

— THE —
BLACK BOOK
— OF —
INTERVIEW
SKILLS

Cutting Edge Techniques For
Interview Success

MARTIN SOORJOO

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Communication Downloads

533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 400
Burlingame CA 94010
Tel (650) 373-2036

www.communicationdownloads.com

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The Black Book of Interview Skills

Cutting Edge Techniques for Interview Success

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Three universal truths

Three universal truths have influenced the focus and content of this book. These truths which almost always apply to every interview you will ever go through are:

- (i) You only get one shot; and
- (ii) The most effective interviewee will get the job.
- (iii) How you communicate during your interview is the most important factor for an interviewer.

Too many interviewees spend a lot of time and money memorizing the answers to hundreds of questions and answers but fail to take necessary steps to eliminate and control fear, build a confident and winning psychology and develop the high performance communication skills. Without these skills and abilities your chances of securing the job you really want are greatly reduced. When it comes to the day of the interview, fear gets control, they forget the brilliant answers they spend weeks memorizing and fail to sell themselves in a persuasive and confident manner.

With these truths in mind I have created a practical resource that equips you with the most advanced and effective communication strategies and techniques available that will ensure you dramatically improve your interview performance. You will find it far easier to successfully navigate the path to securing the job you desire. You will learn how to easily develop rock confidence and a winning psychology.

It's clear that if you use the same basic approach that everyone other job applicant uses, then you will have an average chance of success. In order to have the edge over your competitors, you need to learn how the most successful people in the world (e.g. Donald Trump, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bill Clinton, Jim Carrey and Jack Nicklaus to name a few) achieve their goals and then apply those same strategies and techniques to ensure you secure the job offer you want.

Whilst an attorney I spent fifteen years asking hundreds of witnesses challenging questions and carefully analyzing their responses. Responding to questions in court as a witness is far more challenging and stressful than giving answers in interview. But the question and answer process has many similarities as I discovered when going into business and interviewing and recruiting numerous individuals from many fields.

The insights I gained whilst an attorney and in business, my training in NLP, Body Language and psychology, coupled with advice and input from many experienced interviewers and have enabled me to create a highly effective system for ensuring interview candidates consistently deliver high performance interviews.

Over the coming pages you will learn the most effective human performance techniques and strategies from the fields of Body Language, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Neuroscience and Psychology. Many of these techniques are already used by highly successful individuals and organizations and are backed by international scientists and research from leading institutions such as Harvard. You may come across information and research that surprises you. Keep an open mind, as you are about to discover a whole new way of achieving interview success.

Accelerated Learning principles, used by the most successful companies and organizations throughout the world, are applied throughout this book to ensure you learn as effectively as possible.

Be on notice, this is a book for people who are hungry for the job they have applied for and are playing to win. You will not find pages and pages of obvious information and advice that you have heard a thousand times or should know by now. What you will find in the coming pages are techniques and strategies that are designed to turn you into a job offer magnet. To achieve this, all you need to do is invest some time in reading this book and practicing the processes you will learn.

And if you do, your interview performance will never be the same again.

High performance interview techniques

By the time you walk into the room, you should know everything you need to know about the position and company you are being interviewed for. You will be clear as to your goal; to give the best performance you can possibly give and win the interviewer over. You know exactly how to create a great first impression. You are now primed and ready for engagement. The follow techniques will ensure you deliver a winning interview performance.

Mindset

The mindset with which you approach the interview has a key influence over your performance. You must have empowering beliefs about yourself which must include the following:

- You are a highly attractive candidate who would be a real asset for the organization.
- You are an equal party to the interview process; and
- You have the ability to exercise control over process.

The above beliefs are not exhaustive, so feel free to add or detract. If you don't go into the interview feeling empowered and strong, it will come across through your nonverbal communication, the answers you give and your overall performance. You must go into the

interviewing *knowing* you are a winner. Use the visualization and Conditioning Commands processes we covered in Chapter 2 to instill these beliefs.

Be Enthusiastic, Energetic, Optimistic but Measured

Energy, enthusiasm and optimism are infectious and will cause people to warm towards you. Interviewers do not want to recruit someone who seems negative and low energy as this suggests they will interact with clients and colleagues in this manner. It is important however, that you do not come across flaky and hyper, so please carefully read the section on rapport later on in this chapter. Be energetic, enthusiastic, optimistic but measured.

Communicate With Certainty

It is often said that the person who communicates with the most certainty, wields the most influence. Those in authority frequently communicate with certainty e.g. CEO's, doctors and the police. Communicating with certainty indicates that you are a strong willed, competent individual who knows what they are talking about. Additionally, in contrast to hesitation and dithering, speaking with certainty is consistent with telling the truth.

I am not suggesting you communicate with certainty when you are not sure about something. If you really are not sure, then say so, rather than be caught out. I am talking about eliminating the 'ums' and 'ahs' and 'ers' and 'maybes' that people often use to fill their sentences.

It is not simply a question of what you say but also how you say it. As we have seen earlier, how you say something counts for much more than your actual content. Tone of voice, pace

of speech and effective use pauses are all critical. Look at any clip of President Obama speaking on You Tube and you will see a great example of certainty in action.

When you are running through your mock interviews, practice answering and talking with certainty and review your performance afterwards.

Aim to Build Rapport

Rapport is at the heart of successful persuasion and influence. Everyone experiences moments when they are completely in sync with another person, when they feel on exactly the same level and are coming from the same place. If you look at two close friends engaged in intense discussion, they will often be sitting or standing in a similar position and talking at the same pace and pitch. This is completely natural. People constantly do it without even being aware that they are. Take some time to notice when people are in rapport with another and look for how many things they are doing the same. Couples in the early stages of their relationship usually demonstrate very strong rapport.

It is when you have built rapport with another person that your ability to influence them is greatest. It is one of the most important communication skills a person can develop and its power should not be underestimated.

The importance of rapport to the interview process is that people like to work with people they have rapport with. People like people they have rapport with. If you have minimal rapport with the person interviewing you, then the likelihood of you being offered the job is greatly diminished. Knowing basic rapport building skills will give you a significant advantage in a competitive interview process.

The skill of building rapport is relatively easy to learn and can be fun to do so, but does require consistent practice. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) teaches us much about how to establish rapport. The starting point is identifying ways that you can subtly communicate to the other person that you have things in common with them. This is because, fundamentally, people like people like themselves. Rapport works on the subconscious mind and sends out the message to the other person that you are like them and therefore ok.

People tend to gravitate towards others of the same race, religion and political persuasion. They form clubs made up of people with the same interests e.g. hobbies or sports. This is not to suggest that people do not have friendships or relationships with people who are different, plainly and thankfully they do. But it is important to understand that we naturally move towards people we have things in common with and conversely do not readily like or form bonds with people we have no rapport with.

Sales people and other persuasion professionals are often trained how to build rapport. To achieve rapport you need to learn how to ‘match or ‘mirror’ someone. By this I mean that you *subtly and gradually* copy certain elements of their behavior. Whilst there are constraints in an interview situation that do not exist in a sales or other persuasion context, an understanding and awareness of how rapport is developed increases your chances of establishing rapport with the interviewer and, at a minimum, means you are less likely to behave in a way that alienates them.

I will not deal extensively with all the ways you can build rapport, rather simply focus on the opportunity that exists to build rapport in an interview context. You can *match* or *mirror* the interviewers:

- Body language e.g. if they are sitting upright don’t slouch. If they lean slightly forward then you should lean slightly forward.

- Speech – their tonality, volume, pitch and pace of speaking. The more you match your speech qualities to the other person's the more you will build rapport. A slow, quietly spoken methodical speaker will not enjoy the experience of conversing with a loud, fast speaker.
- Verbal content – when you approach the interview process with the mindset that you are an equal party who would be an asset if hired, you are more likely to view the interviewer as a person you are having a conversation with, rather than a victim at the hands of an interrogator. In this context you will be more able to look for opportunities to make rapport building conversation and comment. If you have done your research you might be able to make a positive comment on a recent innovation developed by the company or an extremely significant donation they have made to a charity.

It is extremely important that you only attempt to use this skill after you have been practicing it for some time and have successfully built rapport with people on several occasions. You already build rapport without being aware that you are, so it is just a question of you being able to do it consciously. You must observe the other person very closely and slowly and subtly begin to mirror their behavior. Rapport building works when you mirror someone outside of their conscious awareness. If they become aware that you are copying their behavior and mannerisms they will not think highly of you. I recommend that you read a specialist book on the subject. I cover the topic of rapport extensively in [The Black Book of Reading People](#) .

Focus on the Question – The Downside of Preparing Answers

Whilst there is great value in identifying in advance the answers you will give in interview, there is a potential downside that can be quite damaging to your interview performance.

The problem arises when you try to fit the question you have been asked in to a question you have already prepared the answer to. This may be completely unintentional and occurs because you are so focused on delivering your carefully prepared answer for this particular issue that you have not noticed that it is the *same issue* but a *different question*.

The inevitable consequence is that you give an inappropriate answer which either suggests you are being evasive or that you are not listening properly. So when an interviewer asks a question, give them your full attention put out of your mind your pre-prepared answers until you are sure you have correctly understood the question.

Begin Your Answer with the End of the Question

There may be times when you cannot fire off an instant reply to a question you have been asked, but know it is somewhere in the back of your mind. One technique, used by many attorneys when being on the receiving end of a tough question from a judge, is to start to answer by repeating the first part of the question. For example, you are asked ‘what was your greatest challenge in your last job?’ Assuming this is something you know the answer to, but need a couple of seconds to pull it out, you can begin your answer by stating “The greatest challenge I experienced when working at....”.

There are two benefits to this technique. This first is that it buys you time to pull the answer out from your memory or properly formulate your answer. The second benefit is that the act of focusing and repeating the question causes your brain to actively search for the information you need. It is, however, extremely important that you know the answer and are confident you can pull it out, otherwise you will just stop short mid sentence.

If You Don't Know the Answer, then Say So

Whenever I had a client who was about to give evidence, I would always advise them to only give an answer to a question if they were fairly certain that answer was the correct one. When asked a question during interview, people understandably feel under pressure to provide an answer. This is normal. It is extremely important, however, that you exercise self-control and make sure you are about to give the correct answer.

Do not guess! Simply say something like 'I cannot recall right now' or 'I don't know right now but can I come back to you with the information after the interview'. Most interviewers will respect that honest approach. However, if you guess and are exposed as being wrong, people may regard you as either deceitful or incompetent.

If a Platform Doesn't Come Along, Build One

Part of taking control of the interview process means identifying the opportunity to deliver your key message(s). The interviewer may not ask you the questions that give you that opportunity. One option is for you to use your answer to another question as a platform to deliver your message. There must be some relevance between the question asked and the

message you deliver and for the avoidance of any doubt, you must still answer the question posed.

Alternatively, if you do not feel that any of the questions provide a suitable platform, then just go ahead and deliver your messages(s). You can introduce your point but saying something along the lines of “I thought it important that you are aware”. You do not want to leave the interview room not having told the interviewer that you were the top salesperson for three years running at your previous employment just because they didn’t ask you the question.

Use Stories to Highlight Your Strengths and Qualities

As touched upon in chapter 3, use examples from your past that you will tell by way of short stories to illustrate how and why you possess the necessary skills and qualifications for the job. Stories have a hypnotic effect which enables you to lead the interview process. They are also remembered much more than bland facts.

Inoculate Against Potential Objections

You may find yourself in the position of not fully meeting the job specification i.e. you are not familiar with Excel or there is a difficult issue about your employment that may be raised by the interviewer e.g. why you were fired by your last employer.

If there is a real risk that the interviewer will raise the issue, then it is important that you take the lead and inoculate against the potential objection through the art of reframing. This technique is derived from NLP and is frequently used by salespeople and politicians.

Reframing is a communication and therapeutic technique which refers to giving another perspective or meaning to a situation or statement; usually a positive meaning. The following example is based on an issue one of my coaching clients had concerning his educational qualifications.

Joe (not real name) applied for a job in the marketing department of a large company. Although Joe had the right qualification he did not have the grade that the job specification required. The company had, however, decided to offer Joe an interview. Joe was intending not to raise the issue of his grade and hope that the interviewer had missed the point. After all Joe said to me, they had offered him an interview so maybe they didn't mind.

I asked Joe why he hadn't got a better grade. Joe explained that he had taken out a lot of time from college to look after his sick mother and this had affected his studies. I persuaded Joe that he should raise the issue with the interviewer and explain exactly why he had not achieved a higher grade. He should turn what might be viewed as an academic shortcoming into a positive statement about his character i.e. he is a responsible individual who puts others first.

This approach worked like a dream and led to the interviewer complimenting Joe on taking on such responsibility at a young age, He was offered the job.

Had Joe not taken the lead and placed a positive frame on his low grade, the interviewer may not have raised the point but assumed that Joe lacked the necessary academic ability and additionally, had not carefully read the job specification.

So, my advice to you, is always look at any shortcomings you have that may be raised in interview and consider whether you can reframe the issue.

You Don't have to say Everything

At the other end of the spectrum, if there is an issue in your past that is *not likely* to come up, then as long as you are not lying, you should not volunteer this unhelpful information. This may sound obvious but people sometimes feel the urge to confess all during an interview which is no doubt why interviews are sometimes compared to police interrogations.

Close Well

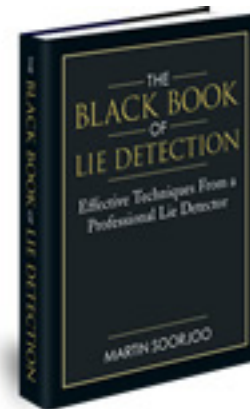
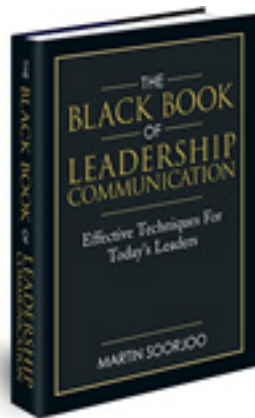
Your first impression is the most important impression, but your last impression comes in a close second. You must close on a good note and therefore I strongly recommend you practice your closing several times during your preparation sessions. The following is a guide to points you may want to include in your closing:

- Make any good points that you haven't managed to so far. Reinforce those strong points you have already made.
- Make sure you have asked all of the questions you wanted to.
- Ask the interviewer if there is anything else they would like you to deal with e.g. remaining concerns and issues. This is your last chance to deal with any reservations the interviewer may have.
- Ensure you are clear as to the next steps in the recruitment process.
- Make clear that you really want the job. Enthusiasm not desperation. Flattery will get you everywhere.
- Shake hands, thank the interviewer for their time, maintain eye contact and smile!

If you found these extracts from The Black Book of Interview Skills useful, then download the whole book and give yourself the Communication Edge during your interviews.

You will love [The Black Book of Reading People](#) and [The Black Book of Persuasion](#) !

And if you want to develop some pretty cool lie detection skills, then download your free copy of [The Black Book of Lie Detection](#) .



About the Author



Martin Soorjoo is a communication expert, author, attorney and President of Communication Downloads; an international communication training company with offices in California and London. Martin's clients include politicians, business leaders, business owners, sales executives and students.

He is the creator of the Communication Edge learning and coaching system which combines the most effective techniques from the fields of Neuroscience, Psychology, Body Language and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Martin is the author of the popular Black Book of Communication ebook series including **The Black Book of Confidence** , **The Black Book of Interview Skills** and **The Black Book of Leadership Communication** which are available from his company's website. **Free chapters available online.**

Before founding Communication Downloads, Martin spent 15 years as an attorney making a difference to the lives of people in difficult circumstances. Nominated for national Human Rights Lawyer of the Year in 2004 and consistently rated by the world's top legal directories as a 'leader in his field', Martin acted in many cases that led to positive changes in national and international law.

In addition to the advocacy skills and experience he developed as an attorney, Martin is a certified Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and expert in body language and psychology. Throughout his career he has appeared numerous times on television and radio, as well as frequently speaking to large audiences. He was portrayed in the TV legal drama 'The Colour of Justice' which was based on one of his cases. Martin now spends majority of his time helping people from all walks of life and from all over the world, improve their communication skills.

Should you wish to book Martin for interview coaching, to speak at your next event or run a seminar for you company, please contact him at

Communication Downloads

533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 400
Burlingame CA 94010
Tel (650) 373-2036

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coaching@communicationdownloads.com

www.communicationdownloads.com