked into hiring manipulative candidates who know how to make a great impression during an interview. However, these are not always the best candidates to be hired.

In an interview, which ranges from a few minutes to a maximum of a few hours, it is difficult to ascertain an attractive and flattery

Managers are sometimes overconfident of judging the right talent for their organisations and feel that they can predict whether the person will be a performer or non-performer once the latter is hired. Many a times it goes right but there are times when the whole idea backfires. However, nowadays, especially in the retail sector, the trend is picking up to issue an offer to a candidate only after they clear the entire interview process, hand over proper documentation and



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of impression management, which can really confuse the interviewer leading to a wrong hire. It is not easy to stop people from using these gimmicks but we can always make our interviewers competent enough to understand these false techniques. However difficult it may be to believe, but the truth is that only 7 per cent of how we communicate with each other is done through words. Recent studies have concluded that body language makes up about 55 per cent of our interactions. Many studies have also shown the limitations of

candidate on their credentials. A wrong decision of hiring can be disastrous to the organisation. An interviewer can be confident about their judgement of hiring a person, but can never be confident as to how the person will perform after being hired. Especially in the retail sector, which is growing and getting organised with each passing day, the decisions become more and more tough. Along with skill fitment, there is a lot more to judge in terms of cultural fitments, ethical behaviour and code of conduct.

all the required verification. This verification may vary from past one or two employers, address and family verification, financial verification, educational verification and police verification also in a few cases. I have personally seen many offers being revoked for fake documentation and negative verification results; these are not only limited to junior and mid-management but also at senior levels.

During a conversation, one can easily spot a lie by forcing on a few of the body gestures. One can practice the word they want to speak

especially during the interview, but they forget to practice the gestures. Also, it is easy to play with words but one cannot fool the body movements. A few easy but important things to focus upon while having a conversation with a prospective candidate are:

**The face:** After observing a person for just some time and after gazing his basic face structure, it becomes rather easy to find out the extraordinary gestures. Once a person starts lying, their basic gestures like scratching the nose, ear tugging or covering the mouth become too obvious.

**The shoulders:** Shoulders speak a lot about what is going on in a person's mind. For instance, a rise in shrug would simply indicate messages like "I Don't Know" or "I don't care". However, liars often show a "half shrug" when they are not speaking the truth and they fail to realise they are being observed for this.

**The torso:** It is natural to move our body while talking. Sometimes we lean backward or may be bend forward while emphasising a



point. But liars tend to freeze their body movements. They do it to prevent the leaking of any emotional gesture and being caught. So the next time you see someone with a frozen body movement in-between a conversation, do continue the conversation in a detailed manner to get the truth out of it.

**The arms:** Arms depict another very important body gesture and their movement tells a lot when underutilised during a conversation. Arm movements are common but when someone is lying, they would rather close their arms and take a defensive position thinking of avoiding a lot of wrong movements, which can be caught during the conversation. So always focus on this often ignored posture.

**The personal blockage:** Other than the above-mentioned postures, there are hands, legs, movement of feet, etc., that need to be noticed. But one important thing to note are the people who feel threatened or questioned when they are hiding something and who are always try to maximise their safety zone either by sitting very far or by creating physical barriers like book or purse or even a glass of water between themselves and the interviewer. They do this to move focus from their physical movements. So the next time you meet such a person, make sure to remove all these barriers and have a direct conversation with the other person.

One important aspect to have happy and successful employees is to find out one major aspect that your organisation specifically looks out for in all its employees. This can vary from skills to compatibility to task orientation, etc. The moment we are able to find out what is that one factor, the scrutinisation becomes easy. One important skill that contributes immensely to individual growth is the mental ability and mental stability of the candidate. However competent or skilled a person may be, if they are not mentally stable, they would never be able to focus on their work in most of the cases. Also it is quite easy and cost-effective to check one's mental ability. A person with a good mental ability can be trained, moulded as per the requirements and re-trained as per the need of the hour. Although the intelligence factor is not required for every job, but it definitely helps in many areas.

Also intelligence tests are really cost-effective, easy to monitor and completely unbiased. In terms of cost calculations, the hiring cost of a wrong hire is way higher than the cost of rejecting handful of candidates who fail to clear these tests. A simple test along with a structured personal interview process followed by a few verification procedures is a solid way to controlling wrong hires. It does not guarantee 100 per cent accuracy but definitely helps minimise the risks. IR



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