

TECHNOLOGY PLUS CREATIVE WORK: A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF THE RECRUITING INTERVIEW

The ability to act in situations of uncertainty is the art which becomes more and more important as a subject in the framework of teaching management technologies.

The interview enhanced with improvisation techniques and links to artistic techniques can be effectively used for moving the frames of behavioral templates, which bring closer to each other manager and candidate.

This art frequently remains outside the framework of standard forms of management education, in particular traditionally used by the MBA model for case studies. It demands not so much rational analysis of situations and employment of traditional instruments: It demands the development of intuition, ability to assess situations, start a constructive dialog and receive crucial information literally “from the air”. All this requires non standard methods of education.

The search of effective ways for the skill development of managers to act in conditions of uncertainty motivated the authors of this article for the creation of unusual training programmes.

A Combination of standard techniques for Western European recruiting interviews and non-standard artistic elements allows both - managers and candidates, to stay in the familiar interview scenario, but move outside the common field of templates. They can find new problem-solving methods, not available with conventional methods. Talented managers frequently use art techniques unconsciously and have wonderful results in different areas. We raise the topic to research fields of the application of art techniques in management situations and found internal “algorithms” of artistic elements during the conduct of our training.

The programme merges intellectual resources of the Federal Centre of Sociological Skills (St Petersburg State University) and Swiss company Delta JS which practices consulting. The aim of the programme is the development of a fundamentally new approach for conducting recruiting interviews. The training uses English and Russian language – and integrates recruiting techniques which are used in West-European corporations and integrates Russian techniques from the sphere of visual communication and art-therapy.

A recruiting interview is an event based on a certain scenario. Its variants can take different directions which can be unexpected for both sides. The manager and the interviewee are two different worlds and their communication calls for mutual attention and the capacity to improvise. The usage of non-standard art techniques can:

- Turn a recruiting interview into an effective instrument to create the base for a future mutually beneficial relationship between the candidate and his or her potential employer.
- Collect delicate additional information which helps to shape an adequate profile of the candidates future tasks and can help to structure compensation instruments.
- Change the process of the interview towards an artistic improvisation which brings energy, a more relaxed atmosphere, pleasure and new ideas to all participants.

RECRUITING INTERVIEW: BALANCE OF RATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND THE REQUIREMENT OF IMPROVISATION

Before the beginning of the interview candidates frequently suppose that the manager has read his resume very attentively, that he is impressed, and so the questions which will follow will be logical and connected with this information.

But in reality the framework for interviewee and manager can be the following: the manager has gone through several frustrating meetings, the secretary is on holidays, the assistant forgot to print out the resume. And at the end of the working day one colleague suggests to join him for the job interview while he wanted to get on his way home. In addition he confuses the candidate with someone else. All this is not conducive to create a working atmosphere and common understanding with the candidate. Meanwhile, the

candidate may also not be in perfect shape.

Instead of being calm, focused and attentive, as the conditions demand, the candidate could:

— Have read piles of scientific literature, has studied books and papers each night on professional topics and has rehearsed his or her speech a lot of times. As the result of not getting enough sleep his thoughts mix up, and it is impossible for him or her to recall the first phrase.

— If the candidate is a man, he feels nervous because of the harmony of suit and tie; if it

is a woman, she can be nervous because she had to put on a skirt which is too short and not appropriate for the interview;

— Have bought several books like “How to win a job among 200 candidates” and tries to follow them step by step.

— Sit totally exhausted in his chair in front of the manager fearing to radiate incompetence (although he is competent enough as a specialist) and can't remember a word from his “presentation”.

Certainly these situations can seem exaggerated and the real one can be much more “normal” and more appropriate for a fruitful dialog. It is important that the joint conditions of candidate and manager could be described mathematically as a huge number of random combinations. Therefore, there is the same amount of interview scenarios.

For the recruiting practice the awareness and usage of information asymmetry contains value, monetary and non monetary for the firm and the candidate alike:

— it narrows the gap between the standard list of functions on paper and the real tasks which the candidate will face in his work;

— helps to structure and to individualize form and volume of compensation for the professional services of the candidate;

— facilitates the process of working out individual contracts and structures the split between monetary (salary, bonuses) and non-monetary compensation (e.g. language courses or professional training paid by the company).

Communication between people cannot be controlled only with the help of logic and standard schemes.

Under the thin layer of information

about the interlocutor that is known there is a large information stratum which is unknown for us. The discrepancy between the “**unknown truth**”, which is possessed by another side, and our own “**known truth**” is called “**information asymmetry**”. The decrease and at the same time creative realization of this asymmetry is a difficult task to which we pay attention very rarely.

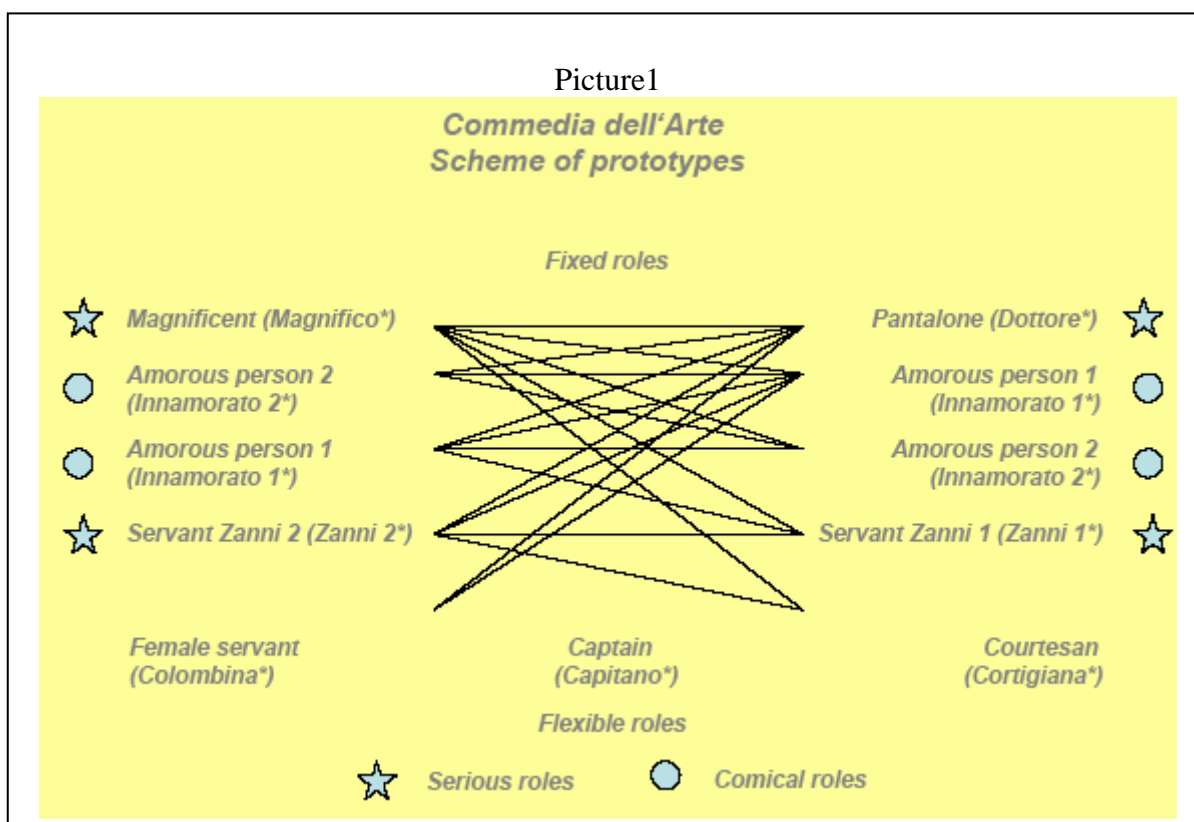
NON-TRADITIONAL METHOD OF ORGANIZING AN INTERVIEW FOR CANDIDATES AND MANAGERS: USAGE OF THE TECHNIQUES OF COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AND THE CHOICE BETWEEN “FLEXIBLE” AND “FIXED” ROLES

The way of following fixed standards and scenarios as is typical for classical management education is effective only when we possess full information. If we want to search a solution in the conditions of information asymmetry we need to step aside from the standard scenario, be able to operate distinguished scripts and to combine them depending on the situation, and sometimes – refuse all known scenarios and create in principle new ones.

The interview which is enhanced with artistic techniques of improvisation can be effectively used with the aim to enlarge frames of typical behavior and draw together the manager and the candidate. Effective and at the same time striking techniques for application in the situation of uncertainty – is the situation from the famous commedia dell'arte which springs from the Venetian carnival.

In Commedia dell'arte exist well-known personalities – Harlequin, the foolish old man Pantalone and pretty young lady Colombina – all they are not characters but types based on two kinds of roles. “Fixed” role – is a standard, given and rehearsed role, it is always the same. “Flexible” role is based on improvisation, an actor has only the skeleton of the role but all sketches and cues can be arbitrary. Theatre dell'arte is interactive, spectators become participants of the play. So the actors of dell'arte are usually artists of improvisation who keep the given character of the “type”, but they immediately react to the cues of spectators and other actors (pict. 1).

Picture 1. The scheme of relationship between types in Commedia dell'arte.



It is supposed that a recruiting interview (by the confrontation of personalities, unpredictability of scenarios, ways to exchange views, tension of action) is very close to the sketch with participation of characters from commedia dell'arte. Managers and candidates don't know each other before and they firstly meet each other as the “types”, in other words they are within the limits of **their professional roles**.

Professional roles of the participants of the interview are limited by the strict frames of the hierarchy of organization and are “fixed” or using the terminology of dell'arte “scenario roles” (this is “known truth” of asymmetric information). The techniques of commedia dell'arte suppose communication with the partner outside the limits of his professional role – using techniques and instruments that allow to interact **on a basis of equality and improvisation**. Combination of “fixed” and “flexible” roles helps to recognize an unpredictable personality in a “flexible” role (in other words, to open “unknown truth” diminishing information asymmetry).

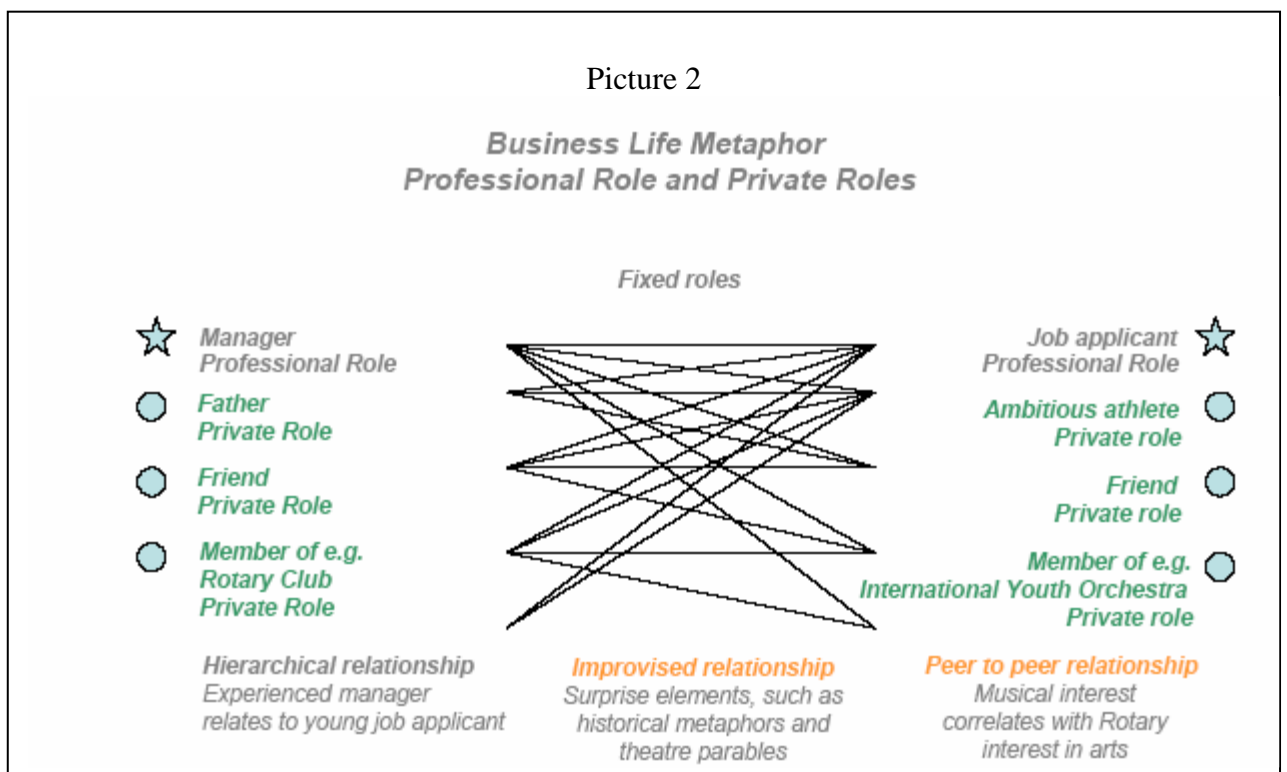
If the interlocutors perceive each other only as bearers of specific professional characteristics, the situation noticeably impoverishes and frequently doesn't allow to reveal important information for both sides (and for business!). Meanwhile, when we meaningfully stay in the roles of "manager" and "candidate" at the same time we are in all other our roles with all their advantages and disadvantages. And these roles interfere in the way of negotiation and sometimes turn it into an undesirable scenario. The conversation of interviewee and interviewer can change into the dialog of "ambitious careerist" and "person with complexes", "pragmatic person" and "romantic person", "parent" and "child" etc. (pict. 2)

In order to make interviews successful its participants should:

- understand what types talk to each other
- how they can meaningfully manage the transfer from one role to another
- how to enlarge the spectrum of their own roles

The success of the candidate, pledge of his/her future career growth in the company requires the following:

- assessment which of his/her possible roles are appropriate to the desirable position and which roles correspond to the situation of the interview, for example:
- try to pick up which roles correspond to the strategy of the company during the interview and on this base:
- harmoniously follow the "role dance" in the dialog.



In this case the combination of roles, which is caused by the aims of the interview and dialog dynamics, and the use of not only the professional but also other roles, allows to estimate fully the candidate's professional skills and to open concealed potential.

It is clear that everyone recognizes actor's talent in himself. However this ability can be trained as any other skill, and the first step on this way is attentive attitude to yourself and to other people. And one important factor of opening and developing this attention is another quality of commedia dell'arte - humour. A very serious treatment towards oneself will make a lot of role templates disappear but may render professional life and life in general more simplistic.

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