

ST APPPOINTMENTS

MAKING OPPORTUNITIES KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR

How to stay cool and confident under pressure

"So, Susan, your report indicates your support forging ahead with the expansion but have you considered the impact this will have on our customers? Surely you remember the fiasco in Dallas last year when they tried the same type of project?"

"Yikes! If you're Susan, you're likely feeling under pressure! You have to answer the question and allay the CEO's concerns about the disruption to customers. What do you do? What do you say? How do you say it? What if you can't think of anything to say?"

This is not an uncommon situation. Whether you are put under the spot while attending a meeting, presenting a proposal, selling an idea, or answering questions after a presentation, articulating your thoughts in unanticipated situations is a skill. Thinking on your feet is highly coveted skill and when you master it, your clever and astute responses will instill immediate confidence in what you are saying.

When you can translate your thoughts and ideas into coherent speech quickly, you ensure your ideas are heard. You also come across as being confident, persuasive, and trustworthy.

Confidence is key when learning to think on your feet. When you present information, give an opinion or provide suggestions, make sure you know what you are talking about and that you are well informed. This doesn't mean you have to know everything about everything, but if you are reasonably confident in your knowledge of the subject, that confidence will help you to remain calm and collected even if you are put unexpectedly in the hot seat.

The secret of thinking on your feet is to be prepared: learn some skills and tactics, and do some preparation for situations that might put you under pressure. Then when you do find yourself faced with unexpected questions and debate, you'll be ready to draw on these tactics for preparation, and so stay poised while you compose your thoughts and prepare your response. Here are some tips and tactics:

1 Relax

This is often the opposite of how you are feeling when you're under pressure, but in order for your voice



to remain calm and for your brain to "think", you have to be as relaxed as possible.

Take deep breaths. Take a second and give yourself a positive and affirming message. Clench invisible muscles (thighs, biceps, feet) for a few seconds and release.

2 Listen

It comes as no surprise that listening is critical to thinking on your feet. Why do you need to listen? To make sure you fully understand the question or request before you reply. If you answer too soon, you risk going into a line of thinking that is unnecessary or inappropriate. To help you with your listening remember to:

Look directly at the questioner. Observe body language as well as what is being spoken.

Try to interpret what is being suggested by the question or request. Is this an attack, a legitimate request for more information, or a test? Why is this person asking this and what is the intention?

Tip:

Remember that the person is asking a question because he or she is interested. Some interest is positive - they simply want to know more - and some is negative - they want to see you squirm.

3 Either way they are interested in what you have to say, it's your privilege and pleasure not to

disappoint them! Have the Question Repeated if you're feeling particularly under pressure, ask for the question to be repeated. This gives you a bit more time to think about your response.

At first glance people think this will only make them look unsure. It doesn't. It makes you look concerned that you give an appropriate response. It also gives the questioner an opportunity to rephrase and ask a question that is more on point. Remember the questioner may well have just "thought on his or her feet" to ask the question, so when you give them a second chance, the question may well be better articulated and clearer to all.

By asking to have the question repeated you also get another opportunity to assess the intentions of the questioner. If it is more specific or better worded, chances are the person really wants to learn more. If the repeated question is more aggressive than the first one, then you know the person is more interested in making you uncomfortable than anything else. When that's the case, the next tip comes in very handy.

4 Use Stall Tactics

Sometimes you need more time to get your thoughts straight and calm yourself down enough to make a clear reply. The last thing you want to do is blurt out the first thing that comes to your mind. Often this is a defensive comment that only makes you look insecure and anxious rather than confident and composed.

Repeat the question yourself. This gives you time to think and you clarify exactly what is being asked. It also allows you to rephrase if necessary and put a positive spin on the request. "How have I considered the impact on customers in order to make sure they have a continued positive experience during the expansion?"

Narrow the focus. Here, you ask a question of your own to not only clarify, but to bring the question down to a manageable scope. "You're interested in hearing how I've considered customer impacts. What impacts are you most interested in: product availability or in-store service?"

Ask for clarification. Again, this

will force the questioner to be more specific and hopefully get more to a specific point. "When you say you want to know how I've analyzed customer impacts, do you mean you want a detailed analysis or a list of the tools and methods I used?"

Ask for a definition. Jargon and specific terminology may present a problem for you. Ask to have words and ideas clarified to ensure you are talking about the same thing.

5 Use Silence to your Advantage

We are conditioned to believe that silence is uncomfortable. However, if you use it sparingly, it communicates that you are in control of your thoughts and confident in your ability to answer expertly. When you rush to answer you also typically rush your words. Pausing to collect your thoughts tells your brain to slow everything down.

6 Stick to One Point and One Supporting Piece of Information

There's a high risk that, under pressure, you'll answer a question with either too much or too little information. If you give too short an answer, you risk letting the conversation slip into interrogation mode. (You'll get another question, and the questioner will be firmly in control of how the dialogue unfolds). When your reply is too long, you risk losing the person's interest, coming across as boring, or giving away things that are better left unsaid. Remember, you aren't being asked to give a speech on the subject. The questioner wants to know something. Respect that and give them an answer, with just enough supporting

information. This technique gives you focus. Rather than trying to tie together all the ideas that are running through your head, when you pick one main point and one supporting fact, you allow yourself to answer accurately and assuredly.

Tip:

If you don't know the answer, say so. There is no point trying to make something up. You will end up looking foolish and this will lower your confidence when you need to think on your feet in the future. There is (usually) nothing wrong with not knowing something. Simply make sure you follow up as soon as possible afterwards with a researched answer.

7 Prepare some "what ifs"

With a bit of forethought, it's often possible to predict the types of questions you might be asked, so you can

prepare and rehearse some answers to questions that might come your way. Let's say you are presenting the monthly sales figures to your management team. The chances are your report will cover most of the obvious questions that the management team might have, but what other questions might you predict? What's different about this month? What new questions might be asked? How would you respond? What additional information might you need to have at hand to support more detailed questions? In particular, spend some time brainstorming the most difficult questions that people might ask,

WANTED

Production Manager.
Production Asst.
Packing Incharge.
Interview on 03 - 02 - 10
9 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.
Grand Garment,
Wackwella - Galle



THE WORLD BANK Colombo Office

Position of Team Assistant

Background: The World Bank Colombo Office is seeking applications from qualified, bright candidates for the position of a Team Assistant to provide operational and administrative support to the Sustainable Development Team.

Duties & Responsibilities:

The Team Assistant would be required to interact closely and effectively with the Team providing a full range of office support work, including secretarial and administrative tasks. While at times the Team Assistant will work under close supervision and guidance of the assigned unit, most often he/she would be expected to work unsupervised according to established processes and take initiatives in line with office/bank policy and established practice. Specific tasks would include the following:

- Arrange/schedule appointments, internal and external meetings and provide logistical support for conferences, workshops, negotiations, etc.
- Maintain - distribution lists and an efficient filing system.
- Assist team to translate/draft a variety of routine documents, applying effective proofreading skills in finalizing documents
- Assist to produce complex text, reports, figures, graphs, etc., according to standard Bank formats and guidelines
- Coordinate information flow between Washington, Colombo and other offices in the region and liaises with external clients of the Bank
- Track correspondence and assigned tasks/project steps/timetables, proactively coordinate with relevant staff and provides assistance and/or information on project-related matters.
- Process, prepare and monitor Bank-hired consultant contracts
- Maintain and update the Team's action plan and calendar of activities, advising on overdue actions.
- Follow through team priorities in the absence of the team leaders and respond to requests for information
- Handle transaction processing in SAP, the computerized system extensively used by the bank.

Competencies:

- Ability to produce high-quality work under pressure, effective time management, organizational skills and handle multiple tasks
- Demonstrated initiative and resourcefulness, ability to work independently and make appropriate linkages in work requirements and anticipate next steps.
- Committed team player with demonstrated inter-personal skills and work effectively in a multi-cultural environment.
- Ability to adapt to changing business needs by continuous learning/training

General Qualification & Experience:

- GCE Advanced Level as a minimum qualification
- Minimum 2 years of secretarial and office administration experience
- Proficient English language skills (written and spoken)
- Good computer skills and familiarity with standard computer packages and adaptability to use state-of-the-art software

Clearance and testing requirements:

Ability to pass relevant Bank Group Tests (e.g English language, computer applications, etc) in place at the time of recruitment.

The World Bank offers a locally competitive package. The current assignment will be Two Year Term Appointment. The World Bank is committed to attract and maintain a diverse, highly qualified and dedicated work force.

We are aiming at changing the staffing profile at all levels to reflect a better representation of women and people with disabilities. Deadline for applications will be February 16, 2010. Only short listed candidates will be notified. Candidates should submit their resume online to

www.worldbank.org/jobs referring to job# 100148 wherein a detailed job description is posted.



Central Hospital (Pvt) Ltd, the latest venture of Asiri Group of Hospitals, will commence its operations at Norris Canal Road, Colombo -10 shortly.

Asiri Group is the largest private hospital chain in Sri Lanka. It provides superior customer experience with a "patient first" policy, using state-of-the-art technology backed by a highly skilled and motivated team of professionals.

An exceptionally competent and motivated work force will be an important feature that we would strive to maintain in our new hospital, to give our customers the best experience in health care within the country. If you are truly determined to make your career in a highly progressive and professional environment, you are invited to apply for the following positions within "Team Asiri":

• ACCOUNTS EXECUTIVES

"Young & ambitious individual with analytical mind, willing to take responsibilities, work late hours & meet tight deadlines"

- AGE : Below 30 years
- QUALIFICATIONS : Partly qualified in ICASL/CIMA
- EXPERIENCE : Minimum of 3 - 4 years with the following ;
Auditing /Manufacturing /Services/Hospital industry
With Computer Knowledge in Accounting Packages

Apply through e- mail / post with contact numbers & Two non related referees within 10 days of this advertisement to :

Human Resources Manager

Central Hospital (Pvt) Ltd

No: 37, Horton place, Colombo 07. E- mail : hrcentral@asiri.lk