

Career Counsel

By Betsy S. Hersher and Graeme Udd

The 'WOW' Factor

In any interview, making a key connection is a skill and an art.

When interviewing for a new job or promotion, is there a “secret tip” for success? Yes, in fact, there are many. Interviewers often look for a “wow” factor, and you never know what personal attribute or skill will cause the interviewer to connect with you. This may be a quality that demonstrates your enthusiasm and passion in addition to your career success. It could also be a quality outside your work life that portrays a broader and more balanced you.

Think of your life as being divided into three parts, or personas: your business life, your personal life and your private life.

Your business persona is how you present yourself in the workplace. For example, the hard and soft skills articulated on your resume could emphasize your communication and leadership attributes, as well as a positive track record. Your resume may also include professional volunteering and coaching that reflects your interest in learning, or active memberships in professional organizations.

Your personal life is just that: family and friends, hobbies and interests, travel, etc. This is a fairly public aspect of your life, often presented on a resume as well.

Your private side may be neglected or considered unimportant to your business persona. Rarely would you show this

special part of your personality to the outside world. It comprises your hopes and vision for the future, your history and character. It also includes the internal gifts or quirks that drive you to succeed. It is an important piece of your life that helps balance you and ties together the other two parts into a cohesive whole. It is this balance that really gives you an advantage in the job market.

You make the call

These three parts, when presented in synergy, provide a complete picture of you. The balanced candidate tends to be flexible, multi-dimensional and accessible.

But is it good to share your outside interests? You must make that decision -- and your determination may change depending on the prospective job or a particular corporate environment.

In many cases, it is illegal for the interviewer to ask questions of a personal nature that do not pertain to the position at hand. Nonetheless, you may sense an opportunity to highlight a relevant aspect of your persona during an interview. For instance, while reviewing your background, the interviewer might not expect “rock climber” to come out of your mouth when asked to talk about hobbies and interests. That could be a “wow” factor and a chance for connection.

Keep in mind that the “wow” factor is attached to the overall temperament and attitude of the candidate during the interview. The tone of your voice and a quick sense of humor go a long way toward building a positive rapport. As you continue to answer work-related questions, enthusiasm and passion should be expressed. However, you’ll walk a fine line if you become too excited. Strive to display an appropriate level of professionalism at all times.

In any interview, making a key connection is a skill and an art. You can always play it straight and stand on your excellent background and skills. After all, the best “wow” factor may be well-earned confidence in your ability to do the job, and your determination to succeed.

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