In a recent study, Right Management determined that five critical communication skills, above all others, made the difference between job candidates who performed well in interviews and those who did not. These key findings provide essential methods to enhance your ability to communicate effectively and powerfully.

**Top Five Communication Skills Essential to Career Success**

**Conciseness of Answers.** Nothing turns an interviewer off more than a meandering, overlong answer to an interview question. Long answers show that a candidate is nervous and may have missed the point of the question, possibly trying to substitute volume for substance. Such an answer is discourteous, wasting the interviewer’s valuable time with stories that don’t address the issue being discussed.

Good advance interview preparation, including feedback from someone whose advice you respect, will help you formulate answers which strike the right balance between fully responding to interview questions and keeping your comments to an appropriate length.

**Structure of Answers.** A concise, structured response to a question indicates organized thinking and demonstrates that you have command of your subject matter and know how to communicate it. Anticipating questions beforehand allows you to prepare and practice answers—a key to ensuring you communicate a compelling and relevant message. Being effective in an interview is similar to being an effective public speaker. Each answer is a highly condensed speech and may contain some of the same elements as a speech you would deliver to a larger audience, but in subtler form. Especially when responding to critical and complex questions, or questions requiring multi-part answers, you need to provide a sense of structure so the listener can easily follow what you are saying. For instance, you can preface your answer with an introductory statement that indicates the scope of what will follow. Each part of the answer, then, can be highlighted or “sign-posted” in some way to show what sub-topic you are addressing—much as bold headings might do in a printed article. Finally, you can wrap up your remarks with a simple statement that pulls your thoughts together and invites a response from the interviewer.

**Logical Flow of Information.** Logic is the means by which we make reasoned arguments to support our views—connecting ideas, providing evidence and drawing conclusions for a persuasive message. When you speak logically, people can follow your reasoning and see why you have arrived at your views. Logic can take many forms, including the following: a natural sequence or series of thoughts, as in the steps of a process; reasoning from cause to effect; supporting a general assertion with a
specific example or illustration; or moving from examples to a broader generalization. In an interview situation, logic is related to the idea of structure because it demonstrates orderly, thorough thinking—which are key qualities in any job. Conversely, if a job candidate makes broad assertions without strong reasoning or supportive examples, or presents ideas in a disjointed manner, an interviewer will have little basis to conclude that the individual is truly knowledgeable, able to lead others persuasively or to communicate effectively with management.

**Eye Contact.** It’s a fundamental fact of interpersonal communication that making eye contact increases the sense of rapport, engagement and mutual trust. Looking at the person to whom you are speaking communicates that you respect him or her and are giving your undivided attention. This is especially true when you are listening. If your eyes wander around the room or out into the hall while the interviewer is talking to you, you have unconsciously said you are not interested in what is being said, are easily distracted or have other things on your mind. Good eye contact does not have to be constant, as no one wants to feel stared at. But, it should be interrupted only occasionally and briefly.

If you find making eye contact difficult, be sure to practice this skill during your interview preparation and have a colleague or mentor evaluate how well you did and point out areas for improvement.

**Clarity of Speech.** You don’t have to be an actor or a radio announcer to speak clearly but you do need to give it conscious thought and make an effort. Few things ruin a good first impression as quickly as careless, mumbled or slurred speech. These make people think you don’t care if anyone hears or understands what you are saying, and a listener will soon stop trying. Sometimes unclear speech indicates shyness or lack of self-confidence. Practice sessions, including recording and reviewing your speech habits, combined with good coaching and feedback, can help tremendously to make your speech audible, clear, confident and natural.

### ABOUT RIGHT MANAGEMENT

Right Management is the leading global provider of integrated human capital consulting services and solutions across the employment lifecycle. We offer consulting services in four areas: Attract & Assess, Develop, Engage & Align, and Transition. These services help our clients maximize the return on investment in their people, while assisting individuals to achieve their full potential.

Right Management has a global network of more than 300 service locations in over 50 countries and is part of the Manpower Group of companies, the leader in the world of work. Partnering with business and HR leaders at mid-sized and large companies, we have over 3,100 employees, and serve 80% of the Fortune 500 and 50% of the Global 1000 companies.

For further information on effective job interviewing and communication skills, contact your local Right Management office.