

Sell yourself well – talk (also) about your weaknesses!

Most applicants sell themselves in the application process by talking exclusively about their merits and qualities. A supposedly flawless image, however, evokes resistance from recruiters. It is therefore high time to deal with the so-called Sarick effect.

Peter Näf

In his book "Originals", Adam Grant mentions the effect described by the sociologist Leslie Sarick and named after her. It is about achieving sales success with critically minded customers by formulating arguments against the product or service. He gives the example of a man who set up an online magazine and blog with information for expectant parents. He attracted venture capitalists by giving them the top five reasons why they should NOT invest in his business. After two years, he wanted to sell this to Disney. Since the sale had worked so well over the weaknesses last time, he decided to do a re-do. He again gave a sales presentation with the main reasons for not going into the business. Disney then bought it from him for \$40 million.

Every investment has weaknesses

Why does the Sarick effect work? Every product and every investment have advantages and disadvantages. Potential buyers are therefore on their guard and do not only want to hear the positive aspects. They have questions and doubts. And they look for weak points in the offer. Normally, sellers only emphasise the positive aspects of their offer and want to give the impression that there are no disadvantages. This

triggers resistance in the customers. If the salesperson reveals the weaknesses himself, the resistance collapses. The pressure falls away, the customers relax, trust grows and a real conversation can take place.

Stand up for your weaknesses

Recruiting employees is an investment decision. Depending on the position to be filled, it is not only a matter of a lot of money. The future success of the company may depend on successful recruitment. And applicants also have their advantages and disadvantages, their strengths and weaknesses. Recruiters are critical conversation partners because of their role. If you take the Sarick effect to heart, the much-hated question about weaknesses becomes an opportunity for a successful interview. Address your weaknesses and show how you deal with them successfully. This builds confidence. Recruiters have a good feel for people and they may have already discovered your weaknesses. If you address these on your own initiative, it creates a basis for a real exchange about mutual expectations. As an interviewer, I have experienced several times that applicants have qualified for the next round of interviews by their convincing answer to the question about their weaknesses.

Real confidence and personality are shown in accepting one's own weaknesses and learning to deal with them.

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