

# NAIL THE STRESS INTERVIEW

Ever heard of a 'stress interview'? We delve into this phenomenon

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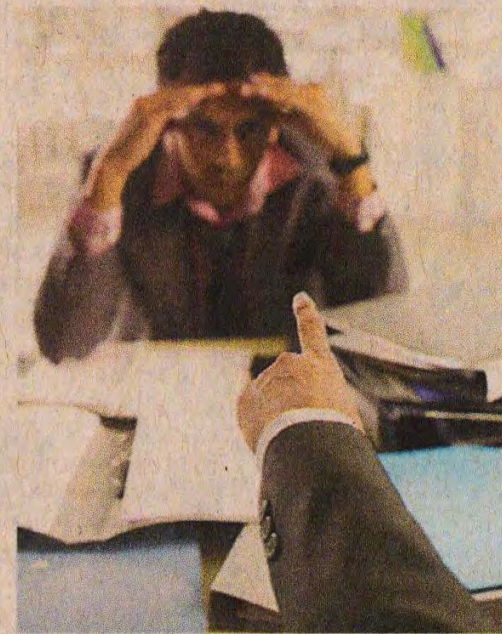
A stress interview is the deliberate construction of an unfriendly environment in the interview to subject a potential employee to a pressurised situation and study his/her response.

Consider this scenario. You have been waiting for your interview for close to five hours. After the long nerve-racking wait, when you finally enter the designated room and find that four recruiters are impatiently waiting for you to settle down and begin the process. Then, you realise that one of them is yawning; another one is occupied on his laptop and not paying attention to your answers at all; the third one is more interested in munching his sandwich than your monologue and the last and the only person asking you questions is being quite rude, taunting and critical about each of your answers. What would be your response? Most of us would naturally panic thinking that

things are not going well. What is actually happening is that the candidate is being subjected to a 'stress interview'.

Ronesh Puri, MD, Executive Access, tells us what stress interviews aim at testing in a candidate, "Since the cost of mis-hiring is huge, companies are beginning to consider various perspectives when they hire a candidate. Stress interviews help in providing a better understanding of a candidate, especially how he/she would perform or think under pressure. The focus is on situations that the candidates may face during their job tenures."

How is the stress environment created? Vipul Singh, VP and head of HR, ADP Private Limited says, "A stress interview consists of questions that are out-of-context, show contempt, involve hostile body language by the interviewer and rapid questioning without waiting for answers. For example, the question can indicate the interviewer's uncertainty regarding the candidate's integrity to check for a response. It is al-



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ways in the best interest of the candidate to stay honest in such interviews."

A candidate needs to be well-acquainted with his/her resume in order to crack such interviews. Nilay Khandelwal, director, Michael Page India, elaborates, "The questions are often picked out from the candidate's CV and the candidate is then probed further. The questions are probing in nature in order to catch the candidate off-guard. When we conduct stress interviews, we find that candidates either get quite defensive or nervous. Some clients who need to fill very senior positions have also opted for interviews over lunch to test the candidate's behaviour in a non-official environment, which can be quite stressful."

Raghavendra K, VP and head – hu-

man resource development, Infosys BPO, explains why stress interviews have become important today, "Certain job roles require individuals to be able to handle stress as the job role could demand an individual to be dependent on certain functions that are not under his/her control. Individuals are expected to meet deadlines in spite of all the challenges. Many leadership roles and profiles like sales, recruitment, banking, etc, where targets are measurable and dependent on external factors, assessments can be easily designed in the form of stress interviews."

*Prateek N Kumar, MD and CEO, NeoNiche Integrated Solutions Pvt Ltd gives some tips to perform well in an stress interview:*

- The best way to handle a stress interview is to anticipate and prepare thoroughly for it in advance by knowing the position and responsibilities of the job being applied for;
- Do not make the mistake of taking an interviewer's behaviour personally;
- Stand your ground and do not get intimidated. Being argumentative, insulting or reactive will not help. Take this as an opportunity to rise to the challenge and respond in a level-headed, confident, and professional manner.

Therefore, a stress interview is conducted to gauge your soft skills and it's at times like these that you cannot crack under pressure.