

GETTING THE
JOB

THE **7** KEYS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why some people with similar qualifications and experience appear to move effortlessly up the ladder, and others don't?

We all know highly competent individuals who are excellent at what they currently do. They have the potential to go further, but have not continued to advance in title or compensation. Why not? One of the differentiators is the ability to deliver an exceptional job interview. Some people nail it. Others do not.

Over the last 25 years, I've made it my business to identify the essential elements of a successful job interview, discovering what makes the difference between moving-on-up and staying-put. I have been on both sides of the desk. I've been an interviewer and interviewee. My research has uncovered some common denominators.

In addition to being good at what you do, you need to be able to tell others what you do and why it matters. And to communicate your value in a way that *builds rapport, without becoming a bore. Bring the heat to the people you meet.*

I have been helping individuals prepare for and acquire the jobs they want in several industries, including Fortune 100 companies. I have distilled my discoveries into *The 7 Keys*.

To get the job you want, *The 7 Keys* will serve as your guidepost to navigate the complex process of preparing for and presenting yourself in the interview. Applying *The 7 Keys* will distinguish you from the competition.

It's about getting real and closing the deal.

If you want to get the most out of this book, I urge you to take the time to write your answers to the questions posed. Make it a workbook.

First, you need to be good at what you do; then you need to be able to talk about what you do in a way that builds your brand. Moving up the corporate ladder requires three crucial competencies. One is the ability to effectively articulate your value. The second is to communicate your value in a way that builds rapport, without becoming a bore. And third is knowing how to bring the heat with the people you meet. These are competencies that can be learned

Prepare yourself today - so you can win tomorrow.

The 7 Keys

1. Purpose

2. Passion

3. Preparation

4. Partnering

5. Practice

6. Poise

7. Presentation

KEY #1 - PURPOSE

Purpose – why you do what you do

Know why you are here, what you care about, what matters to your customer – the interview panel. When you are clear about your *Purpose* – why you do what you do - you have the 1st of *The 7 Keys* in your arsenal.

My Purpose is to help you prepare and deliver a winning job interview.

Your Purpose in the interview is to demonstrate you are a good fit for this role, this department and this team.

Your aim: Make it easy for the people hiring you to see you in the new role. Build a bridge between what you've done before and what you will be doing. This is your primary task throughout the interview process. Help the panel see what you can do – and will do for them.

Define what makes you an exceptional candidate. In the opening of your job interview, after being asked to tell a little about yourself, simply and briefly give an overview of your work experience, the number of years, roles and functions. Then, use transition sentences like: “But what first prepared me to go into leadership was....” Or “Through the range of roles in agency and operations I have built a solid foundation of leadership experience including my work on...”

These are “link-line”’s to set up a specific story that captures a snapshot of what has shaped and prepared you for the job you now wish to have. It is an anecdote that illustrates *who you are as a leader in action and the kind of results you deliver*.

Example:

A woman interviewing for a manager role in an insurance company first named the number of years served in the industry, functions, roles and then...

Looking back, one of the things that helped shape me for this work was my love of math. I even won a statewide math contest. One day in my last role, the company received a letter saying we owed the state \$9 million. It took us all by surprise. But I didn't write that check. Instead, I rolled my sleeves up and did one of the things I do best: followed the money.

After I went through a rigorous and thorough investigation, I provided the state with what I had uncovered. After reviewing my findings, the state reversed themselves. Instead of us owing them \$9 million, they sent us a check for \$6 million. I'm a good fit for this job. I understand the scope of this role. I get results and I want to get these kinds of results for you.

The interview is your chance to communicate the results you have produced. Share with the interview panel what

you have done, how you did it, and that you will continue to get results in your new role: to build rapport and provide a mountain of evidence as to why you are the right person for the job.

In the face of obstacles big and small, clarity of *purpose* gives us the passion to pursue our dreams and to persist in our aim to achieve.

*Remember, the interview isn't really about you...
it's about what you can do for them.*

Interview Cues/Reminders

- Does the story or example I am using make it easier for the interview panel to see me in the new role?
- Am I building a bridge between what I've done before and what I will be doing in this new job?
- Am I connecting with my audience?
- Am I communicating what makes me an exceptional candidate?
- Am I communicating with clarity, confidence and passion?

KEY #2 - PASSION

Passion - that animating spark which propels people into action

We are drawn to people who have enthusiasm for their work and life. This special energy is magnetic.

Your *Passion* is the current that carries you through challenges, setbacks and into people's hearts and minds. It drives your purpose forward and moves people into action. Connect with your inner flame and share the warmth.

Each of us has thousands of events from which to choose. Recall a few key moments to see which one of these events from your work life would most help the interview panel get a sense of who you are and what you can do.

Think of a business example, a story, with you as the hero. The example you use needs to incorporate a few of the leadership competencies that are relevant to the position you are seeking.

For example, describe how you applied your business acumen to discover a problem and applied the right strategy to resolve it. Or a performance-obstacle met and

overcome through your people-skills, a measurable business result you led the team to achieve.

With the stories you tell, paint a vivid picture of you moving into action. A good story has high stakes and swiftly engages the audience.

One client, who had been an Emergency Medical Technician early in his career, told the following story as part of his interview opening statement:

I went out on hundreds of calls to buildings, schools and homes. I had dealt with life-and-death circumstances every week. On one occasion, my team and I arrived at a home. I looked at the pale man in his bed and quickly surmised - based on my experience - what needed to be done. I called out to my team, 'Let's get this man on a gurney and to a hospital now.' The pale man in the bed shouted, 'Wait. Aren't you even going to take my blood pressure?'

It was at that moment, I learned a powerful leadership lesson: It is not enough to simply know what needs to be done. I need to explain why we're doing it.

In a simple one-paragraph, a 120-word anecdote, he communicated a great deal.

Let's examine: You know from this story that he can handle himself in intense emergency situations. He's

good under pressure. He is decisive. He has the ability to reflect on the impact of his actions, adapt and respond to what is actually wanted and needed by the real live human being. He was willing to learn from the client that knowing why choices are made is critical to the larger sense of “care.”

Interview Cues/Reminders

- What inspires you?
- What about this new opportunity is exciting to you?
- What are you willing to fight for?
- What is one story or anecdote that could give the interviewer(s) an experience of who you are?

Answering these questions is one way to connect with your *passion* and *prepare* for the interview.

KEY #3 - PREPARATION

Preparation = Ready-Now

The interview is not solely a monologue. *Prepare* for the conversation - not simply a recitation of work experience. Your *preparation* is a demonstration of your leadership and the signature of a consummate professional.

Prepare your responses

If you're going to compete – turn up the heat!

The questions the panel asks you are designed to discover if you know the business, understand the vision of the company. They want to see for themselves if, under pressure, you can think on your feet and handle the curves. They also want to get a feel for what it would be like to have you on their team.

With each business example, provide context, purpose and outcome. They need proof, evidence you can succeed and excel in the role.

Select a situation (project, business issue, initiative) that clearly demonstrates competencies relevant to the *new* position. Describe the **situation**. This provides context and sets the stage. Follow with the **behavior** – share with them what you did – the strategy applied and the actions taken; what resources you employed, number of

people participating, dollars spent, partners and stakeholders engaged. And close with the **impact**. Define the results you produced, increased revenues, efficiencies, or customer satisfaction ratings. This is your opportunity to highlight a variety of leadership competencies and further define your value proposition.

You need to prepare, practice and present these components in each response. They are the main ingredients:

- **Situation** - A business initiative or issue with high stakes.
- **Behavior** - The actions taken to kick off a project, address a challenge, overcome and resolve conflict. Include a beginning, middle and end.
- **Impact** – Keeping score - measurable results.

Prepare Your Self

It is also important to prepare your self through cultivating Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence. As you prepare to advance your career, return to the following questions and seek to find answers:

- Where do you need to grow most as a leader?

- Can you articulate what you've learned?
- What terrifies you?
- What are your strengths?
- What could you improve?
- How will you take what you've learned, experienced and accomplished, and put that know-how into action in the new role?

Prepare for the Panel

- What are the five most-critical concerns of the people to whom you will be reporting? (If you don't know, find out!)
- What keeps them up at night?
- What are key competencies they are seeking for this role?

- What matters most to them?
- What will you bring to this role that will add value?
- How will you support the objectives of the department and the enterprise?

This combination of preparation, research, self-assessment and reflection will *prepare* and empower you to be your own best advocate and champion.

Timing

What's too long? What's too short? What's just right?
The length of your opening story - between 1:00-3:00 minutes.

Generally speaking, that is enough time to tell a relevant and compelling story about who you are and your essential competencies as a professional.

KEY #4 - PARTNERING

The act of working together to create something of value, to accomplish some task or achieve some end

One way to stay relevant and competitive with the light-speed pace of change and new technology is to find fresh ways to collaborate and partner. Creative collaborations inspire innovative approaches to multiple personal, professional and business issues.

Partnering – The Buddy System - is an effective, efficient way to successfully prepare for important meetings, presentations and yes, your job interview.

Andre Agassi, early in his career, found himself folding in the face of higher-seeded players when it came to the finals of big tournaments. To counter this habit, he hired and *partnered* with a team of people to help him prepare mentally, emotionally and physically. Partnering added new firepower to Andre's arsenal and helped to further develop his physical skills along with a winning mindset. He put the buddy system or team into action and it paid off – big time. Andre Agassi was soon the number one tennis player in the world, as well as one of the few to win all four Grand Slams. He won those Grand Slams on three different surfaces: hard surface, clay and grass.

On a more personal note...

A few years ago, I was preparing to make a corporate presentation to a very large financial services company.

This was a big project that had the potential of being rewarding in every way. I was purposeful, focused and determined. For the presentation I spent weeks, many, many hours researching, structuring, fine-tuning. It was important to me to be well prepared, sharp and professional. Truth is, I wanted to be great. In fact, I wanted so much to be great, to do it perfectly, that this project had become all consuming. Anxious, oh yeah. Nervous? Yes, indeed. The interview had taken on a larger-than-life meaning. It felt life- and career-defining.

My younger brother, Jeffrey, a financial advisor, was a great thought-partner. Just before going to the interview, he put his arm on my shoulder, looked me in the eyes with the “I see you” way that only people who really love you can, and said to me, *You care. You're prepared. You've done your homework. You're good at what you do and you bring value. And remember: Some will, some won't, so what?*

For a moment my jaw dropped...some will, some won't, so what? What do you mean, **SO WHAT?** I said, "This is your best coaching? Hey, dude... I want this job."

With his other hand on my shoulder and a hint of a smile, he replied, "Want, yes. Need, no. Some will, some won't. So what?"

"Oh, right, SO WHAT."

I relaxed immediately. My shoulders dropped, my sense of humor and ease returned.

Like Luke Skywalker getting advice from Yoda. This was my brother's way of saying, "There is no try, do. Trust the Force."

Partnering provides access to new ideas, fresh perspective and support. It offers insights for growth and is mutually beneficial. *Partnering* can be one of the most potent and profound forms of accountability. Studies show that we are far more likely to get things done, achieve our goals when we have shared them with a trusted friend or colleague. Sometimes it's your not-so-little brother.

Interview Cues/Reminders

- *How could you benefit from more teamwork?*
- *What are three challenges you would focus and improve upon with the help of a buddy?*
- *What are three challenges you have not faced? How would a buddy help?*
- *What is one way you would like to improve your own partnering?*

KEY #5 - PRACTICE

Many people shy away from practice, concerned that over-practice will make them sound or look too stiff, or too rehearsed. Because of this, many of those same people end up talking too much, going into too many irrelevant details or go off on unrelated tangents that will put their panel-audience to sleep. *Build rapport without being a bore.*

The other value of practice is to prepare for the unexpected or unwanted responses or questions. It is critical to determine how you react when you get emotionally hi-jacked. When someone delivers bad news, it can throw you into a reactive state, kick you right out of your zone and into fight or flight mode. When people turn down requests or don't want to buy what you are selling, you can lose confidence, and feel stuck for what to say or do next.

This is why *practice* is so important. It enhances your confidence and can immediately rescue you from a downward spiral – even in mid-thought, mid-sentence. With *practice*, you can interrupt the voice of the critic. In your head, gently whisper, “Stop.”

As you walk between phone calls and meetings, begin to practice sensing your feet on the ground. Become well acquainted with the experience of *having your feet on the ground.*

This way, when you step into your job interview you can more readily maintain contact with the floor. This will enhance their impression of you as a well-grounded individual.

A couple of years ago, I worked with a VP of sales who was preparing and practicing for his meeting with a company CEO.

Jim had carefully researched the company and understood their challenges, concerns and opportunities moving forward. He felt confident he could provide value. Jim and the CEO talked for about thirty minutes and it seemed to be going well. But at the end of the presentation, the CEO said, “That’s about a 6, and we’re looking for an 8.”

Not what Jim was hoping to hear. He was thrown momentarily. Everything he had worked for could slip away in an instant. Jim briefly paused, sensed his feet on the ground and slowly took a deep breath. He was determined to stay in the conversation. It suddenly occurred to him to simply ask, “So, what would be an 8?”

The CEO smiled and named four additional issues that he hadn’t mentioned before. One of them was right in my client’s wheelhouse. Jim said, “I can help you with that.”

How do you like them apples? Can you relate to that defining moment?

When the CEO said, “That’s about a 6, we’re looking for an 8,” many people would collapse, quit and leave with their tail between their legs. My client had practiced his response, done his homework, was clear about his purpose, and passionate about the service he was offering.

His *practice sessions* had helped him to be agile enough to recover his poise, hold his ground, and then advance rather than retreat. He stayed in the conversation. He got his client to tell him what he wanted. The CEO named the problem he needed solved, and my client was able to provide a solution and close the deal.

Whenever my six-year-old son is able to do something he could not do the day before, I remind him by gently asking: “Michael, how do you get good at something?”

“Practice,” he says with a knowing smile.

Purposeful, Passionate, Prepared, Partnered and well Practiced - but how do you calibrate all this energy and power? Much of what goes on in the interview is between the lines, in the silences and in the non-verbal communication. The panel is taking measure of this creature before them. You. They want to know if you have the confidence when under pressure to lead in this role.

As I watch our kids struggle with anything from pulling on socks to tying shoes, I am reminded of just how important it is to develop a higher tolerance for frustration. We get good and master the things we are willing to *practice*.

Interview Cues/Reminders

- Write your opening and closing statement.
- Record yourself.
- Listen to or watch the recording and critique yourself.
- Ask your partner to listen to you rehearse your opening, your close and a few questions and answers.
- Ask your partner for feedback. What worked well? What would work even better?

KEY #6 - POISE

Poise = Balance

Poise is the confidence to stay in the conversation; to be genuine, unruffled and self-assured.

A few years back, an actor called me after his first Broadway preview, which had gone badly. “I was so frightened,” he told me, “that when I opened my mouth to sing, I only got part of the song out. I just froze. I felt so ashamed.”

The producers understood to a point; but it was clear that, if he didn’t find his voice in the next performance, he would probably be out of a job. We didn’t have much time.

I asked him, “Why do you sing?” He grinned. “I feel alive and excited when I sing.” I asked, “What was so scary?”

After a moment of reflection, he confessed, “All of a sudden, I looked out there over the stage lights and I could see, hear and sense... a thousand people out there... it just hit me, what if they don’t like me?”

Ahh. Yes, I think we all can relate to that fear. “The thing is,” I began, “your fear is justified. Some of those thousand people probably aren’t going to like you or your singing. But there are

people who don't like Adele or Beyoncé - so what? You told me you're alive when you sing. Remember your purpose: Sing to share that aliveness. Keep in mind, your excitement needs to be bigger than any concerns about whether they like you or not." He agreed.

"Also," I said "you need to prepare a way to regroup swiftly during instances where the butterflies really fly wild."

"Oh, *that*."

"The challenge is getting all the butterflies flying in formation."

He laughed; I added, "Stand up even straighter. Be intentional about breathing in slow and deep; be purposeful about sensing your feet on the stage. If you can feel your feet... your voice will be there for you."

Twenty-four hours later, his voice was there for him... And he kept his job.

Poise is our attitude in the moment we stand up after falling.

Everyone I have known who has worked their way up the ladder, has had to face the fear of rejection. A big weight will be lifted from your shoulders when you

realize you don't have to be perfect. You bring the best you have to offer today.

The interview panel wants to know you are comfortable in your own skin. The perception of poise is generated when you give the people and the conversation your focus and attention.

Wisdom of the Body

Assessing the combination of the quality of your thoughts, sensations and emotions is a mood check. See if you can identify one word that captures your mood in the moment. This is one way to begin being present and becoming more intentional about inhabiting your body.

Mood Check

Use the Mood Check to calibrate your mood and connect with confidence.

- Sense
- Think
- Feel

Under stress, many people tend to hold their breath. Breathe. Remind yourself to breathe; it will inspire you, help you to relax, trust and allow them to see and get to know the real you. This will help you manage your energy and present yourself as a leader whose feet are on the ground.

Eat to Win

Eat real food. Be curious about the what, when and how much to eat. Some of us need more carbohydrates; others need more proteins. For a more-focused job interview performance, learn what combination of nutrients your body needs. When you have the right fuel in your engine, your motor will hum. With your blood sugar balanced and brain chemistry supported, you will be more confident, at ease and poised.

Rise to the Challenge

The higher up you go, the smaller the funnel. There is always someone else who is vying for the very job you want. If you are to successfully compete, you need to be well prepared and self-aware. One area for self-awareness is how you perceive yourself as a competitor about competition. Do you like to compete? Can you handle the heat? When you imagine yourself seated across from the panel, what happens to you? Does your heart rate increase? Sweaty palms, cold feet, red face? Some people get the shakes, others even throw-up before the big game, performance or interview. People preparing for high stakes events experience the gamut of sensations and emotions from excitement to fear.

What happens to you when the stakes are high? What happens to you under pressure? Do you talk too fast?

Clench your jaw? Hold your breath? Find it difficult to speak?

Competitive Fire

The job interview is a competition. Each of us responds to the heat of competition in different ways. For some it is an adrenaline rush, and life affirming. For others there is no rush, it is pure terror.

One of the ways you can differentiate yourself is to develop the ability to manage your physiology. Those who can perform with the highest levels of neuro-physiological activation – can compete and win. There are others that enter the arena with too low a flame.

Everyone has doubts and fears. So what?

If you are going to compete – turn up the heat.

Interview Cues/Reminders

Relax your shoulders and soften your jaw. Stand up or sit up even straighter. An erect spine sends a message of confidence and dignity.

Your Mantra:

- I have earned my seat at this table.
- I belong.
- I am the right person for this job.

KEY #7 – PRESENTATION

The 7 Keys *working their magic as one*

Presentation is a promise you make to people about who you are and what you will do. Your interview is evaluated on the quality of your content and the way you make contact. It's not only what you say, but also how you say it. You are being judged on the way you walk, talk and sit, from what you wear, to the cut of your hair. The clothes you wear need to reflect the particular corporate culture. At one company it may be jeans, at another it will be a classic suit.

How quickly do people make assessments about you? In the blink of an eye. You need to walk into that room in a state of ready-now.

Several years ago, my father was diagnosed with prostate cancer. We sat together waiting to meet the surgeon prior to his surgery. My dad was scared, frightened of what they might find. The surgeon, wearing tennis shoes, bounded through the door. He was long, lean and energetic. He was the walking embodiment of Can-Do.

He shook my father's hand, looked him straight in the eyes and said simply, "We're going to go in and get it done." He conveyed absolute

confidence. It was clear that this was a seasoned, well-prepared professional. He knew what he was doing. If you had to get this operation, you would want this guy to do it.

The following morning, when my dad awoke from the anesthesia, I got to share with him the good news. “Pop, the doctor delivered on his promise. You made it, Papa, and you’re going to be OK. Everything will still be in working order.”

We want our doctors to be confident; it reassures us. We want our leaders to be confident as well. When you present your services, your authentic confidence is essential to the “Remarkable” customer – or interview-panel - experience.

Leadership or Executive Presence

The job interview is a *presentation* of your value proposition. *Presentation* is verbal and non-verbal. Studies indicate that 93% of what we communicate is non-verbal.

People get a gut sense of who we are at “hello.” Trust or distrust us, like or dislike us on sight. They feel our warmth and accessibility or the frost of our distant demeanor.

There is a particular blend of experience, know-how and confidence, which produces a special kind of *Presence*.

Whose *presence* has made a big impression on you?

I remember the first time I saw a Bruce Lee film. In one scene, he climbs down a rope, landing silently like a cat. Stealthily, he moves looking carefully for danger. Pausing, but even without turning his head could sense the villain creeping up from behind him. There was something thrilling watching how he moved. The way he seemed to listen with all his senses and then felt danger approaching. He then reacted skillfully and lethally. *Presence*.

At the age of 21, Mike Tyson, then Heavyweight Champion of the World, had a dangerous presence as he faced off against any opponent in the ring. Recently, I saw him on stage in a one-man show about his life. He is formidable, but his passion and power were now expressed through his words instead of his fists. And instead of his usual fury he shared his wins, losses and tragic mistakes with a certain humility and humor. His expressive physicality and voice were confident and authentic. *Presence*.

Margaret Thatcher had an air of stoic restraint, a steely determination and intelligence in the glint of her eyes. She carried herself in a way that appeared somewhat elusive and flinty. But always assured. One knew immediately that she did not and would not suffer fools. *Presence*.

The Dali Lama beams with kindness. It is conveyed through his twinkling eyes, ever-present smile as well as the graceful and gentle way he moves and talks. *Presence*.

Interview Cues/Reminders

- Put the panel – your customer – at ease.
- Get the attention off yourself.
- Present an inviting, confident smile.
- Assure them through your tone voice.
- Dress for success.
- Let them know – you’ve got this!

The Close

Your close is your call to action. Simply, clearly and confidently ask for the job. Let them know in your own words that you want the job. Be simple. Be clear. Be confident.

It takes courage to ask. Courage: The source-word for courage is from the French word “coeur” meaning heart.

It takes courage to ask from the heart. But, remember: “Ask and Ye shall receive.” Courage and commitment are required to fulfill your purpose.

There is only one *you*. You are unique. No one else has your history, your perspective, personality and DNA. Stay in the moment; stay in the conversation. Listen. No matter what, keep breathing.

GETTING THE JOB - *THE 7 KEYS*

Apply *The 7 Keys* –

- *Purpose* – provides focus and the why you do what you do
- *Passion* – the spark which propels people into action
- *Preparation* – Get ready. The time when strategy and approach is developed
- *Partnering* – creating leverage through collaboration
- *Practice* – how people get better – achieve mastery
- *Poise* – dignity and grace amidst the unexpected
- *Presentation* – telling your story, getting real and closing the deal

*If you want to compete – you must turn up the heat.
Build rapport – and don't be a bore.*

*To raise your game - turn up the flame.
Have fun – and **Get That Job!***

NOTES

Getting the Job – The 7 Keys

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