

# What your body says to the interviewer

**ANNY CHIH**  
Special to QMI Agency

Life is too short to spend hours assessing every potential new hire, so as unfair as it may seem employers make hiring decisions based on brief initial impressions. These impressions are often based on physical appearances and verbal communication skills, but your body language is also very telling of what kind of employee you are likely to be.

If you want your body to agree with your mouth as you speak to your skills, experience, and interest in the position, take up space, lean in, and keep your hands away from your face.

What you do before your interview can be just as important as what you do during the meeting. Last September, Harvard researchers Amy J.C. Cuddy, Caroline A. Wilmuth, and Dana R. Carney published a study which revealed people who took up expansive and open high-power poses before mock job interviews were more likely to be hired than those who adopted closed low-power poses.

The theory behind this is that mammals which expand their shoulders and spread their limbs are showing dominance. In doing so yourself before an inter-

view, you are priming your body as well as your mind to convey a message of confidence in your abilities.

During an interview, women tend to perch at the end of their seat rather than sit towards the back of the chair.

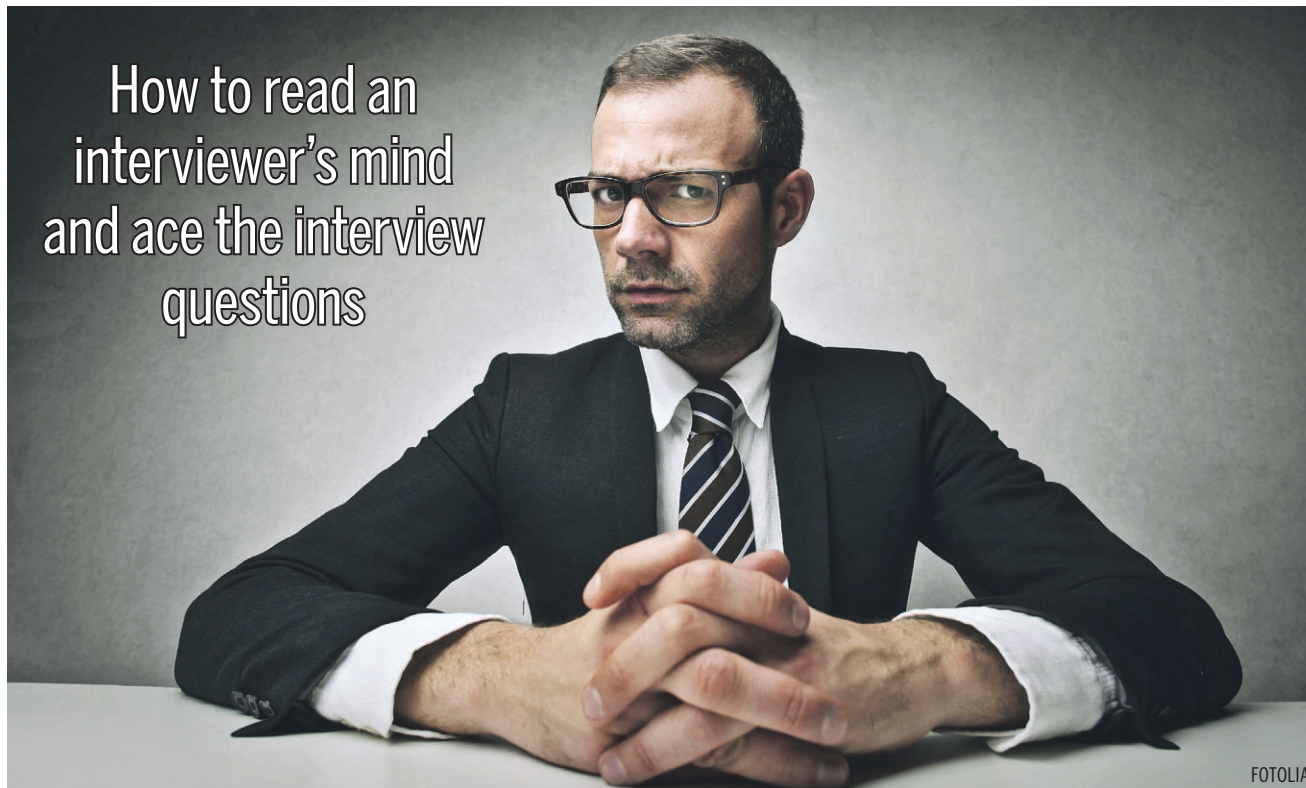
While it may be more practical to sit forward while wearing a pencil skirt, doing this also makes a person look smaller, weaker, and overly eager. It also makes it next to impossible to lean back on the chair without slouching.

For both men and women, it's best to sit at the back of the chair so that when you lean back, you can do so without curving your spine. Leaning slightly forward in this position demonstrates interest in what your interviewer is saying, and natural movements while speaking assures the listener that you know what you're talking about.

Finally, it's common to see complacent workers fidgeting with their hands during meetings. Though touching your face and hair is an effective flirting technique to indicate that you are touchable, this is not an attribute you want to bring to the attention of a potential employer. Keep your hands away from your face and avoid fidgeting to indicate professionalism.

**“... take up space, lean in, and keep your hands away from your face.”**

## How to read an interviewer's mind and ace the interview questions



FOTOLIA

Our expert reveals five randomly selected questions followed by a sneak peek into the mind of the interviewer and strategies on how to answer the questions.

# How shall I answer that?

**DAISY WRIGHT**  
Special to QMI Agency

The main reason job seekers fear and fail at interviews is that they are attempting to read the interviewer's mind then give answers they think the interviewer wants to hear. This mind-guessing game will not work and is destined to fail unless you know the reasoning behind the questions.

Most interviewers will use behaviour-based interview questions to find candidates who will fit the job, fit the team and fit the company. These are open-ended questions designed to drill down and uncover evidence of the competencies needed for the position. While no one interview strategy is foolproof, the premise behind behavioural interviews is that past behaviour predicts future success.

This is where a good understanding of the PAR/CAR/SAR interview concept will be helpful to the job seeker. If he or she knows how to develop success stories demonstrating Problems, Challenges or Situations faced, Actions taken and Results obtained, it puts them in a better position to ace the interview.

Here are five randomly selected questions followed by a sneak peek into the mind of the interviewer and strategies on how to answer the questions:

### WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER YOU A STRONG APPLICANT FOR THIS POSITION? WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN YOUR PREVIOUS JOB?

*What the interviewer wants to know:* Does this candidate understand the duties and responsibilities associated with this position? Does he have the specific skills, abilities and the right experience that demonstrate a high level of proficiency?

*Strategy:* Review the job posting very closely and identify the skills and knowledge that are critical to the position. Then offer your specific achievements that directly or closely relate to the job.

### WHAT WERE THREE OF YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN YOUR PREVIOUS ROLE THAT DIRECTLY RELATE TO THE POSITION WE ARE DISCUSSING TODAY?

*What the interviewer wants to know:* Is the candidate aware of the contributions she has made to the employer? Has she left a legacy that has had significant impact on the company? Did she make or save the company money?

*Strategy:* Recall and tell stories of instances where your efforts made significant

impact on the company's bottom line and where you saved the company time or money. This is also a great time to mention any awards or recognitions you received for your efforts.

### IF I WERE TO CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR, WHAT WOULD SHE SAY ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO COMPLETE A DIFFICULT TASK? WHAT CRITICISM WOULD SHE HAVE ABOUT YOUR TECHNICAL COMPETENCE?

*What the interviewer wants to know:* Is the candidate someone who accepts or resists management directives? Does he have a good work ethic? Does he willingly pitch in to help co-workers with challenges?

*Strategy:* Focus on the teamwork/collaborative competencies that directly relate to the job for which you are interviewing. Give specific examples of how you get along with your co-workers and how willing you were to go the extra mile to get the job done.

### DESCRIBE A SITUATION WHEN YOU WORKED WITH SOMEONE WHOSE WORK STYLE WAS DIFFERENT FROM YOURS. WHAT PROBLEMS DID YOU ENCOUNTER? HOW DID YOU RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS?

*What the interviewer wants to know:* Can this candidate work with different personalities? Is she accepting of others? Is she flexible? Is she aware that there's more than one way to accomplish a task?

*Strategy:* Offer stories that demonstrate flexibility and tact when dealing with people and problems. Relate your cross-cultural experience and your respect for diversity.

### TELL ME ABOUT A CHALLENGE OUR COMPANY IS FACING AND OFFER A SOLUTION. WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS SOLUTION IS THE ANSWER?

*What the interviewer wants to know:* Does the candidate understand our industry and can he offer some insights into potential challenges the industry is facing?

*Strategy:* Tell stories that demonstrate a thorough understanding of the industry and offer ideas for solutions. Give examples of ideas you offered that were accepted in your previous role. If you can do this you will be an extremely desirable candidate.

— Daisy Wright is a certified career management coach and professional resumé writer. Visit her website at [www.thewrightcareer.com](http://www.thewrightcareer.com).

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