

Tool 2

Culturally-Competent Communication for Interviews

SCENARIO (RECRUITER)	DON'T SAY OR DO THIS	DO SAY THIS	RATIONALE
WHEN ASKING QUESTIONS	"Tell me about yourself."	"Tell me about your education/ experience."	Immigrants may have trouble answering open-ended questions. Specific questions help focus responses.
	"Tell me about a time..."	Add, "I want to know your particular role in this work activity."	Many immigrants are modest about personal "achievement"; their cultural values may emphasize collective over individual achievement. It is culturally inconsistent for them to speak of individual achievement. Emphasizing that you want to know their particular role will draw out this information.
WHEN RECEIVING A BRIEF REPLY TO A QUESTION	Assume the person doesn't know.	Be patient, polite and probe.	Respect for authority sometimes causes immigrants to "answer only what is asked"; elaborating without being asked may seem impertinent.
WHEN RECEIVING A SLOW REPLY	Become impatient. Think the candidate is incompetent.	Be patient. Encourage with a smile and nod.	Pauses in some cultures are natural, recognizing the significance of the question. Thinking before speaking is common for many cultures.
WHEN RECEIVING NO REPLY AFTER ASKING "DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?"	Think the candidate lacks interest or is slow.	Assure the candidate they can ask any question at all about either the job or the process of selection.	Immigrants are not used to being asked this question, which in their culture may be associated with "challenging authority".
WHEN DISCUSSING TECHNICAL MATTERS	Use jargon, slang, acronyms, complex phrases.	Communicate clearly using simple words.	Competency is key; core knowledge conveyance is what is critical. More complex communications will become possible with familiarization.
WHEN THE CANDIDATE HAS A STRONG ACCENT	Lose focus or become frustrated.	Seek clarification. Encourage the person to speak slowly.	Again competency is key. Accents both lessen and become easier to understand with experience in the workplace.
WHEN NOT CERTAIN OF LANGUAGE LEVEL	Assume the person can't do the job.	Request an English test at specific Canadian Benchmark Levels.	Immigrants may have different proficiencies for oral and written English and jobs may have differing requirements.



Plain Speak Please!

A skilled immigrant applying for a health care position was asked by the recruiter: "What do you bring to the table?" The person answered that she would usually bring food. She didn't get the job!!

-Note from South Asian focus group.