

«What do I do with my hands in the job interview?»

A customer asked me this question years ago during job interview training. A justified question? Yes and no. Of course, we have to do something with our hands in a job interview; gestures are part of communication. But the question tempts us to observe ourselves during the interview and to concentrate on outward appearances. And if you observe yourself, you are no longer with yourself.

Peter Näf

Do you know how I can tell that applicants have trained themselves for job interviews with a camera? They are waving their hands in front of their chest as if they are rolling an imaginary, thick lump of dough so that it doesn't fall to the floor. Their upper body is tilted slightly backwards, and their chin is pointing slightly upwards. Well - that doesn't exactly look authentic. No one would naturally gesticulate like that.

I advised my customer - Marcel (name changed) - to simply put his hands on the table and not worry about them. Keeping your hands above the edge of the table is a confidence-building measure that we have inherited from our ancestors. In archaic times, they used it to ensure that their counterparts were not handling a weapon - today it would probably be a smartphone - under the table.

Job application robots trained online

The job interview training went badly. Marcel had prepared meticulously, researched the supposedly most important interview questions on the Internet and found the perfect answers. Today he would probably prepare with Chat GPT. I felt like I was talking to a robot; his gestures were also rehearsed and unnatural.

So, I tried to show him that I would like to get to know him and was convinced that he would come across much more convincingly than the façade of a perfect applicant that he was trying to present to me. To no avail. How could I get him to communicate, at least for a short time, in a way that would reveal the person behind the façade?

The hands follow the language

I pulled out all the stops to distract him so that he dropped out of the applicant role. When I was about to give up, he suddenly told me about his family background in a very personal way for about three minutes. His body relaxed, he leant forward slightly and told me what really moved him. His voice and facial expression softened. His hands emphasised his statements with harmonious movements. It was all a piece: credible, human, and convincing. I gave him feedback that communicating like that he would be convincing in the job interview.

I don't know whether he dared to go into the interviews as Marcel. Communicating authentically by being true to yourself is not a technique, it's an attitude.

But the only recommendations I gave him regarding his body posture in the job interview were: Sit up straight without leaning and feel your two ischial tuberosities on the chair. Place your feet shoulder-width apart on the floor and put your hands on the table. And then concentrate on the interview; your hands will then know what to do.

[#jobinterview](#) [#application](#) [#selfmarketing](#)

Please find further articles on career topics on my homepage
<https://karrierecoaching.ch/en/articles/>

