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Highly Influential: Selecting success/ Preparation: the partner to success

By **Jack Downton**

“Howdy partner!” Perhaps such greetings can only be found in 1970s westerns of a somewhat debateable quality, but for many accountants, being greeted as a partner would be the realisation of one of their greatest ambitions. But many fail to correctly navigate the selection process to success by failing to prepare correctly and show themselves as true partner material.

The first thing to note is that throughout the process you must sell, sell, sell. Selling yourself is for some people seemingly difficult or unnatural, but failing to do so will leave you seeming disinterested and lacking confidence. But it’s important to sell yourself in the right way - its not just about being a good accountant with great technical expertise. On top of this it is about being an all-round business individual with added qualities. You need to show abilities such as leadership, teamwork, innovation and personality. Remember, becoming a partner puts you at the forefront of the business, meaning having business skills and judgment are critical.

In fact when being considered for a partner it is the “soft” selling, judgment and human relationships stuff that is key – all the elements that are not covered in accountancy training!

In addition to selling yourself short, the opposite selling pitfall to avoid is the “scatter-gun approach” of firing as much information about yourself and your talents across the room before you run out of your allotted time. Information overload is the wrong tactic entirely for the situation and will result in any potential selection panel failing to recall any of your key strengths.

Instead, prioritise what you can bring to the table. What are your stand-out qualities and how can you directly benefit the firm? What has been your biggest success? Using such grounded questions as a basis for your pitch should provide you with a sound safeguard against an unwanted attack of verbal diarrhoea and leave you with a well-thought through and concise presentation that your audience will remember.

However, the most important thing to remember is that preparation is everything (the six P’s as are said in the military – proper preparation prevents pxxx poor performance. Do not even consider attempting to wing it on the day.

However, it is also important to not treat it like an exam. Regurgitating memorised replies to questions will leave you sounding dry and mechanical (something which clearly affected Kate Walsh, this year’s runner up in the Apprentice!). Be sure to retain some spontaneity and that your tone matches the description of yourself that you are trying to sell. After all,

attempting to portray yourself as composed and concise won't work with a pitch littered with umm's, aah's and irrelevant tangents.

With the right preparation in place, a concise and appropriate pitch and the self-confidence that comes from this, you'll find yourself leaving your final interview with a real "yee-hah!".

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