

Culturally-Competent Awareness of Body Language

An Interview tool for Employers in BC's Natural Gas Sector

The most impactful element of communication is the non-verbal component – closely followed by tone of voice. Body language and modulation varies greatly from person to person and often results in miscommunication. Between cultures and countries, continents apart, such non-verbal communicators span the gamut of 'normal' custom. This tool targets just a few of the more common 'face-to-face' miscommunications to help you focus on a more accurate assessment of the candidate.

BODY LANGUAGE	ASSUMPTION / REACTION	ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION
No eye contact	Not trustworthy, shifty	Respect for authority; candidate does not want to appear challenging
Shaking head from side to side	No	Actually, YES! (i.e. India and Japan)
Soft or gentle handshake	Not assertive/confident, weak	Conveys respect rather than power or strength
Unusual gestures/closeness	Rude	Acceptable cultural convention



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

“Most recruiters make the decision to hire/not hire in the first seven minutes.”

La Roche and Rutherford. Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees. Elsevier Inc. 2007, p 30.

Test your cultural awareness / openness

The candidate arrives 20 minutes early wearing a strong perfume, stands three feet away from you, looks you up and down, gives a prolonged hand-shake, maintains continuous eye contact, and chit-chats about family and politics.

Have you made up your mind against this candidate already? Why? Can you maintain an open mind knowing cultural differences may be causing the behavior? Can you maintain an open mind knowing these cultural differences may not necessarily relate to job performance?