

Yes, it's all about hocus-pocus strengths!

The question about personal strengths is a classic in job interviews. Many applicants consider it a standard question with little relevance. Or they think it should be left out because the strengths are not verifiable anyway. I have a different opinion.

Peter Näf

"Mr Näf, you don't mean those hocus-pocus strengths! "My client looked at me with a mixture of pity and pretended annoyance, with his head down and his eyebrows raised. This question was so irrelevant to him and he stated that anyone could say anything. I had just explained to my client the programme of our second session as part of a personal and professional assessment: strengths and storytelling. Somewhat reluctantly, he decided to follow my agenda. Not without emphasising once again that a career is about hard facts and that "touchy-feely" things like soft skills have no place there.

Storytelling brings it to light

Despite his objections, I managed to elicit the following story from my client during the session:

For many years he had been working for an international company in the ancillary construction business. For several years he managed the branch office in an Asian capital with a focus on business development. In the context of a call for tenders, he was invited to participate in an information event alongside other suppliers. It was about the awarding of installations for 1,200 new flats. The idea was to divide the

volume among 3-4 suppliers. In conversation with the decision-maker, he had gained the impression that this person had a preference for proactive personalities. He immediately called an employee he knew in production in Switzerland and asked him to send a very specific product by express to Asia. He was to take the package personally to the airport.

Good storytelling is what counts

The next day, my client picked up the package personally at the airport, unpacked it and drove to the company that had tendered the order. He let himself be led to the person in charge, put the product on the desk and said: "This is my offer!" He then received the entire contract with all 1,200 flats. I was excited by the story and asked a few more questions to fully understand it. One question was how he had managed to get the co-worker in Switzerland to do him this favour. He answered that he had visited the production departments again and again during his time in the main business in Switzerland, as he was interested in the employees and their work.

The client finally agreed with me that the success in the story was based solely on personal strengths. Anyone can claim to be empathetic, entrepreneurial, proactive, committed, smart and strategically skilled. But only my client could tell this magical story.

[#Storytelling](#), [#Strengths](#), [#Personal branding](#)

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