

Detecting the Deceptive Impression Management in Job Interviewing

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ABSTRACT

Interviews are a typical process used by organizations in recruitment to understand personalities and capabilities of their potential employees. However, what is reviewed in an interview may not faithfully reflect the interviewees' traits, resulting in the organizations hiring unsuited candidates for their positions. In this paper, a review will be made on researches studying strategies interviewees adopt that may affect interviewers' decision-making, especially impression management and preparation, and factors that may lead to employees' tendency to impression management. This paper will also review suggestions that may improve interviews' effectiveness.

Keywords: *interview, recruitment, impression management, cultural diversity*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world of business has become more globalized than before. There is a witnessed increased interaction among the business leaders, and also labor force is being transferred from one place to another. The amplified interaction has made it possible for people to mingle with each other in executing the assigned duties, hence allowing the integration of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The way individuals present to others tell more about who they are and what they can offer. This is one of the most effective ways of determining if someone is lying or not, rather than relying on what is documented in their papers. The talks and the form of appearances detail the inner traits that cannot be identified easily, making an impression as one of the essential tools for establishing if someone is lying or not. Many organizations and workers are in an environment that requires dependence and interaction with others from different states and cultures. As time goes, companies seek to expand their foreign lands' operations (Chinnobaiiah,2020) to have more comprehensive customer service; thus broadening their profit margins. [1] The approach is appropriate since they can explore new opportunities and find a new market for surplus products. In such a case, an expatriate must act as the middle person between the organization and the foreign one. Unfortunately, most of the expatriates are unprepared for the new locale, culture, and people in their new responsibility. The unpreparedness on the expatriate's

side diminishes the assigned task's success, leading to the loss of time and money for the host organization. As a result, the home company's image is tainted, and this kind of presentation lowers the company's competitive advantage in the target state.

On a larger scale, the previous paragraph has demonstrated that impression management, if not well analyzed, can negatively affect an organization. This is registered by using the wrong people to represent the company in an international market or an environment with cultural diversity. A similar situation can be experienced when the company seeks to employ the right candidates to fill a particular role. Most of the interviewees attending job interviews participate in impression management. The applicants conceal their real image (Langer et al.,2020) and try to fit what they think the interviewer is looking for[2]. As a result, they incline to answer the interview questions based on what they researched or coached to answer them. Impression management is a fatal attribute for the hiring company because it gets the wrong candidate. If not detected early enough during the interview process, the error spills over to the company and might be a liability in the future. For example, hiring a candidate without real skills would force the company to retrain them, which is an additional cost. Therefore, having the right strategies, either in-house or borrowed from external recruiters of detecting deceptive management, would eliminate rogue interviewees.

Job applicants attempting to shadow their real image have attracted considerable attention from past researchers (Melchers et al.,2020)[3]. The study has shown that nearly all applicants engage in impression management, but the tactics differ. The author illustrated that the kind of questions and the nature of the interview are the significant determinants of how the interviewee behave in front of the panel. For example, when applicants are asked about their behavior, they appear more focused and capitalize on positive traits. Ideally, an interviewee would like to sell their features to recruiters and fails to recognize the negative aspect of their lives. The approach is taken by most of the companies when recruiting by only focuses on extracting the positive abilities of the candidates. Following Melchers et al. (2020), a best evaluative interview is the one that aims to understand the whole person, both positive and negative traits[3]. Despite the need to fully understanding what kind of job applicants are, Wilhelmy et al. (2020) pinpointed that the highest percentage of the applicants who get jobs relies on impression management[4]. The author concluded after noting that companies, especially those recruiting employees from the international arena, complain of the high cost of retraining the applicants when they get into the real work. Proper preparation on the interviewers' side would help detect the applicants' impression management and eliminate the possibility of burdening an organization with the wrong employees.

2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWS

Applicants have their way of applying impression management when attending interviews. Each individual can assess the type of interview they would expect, and due to the availability of technology, practice before the primary date. The situation is amplified because some applicants can access interview questions earlier than the set date, hence possessing a structured form of answering questions. They may use nonverbal techniques such as continuous smiling or direct eye contact with the interviewer (Amaral et al.,2019), aiming to disrupt the concentration to the real theme of questions[5]. In the same vein, they can also employ verbal techniques such as defensive, eroding the recruiting team's flow of thought. A defensive approach is used to mend the applicants' negative traits and may include attributes such as excuses and apologies.

Furthermore, an interviewer can use tactics of matching the ideal candidate that the recruiter is looking for. In every job application, the description of the roles is stipulated in the advertisement. Every job application is made based on the job description, and the candidate can quickly try to mimic the kind of employee the company is looking for. As such, the applicants create a new image that does not reflect what they are. This is

achieved by adding traits that they know they do not have or concealing a pronounced negative feature that can deny them a job. Taking this route is dangerous to one's career since the interview room's enthusiasm is rarely translated into a real working environment. Dishonesty in one's abilities creates mistrust among colleagues (Crowe et al.,2019) and could be the start of organizational conflict[6]. At a larger scale, the management can opt to fire the employees and give low recommendations making it difficult for them to find another job. As a recruiter, it is essential to be aware of all tricks that an applicant can play to present the wrong image. High emphasis should be laid when dealing with a foreign candidate whose culture and beliefs might differ from that of the interviewer. By so doing, the organization would receive honest workers and steer its objectives forward.

3. MANAGING "FACE" IN CHINESE AND U.S. WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

The working environment comprises of people from diverse cultures and creed. The diversity of people makes others to conceal who they are so that they can fit well. According to Roulin et al. (2015), new entrants into the job market, especially foreign employees, manage their impressions, particularly in their initial months[7]. They do so to impress the employer and fit the productivity of the existing employees. The phenomenon is expected in the developed economies such as the U.S. and China, where the expectation of delivery is high, to compete in those environments. Face management propounds that people are concerned about how others perceive them. The theory is of the idea that employees are likely to maintain politeness when working with new people. When the person fails to keep up with the appearance, they lose face and result in embarrassment.

When conducting interviews, the recruiters need to have appropriate measures of establishing if the interviewee is lying by reading their facial impressions. This entails reading some subtle clues, such as dropping face, which signifies a lack of confidence in what the interviewee says. Employees who maintain straight eye contact with the recruiter has the highest possibility of being deceptive (Park,2020) compared to those who do not[8]. In the same vein, the author noted that it is difficult for the wrongly chosen candidate to forever conceal their image. Through regular interaction during the workdays, an employer can understand the candidate they absorbed in the working environment. The effective way to assess the employee's capability is through regular engagements and understanding if what they detailed during the interviews is actual.

The study conducted by Kramer et al. (2019) noted that developed economies, such as U.S. and Chinese markets, are prone to absorption of the wrong employees due to face management[9]. According to the author, the

situation is experienced because several states embrace foreign employees, whose cultures differ. The facial expressions' readings could be different, based on beliefs, resulting in wrong interpretation. As such, recruiters should be well prepared to deal with diverse people and minimize the errors committed during selection.

4. IDENTITY TENSIONS IN CHINESE AND U.S. WORKGROUPS

Identity is the state of belonging, which could be classified in gender or place of origin. The tension part of it comes from the fear of being the minority among the people sharing common elements. Due to this, a person differing from others tends to sideline themselves due to fear of being eliminated. Consequently, they hide their real character to impress the person's target. As the global world business continues to expand, the idea of internalization cannot be ignored. It has gone beyond the expansion of business to the extent of labor importation and exportation (Zhang et al.,2019)[10]. Foreign job applicants are faced with tensions, with the employers' expectations in Chinese and U.S. market. The United States is strict with the qualifications and achievements of the candidate. The job requirements in this culture are too high and only absorb the best. This information tells us that a job applicant must prove to the interviewing panelist the capability to be innovative and creative to help the business stay ahead of the competitors. For international applicants, passing such intensive interviews would need good papers and a demonstration of fit to the requirements. This can be a source of identity tension, where the applicants hide their real qualifications by exaggerating the achievements detailed on their resumes. In the same vein, the Chinese culture is characterized by hardworking citizens (Lee & Peterson,2000), and any applicants should be prepared to do beyond what the job descriptions provide[11]. In such a situation, one is supposed to show their capability to work under pressure, which could be different from other cultures. Overall identity tension motivates the job applicants to lie about their abilities and achievements. This results in absorbing employees who cannot meet the requirements and demands of the job. It is imperative to be aware of the identity tension to dispel non-focused hiring.

5. WAYS OF DETECTING DECEPTION IN AN INTERVIEW

Although detecting deception from the interviewee could be difficult, interpersonal deception theory could be an appropriate approach. It provides the latitude of evaluating trick by assessing the messages exchanged between the receiver and the sender. The first thing that the receiver of the message does is determine whether the content is true or false. The authenticity of the message is estimated based on the sender's knowledge and the

level of suspicion. Afterward, the receiver appraises the message's quality, interprets it, and finally assess the sender. However, interpersonal deception theory argues that it is easier to determine the statement's truthfulness than the deception. Therefore, interviewers should be able to apply a constellation of approaches to establishing an element of lies based on the interviewees' information.

The other approach to detecting deception is the use of interview questions. The two main structured interview questions are situational and past behavior. The past-behavior interrogations tend to ask the applicants to detail how they behaved in previous jobs. Such questions are focused on drawing the applicants' strengths and understanding their relationships with the past employer. On the other hand, situational questions focus on establishing how the applicants perform in a similar hypothetical job. The kind of interview questions influences the type of impression management. Leins et al. (2012) noted that situational questions are more prone to impression management than past-behavior questions[12]. This is because situational questions are hypothetical, and interviewers cannot verify the interviewee's answers. Such an inquiry gives the applicants a chance to drum support for themselves and only talk of the positive attributes.

The other way is the level of experience of the interviewer. More experienced interviewers can detect impression deception among the applicants, compared to the new recruiters. As interviewers interact with different job candidates, they can identify the standard ways of concealing their identity. General theories of experiential learning (Miettinen,2000) affirm that experience can improve performance[13]. However, too much reliance on past knowledge results in overconfidence. This kind of overconfidence can make the recruiters trust much on their intuition, thus inaccurately evaluating the applicant. Despite this, the interviewers need to use more than one method of detecting impression management to enhance selection quality.

6. CONCLUSION

Impression management is widely used by job candidates during interviews, and a lack in analyzing this could result in wrong decisions being made by organizations. Job seekers tend to mislead interviewers by emphasizing their positive traits and covering negative ones, preparing for questions that may be asked in interviews, using tactics during an interview, and/or pretending to be the kind of worker that employers are looking for. Newly employed workers also tend to adopt impression management to avoid embarrassment or being treated as minority, but they usually fail to keep the same image in the long term. Being deceived in interviews would bring extra costs to organizations, as they would not find ideal candidates for the positions and have to provide more training for the employees. To

avoid this, interviewers should examine the faithfulness and quality of a candidate, judge his/her honesty, ask situational and past-behavior-related questions, and be experienced. While these provide good hints for organizations to improve interview effectiveness, more studies and experiments can be conducted to provide detail instructions to better solve this problem.

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