

Make a lasting impression

PERSONALITY MATTERS Academic excellence alone is not enough. Developing a pleasing personality and strong character are vital for success, says V Pradeep Kumar

A few months back, I was on the selection panel for admission into a prestigious management institute. Accompanied by a colleague, we were waiting for Shashank (name changed) with high expectations as he had secured a top rank in both graduation and CAT.

Shashank walked in lazily expecting us to greet him. The moment he entered, I noticed his casual grooming. His face displayed an attitude of his expectation of automatic selection.

In a few moments of interaction, we discovered Shashank to be only of academic excellence, with no knowledge of current affairs. Embarrassed by non-academic questions, he admitted that his focus was only on studies, having no time or inclination for anything else.

After the interview, we concur that Shashank didn't meet the selection criteria; in short, he had a weak personality, despite high academic excellence.

Whether you are attending an interview for admission into a prestigious institute or a campus selection, the most important aspect is how others perceive you. Generally, interviewers assess a candidate by the first impression, as a prelude to a detailed evaluation. Therefore, academic excellence alone isn't your gate pass to success.

Your personality is the key

Personality is the sum total of your unique, characteristic mental, spiritual and physical traits, as perceived by others. So, how should you go about developing your personality?

■ **Dress to impress:** You have only one chance to make a first impression. It's important to dress with care and give attention to detail, with clothes that fit well. For interviews, the appropriate

attire would be a formal jacket and a tie. However, if you don't have a formal attire, just choose the best from your wardrobe. Use mild perfumes or deodorants, to make you feel comfortable and not to seek attention. A well-groomed hairstyle and polished footwear is necessary.

■ **Greet with a smile:** There are thousands of languages in the world, but a smile speaks them all. Develop a natural, genuine smile as part of your personality. Greet the interviewers with a smile, to generate positive vibes all around.

■ **Believe in yourself:** Candidates often get nervous while facing interviews, which is an obstacle. Overcome the fear of failure, which promotes anxiety and nervousness. Remember that the first step towards success is to have that inner feeling that you can succeed. Believe in yourself and the power of self-motivation can help you overcome obstacles. If you realise your views are not right quickly stand corrected. This would demonstrate your openness and an attitude to learn.

■ **Communicate well:** Communication is the vital link between your knowledge and grooming, as it enables you to understand others, and speak appropriately for the occasion. Listen carefully and speak confidently, maintaining eye contact. It's common for interviewers to ask tough or offending questions, which is only a technique to assess your overall personality. If you need to disagree with the interviewers, do so politely with a smile, avoiding a nasty argument. Learn to observe the body language of others, which helps you to understand the 'unspoken word'. To cut barriers instantly and develop quick rapport, add



an additional language to your vocabulary. Perfect the art of speaking with the right body language using a mirror or a video shoot.

■ **Get up-to-date:** No one would like to be in Shashank's position, after doing so well in academics. Irrespective of your performance in academics, update yourself on general aspects such as news, sports, movies and so on. Be selective in choosing your friends; interacting with a knowledgeable circle is an effective way to update.

■ **Health and fitness:** As a youngster, develop a hobby and be physically active to maintain health and fitness. This adds to your overall personality and enables a good quality of life.

Whether it is selection for a course or a campus placement, interviewers assess a potential candidate on various factors. Apart from evaluating your knowledge and skill-sets, other assessment factors are your personality, communication skills and compatibility in a peer group.

Get that extra edge

A well-groomed personality enhances your stature by radiating intelligence and charisma, which contributes immensely to success in your personal and professional life.

Real life is indeed challenging and very competitive. A strong well-groomed personality just gives you that extra edge necessary to march ahead, and get what you want. Choose a career out of something you are passionate about, and give it your best.

(The author is a management and career consultant.)