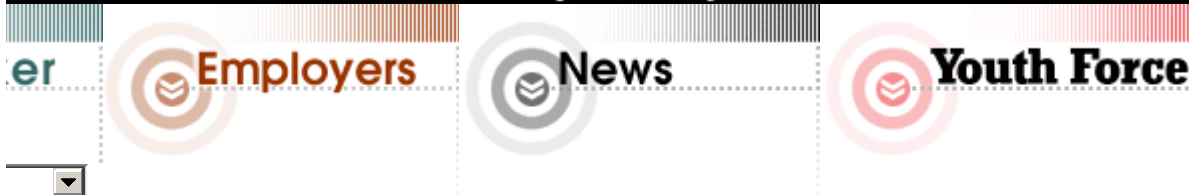




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News

Ready, set, go!

By LINDA WHITE -- Special to the Toronto Sun

If you've spent any time looking for a job recently, you may have heard about speed interviewing. Like speed dating, creating a positive first impression could open the door to a second encounter. But don't let the name fool you -- being successful means making every minute count.



BENEFITS

Speed interviewing allows employers to meet large groups of candidates in a short period of time -- saving them valuable time and money. Proponents believe this recruiting technique also benefits candidates by increasing the number of potential employers they can access.

Each sitting typically lasts five to 15 minutes -- more than enough time to determine whether a candidate is a potential fit within an organization, maintains Tim Cork, president of Nexcareer Inc., a career transition company in Toronto.

Recruiters usually know within the first few minutes whether a candidate is a possible fit within the organization, but will spend up 30 or more minutes with poor matches simply as a courtesy, Cork explains.

He believes speed interviewing can be used in all recruiting efforts, from entry-level positions all the way up to senior executives. Getting straight "A"s -- attitude, aptitude and action -- is key to landing a second interview, Cork says.

"The first thing that comes through is your attitude. If you feel good about yourself ... others will feel good about you, too," he says. "Aptitude or knowledge is about how smart you are and what you bring to the table ... Action is proof of some of your skills. All three are interrelated. The first one is on because you have the other two."

LAW FIRMS

Speed interviewing has been especially popular as a method of recruiting recent graduates and others with similar education and/or work experience. It's

been a standard practice among law firms for a number of years now and is even dictated by Law Society of Upper Canada guidelines.

A law student submits their resume to numerous firms in hopes of landing a speed interview. A firm can interview 20 students at just one on-campus recruiting event -- and even more at larger universities -- reports Michelle Gage, director of student programs at Ogilvy Renault LLP in Toronto.

She firmly believes speed interviews benefit both employers and potential employees. "We can see many more candidates than we would under the old process." Some candidates are much more impressive in person than they are on paper and vice versa.

Out of 250 interviews, Gage typically selects 80 applicants for more in-depth interviews and will eventually hire 12 to 16. What impresses her? "Attention to detail ... I'm also looking for evidence of teamwork ability, evidence of intellectual curiosity and evidence of communication skills."

The University of Windsor prepares its law students for speed interviews. "They need to have a sense of their skills, their interests, what their experiences have taught them," says Francine Herlehy, assistant dean of student services.

"They need confidence ... an initial ice breaker and a success story for every item on their resume. They need to be ready to talk about why they chose this career and their future goals."

Though speed interviewing has earned fans, some recruiters are wary about its long-term impact. "In Canada, speed interviewing is not a huge trend within companies because they are inclined to call in just a few candidates to interview," says Sharon Graham, president and principal consultant at Graham Management Group and executive director of Career Professionals of Canada.

"Generally, speed interviews occur at job and career fairs. Company representatives attending want to see as many candidates as possible in a limited amount of time," Graham says. "So if you are going to a job fair, be prepared to dazzle the recruiters in a very short period of time."

GET UP TO SPEED

Speed interviewing does not need to be stressful. Sharon Graham, executive director of Career Professionals of Canada, offers the following preparation tips:

- Identify the competencies or skills the recruiters are looking for.
- Prepare some highly visual stories about your accomplishments. Use the "situation-action-result" formula to add impact and punch.
- Prepare a clear and concise response to the question, "Tell me about yourself?" It's usually the opener in a speed interview and you want to ensure you make the best possible first impression.

Other tips:

- Research the company you are applying to.
- Dress for success.
- Don't speak for any more than two minutes at one time.

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