

SKILLS FOR A SUCCESSFUL GROUP DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

Developing group discussion skills is useful and essential, as we find ourselves regularly engaging in discussions with friends, family and colleagues. Discussions may vary from very informal chats, regarding casual activities to more serious debatable topics. Additionally, in recent times, group discussions (GD) are increasingly being employed for professional purposes such as interviews and selection procedures in companies. GDs offer an opportunity for extended speaking (and listening) practice to all of the participants. Rightly speaking, group discussion is more a technique than a conventional test. Therefore, continuous practice and development of skills associated with GD is useful and essential for all students.

KEYWORDS: Group Discussion, Skills, Recruitment, Job Market

INTRODUCTION

Group discussions occur in many different formats, ranging from very informal ones which is a common event between friends, to a highly structured and challenging one which is included as part of a selection or recruitment process. In both of the above mentioned scenarios, there are a number of skills that students need to garner and develop in order to excel at contributing effectively to a GD. Many companies and institutes admitting students for higher education resort to group discussion, as one of their criteria for screening and selection of candidates. There are two main reasons cited by recruiters and educationists for giving huge importance for GD. Firstly, a GD is used for mass elimination. And secondly, the selection criteria in a GD are based on the employer's, or the company's requirements.

Essential Skills in a Group Discussion

Most companies organize selection GDs, with very large groups of people. And, in order to shine among them it is mandatory to master few skills. The following are a few skills that are used to judge a candidate in a group discussion.

- Your level of communication with others.
- Behavior (Non- verbal communication) and interaction with group.
- Level of open mindedness.
- Listening skill.
- Putting your views across convincingly (Speaking skill).
- Leadership and decision making skills.
- Reasoning, analysis and subject knowledge.

- Problem solving and critical thinking skill.
- Attitude and confidence.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF GROUP DISCUSSION

Maintaining Eye Contact

It is not sufficient to have eye contact with the evaluators alone. Maintaining eye contact with every team member or participant while speaking is essential as it will project your eagerness.

Initiating the GD

Initiating the GD is a big advantage for a participant as it would portray his/ her confidence. But one should be cautious while resorting to this, only when the topic of discussion is clearly understood by the speaker and he/ she possesses some knowledge on the same. Speaking without proper subject knowledge would create a bad impression.

Allowing Others to Speak

Interrupting anyone while speaking is strictly forbidden in a GD. Even if, you disagree with his/her thoughts, it is bad manners to deny them their chance to speak. Instead one can make some notes of the points of conflicting interests and discuss about the same when given a turn.

Clarity of Speech

Clear and polite speech is what a potential employer would be expecting in a candidate during a GD. Utilization of complex sentences should be avoided as it can be very confusing for the other participants of the GD. Simple and understandable words while speaking is advisable during GDs. Being too aggressive and in constant disagreement with participants should be avoided. Expressing thoughts in a calm and polite is must. Controlling volume and pace is essential.

Bringing the Discussion on Track

If by any means group is deviating from the topic given, initiative should be taken to bring the discussion, back on track. All participants of the GD should be notified about the need to come to some conclusion at the end of the discussion and these conclusive comments can also, be drafted in the form of recommendations in certain cases. So, participants are encouraged to stick to the topic and speak to the point.

Positive Attitude

In accordance with the saying, confidence is the key to success being confident with the right attitude will have a positive effect in the long run. Avoid dominating anyone. A positive body language showing interest in discussion is helpful.

Speaking Sensibly

Avoid speaking just to increase your speaking time. Keep your speech crisp and short. One does not have to worry if he/she has spoken only for a less amount of time. The employer would judge you based on your sensibility of thoughts and relevance to the topic concerned. Therefore it is best to avoid irrelevant speech.

Listening

Speak less and listen more is a rule that is to be followed in a GD. Paying attention to what others are speaking help in the building of a coherent discussion and will encourage involvement in the group positively.

Avoiding Too Many Details

Providing basic subject details is sufficient for a GD. Mentioning exact figures and statistical data while referring to a particular event is not necessary. Since the time provided is limited one has to be precise and thoughts should be conveyed in short and simple language.

Dressing Formally

Avoid a laid back and casual attitude. Fancy and funny dressing should be kept at arm's length as it will prove to be a distraction. Positive gesture and body language will be reflected through appropriate dressing. This will make your work of convincing your fellow participants and proving your point easy.

CONCLUSIONS

With an ever-rising demand of recruitment in various sectors, group discussion rounds have become extremely crucial. This is a medium through which the panelists judge the better candidate, for the desired position. The different formats of GDs are exercised, in order to prepare students for job interviews or as extended speaking practice to improve one's communication skill. It is important to take into consideration the different sub-skills that are involved in a GD, understand their usage and ensure that, they are all addressed. Additionally, students should be given feedback by their tutor or teaching faculty in charge, which should be framed in a manner that will help the students, to identify the areas which require further improvement and work towards the same to attain success in a GD.

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