Tool 3  Culturally-Competent Awareness of Body Language at Interviews

The most impactful element of communication is the non-verbal component – closely followed by tone of voice. Body language and modulation varies greatly from person to person and often results in miscommunication. Between cultures and countries, continents apart, such non-verbal communicators span the gamut of ‘normal’ custom. This tool targets just a few of the more common ‘face-to-face’ miscommunications to help you focus on a more accurate assessment of the candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BODY LANGUAGE</th>
<th>ASSUMPTION / REACTION</th>
<th>ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No eye contact</td>
<td>Not trustworthy, shifty</td>
<td>Respect for authority; candidate does not want to appear challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaking head from side to side</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Actually, YES! (i.e. India and Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft or gentle handshake</td>
<td>Not assertive/confident, weak</td>
<td>Conveys respect rather than power or strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual gestures/closeness</td>
<td>Rude</td>
<td>Acceptable cultural convention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Did you know that…**

“Most recruiters make the decision to hire/not hire in the first seven minutes.”


**Test your cultural awareness / openness.**

The candidate arrives 20 minutes early wearing a strong perfume, stands three feet away from you, looks you up and down, gives a prolonged hand-shake, maintains continuous eye contact, and chit-chats about family and politics.

Have you made up your mind against this candidate already? Why? Can you maintain an open mind knowing cultural differences may be causing the behavior? Can you maintain an open mind knowing these cultural differences may not necessarily relate to job performance?