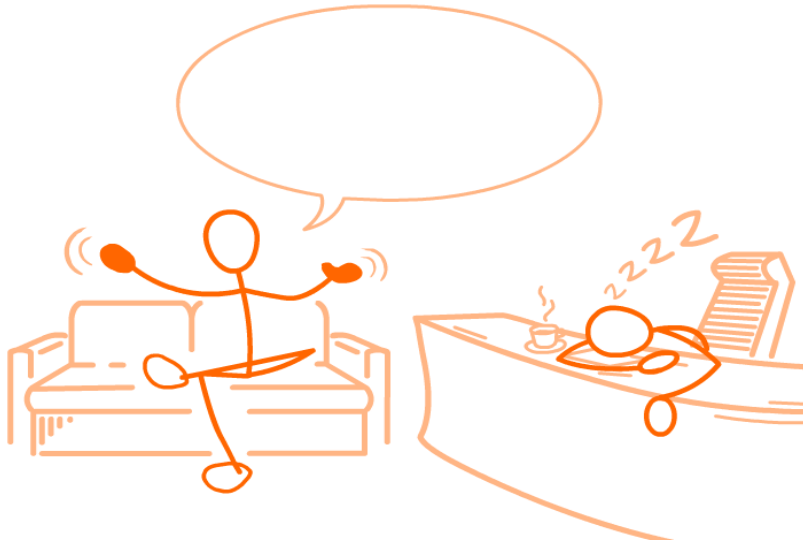


TOP-3 Mistakes in an MBA Interview



1

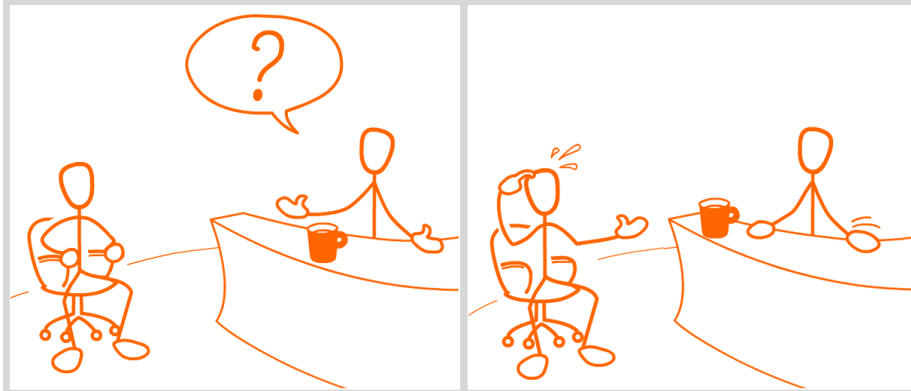
3 Mistakes / Lack of 3 P's

1	Lack of P as in <u>P</u> OI	Page 2
2	Lack of P as in <u>P</u> eople	Page 4
3	Lack of P as in <u>P</u> icture	Page 6



Mistake 1: Not to worry about understanding how to build the idea/image in the interviewer's mind (lack of P as in POI)

This situation might happen 10-15 times in a 30-35 minute interview.



The applicant seems to have a good idea.



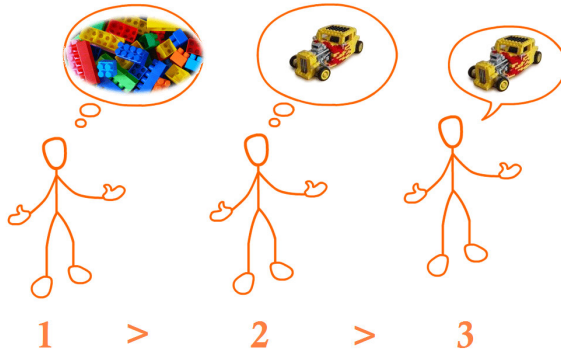
Applicant starts to speak, but observe the interviewer. Is he enjoying what he listens?





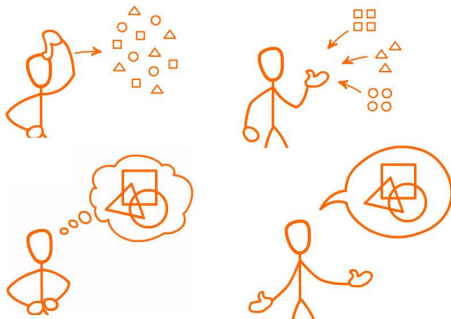
Applicant does not notice that there is a huge difference between what he has in mind and what comes out of his mouth.

Do not skip 2 below. Always reflect before you open your mouth: am I saying exactly what I am thinking? After all, it is not what you say. It is what others understand.



POI is the solution

The solution is to structure the **IMAGE** that you will try to sell to your listener.



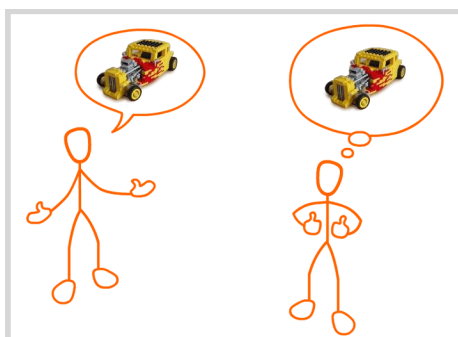
3

You will succeed in building an **IMAGE / IDEA** when you can control the logic relationship of the loose pieces in your speech.

You should always stick to **Principle Organization of Ideas (POI)** - always **3-STEP PLAN**:

01. Clear **THESIS**.
02. Control over **EVIDENCE**
03. Conclusion with a **SO WHAT**

Always make sure that you're placing the same image in your interviewer's mind:





Mistake 2: Focus on Self/Numbers (Lack of P as in People)

What about a movie scene? ([see](#))

"Business is business. Wall Street, Main Street. It's all a bunch of people getting up in the morning, trying to figure out how they're going to send their kids to college. It's just people, and I know people." ([The Family Man](#))

SITUATION: job interview with the Global Director from GS, NYC; M&A position;

COMPLICATION: at age 34 you are an experienced salesman; you sell tires; 13 years earlier, you worked briefly as *broker*;

RESOLUTION: read the *transcript* (Family Man).

Interviewer A

Why don't you have a seat? Peter mentioned to me that you're an avid CNBC watcher. But he didn't say whether you had any actual Wall Street experience.

Nicolas Cage

Um, I was a sales associate at E.F. Hutton.

Interviewer A

A broker, really? And now you're in the tire business?

Nicolas Cage

That's right, and auto supply.

Interviewer A

In the retail end, I understand...

Nicolas Cage

We get about 60 percent of our business from automotive service.

Interviewer A

And you mind me asking what kind of sales you did in the last year? Just Ball Park

Nicolas Cage

We did 1.7 million in total revenue.

Interviewer A

That's great. And what do you project for this year?

Nicolas Cage

I think we're gonna have a banner year. Sales are up almost 20 percent in the first quarter, and we just landed a major trucking company account.

Interviewer A

You did? That's great. So that puts you just a tad over two million?

Nicolas Cage

That's right. And that would make us number one in our market. Excuse me. I'm gonna get a glass of water.

(...)

Look, I know our paltry little 2 million in sales... is about what you spend a year on office supplies. And some regional trucking company account is nothing compared to a multi-billion-dollar merger.



Interviewer A

No, no, no. I'm not trying to knock the tire business.

Nicolas Cage

It's okay, Alan. I get it. I'm in your shoes, I'm thinking the same thing, but here's the deal. Business is business. Wall Street, Main Street. It's all a bunch of people getting up in the morning, trying to figure out how they're going to send their kids to college. It's just people, and I know people.

Interviewer A

Oh, I'm sure you do.

Nicolas Cage

Take you, for instance, Alan. You have a certain energy about you, an active kind of energy. I wouldn't be surprised if you drank about 16 Diet Cokes a day. You're an excellent father, but you feel guilty about the time you spend away from home. You drink bourbon, but you offer your clients Scotch. And your wife decorated this office.

Interviewer A

He certainly seems to have your number.

Nicolas Cage

You're a little tougher, Peter. For one thing, you like expensive things.

Interviewer B

That's easy. You've seen my car.

Nicolas Cage

You smoke Hoyo de Monterey. You're a Scotch man, single malt, not because it's trendy but because you've been doing it for 40 years...and you like to stay with what works. You have two great loves in your life: your horses...and this company. And you're a man who prides himself in finding talent in unusual places.

Interviewer B

How would you know that?

Nicolas Cage

Because I'm here. I'm prepared to do whatever it takes to get this job. I'll start wherever I have to start. I'll park cars if I have to. The biggest part of judging character is knowing yourself, and I know this: I can do this job. I can. Give me a chance, Peter. I won't let you down.

Interviewer B

Alan, why don't you show Jack around?

5

Yes, People Matter

Have you observed the *turning point* in the interview? (...)

Do NOT tell the infinite stories of your job projects, OK? Promise? Really? Someone must say that to your face: VERY BORING!

Show them you're **HUMAN**. Let them know and see that you are acquainted with human beings and that you appreciate them. *'It's just people, and I know people.'*

Oh, and put your **HEART** in it. *"I can do this job. I can. Give me a chance. I won't let you down."*



Mistake 3: Ignore Concrete Examples (lack of P as in Picture)

“Além de dar sinal de vida, estou escrevendo por um motivo em particular. Vocês acreditam que tenho até um “writing coach” - totalmente copiaram o curso de redação da Megaron. A matéria que eu mais gosto é o tal do CAT. Acho que a insistência no formato “argumentativo” me ajudou demais!” (Email sent by a Stanford student)

It is unanimous: Brazilian MBA students do an awful job selling their values, skills, and knowledge out there. Another former student of ours said, ‘unfortunately, the most communicative Brazilian is much below the average American here at HBS’.

The worst we’ve seen was a school asking one Brazilian student to withdraw temporarily from the program and improve his communication or he would not graduate. And we’re not talking about those courses where students can choose to hide under the table when the professor stares at the auditorium.

(***)

Some years ago, I asked my former students: ‘How did your school help you in the pre-MBA?’

- **SURPRISE (-)**

Most schools do not have amazing offerings.

- **SURPRISE (+)**

Stanford recently built a great course - CAT.

Due credit be given. We have analyzed Stanford’s CAT. If you, our dear students, had more time, we would be delighted to offer something more sophisticated. But even with the express course you’ve had, you can perceive that the Brazilian applicant interviewed (see below) is really bad, huh?

The rules for written communication and oral communication are the same. After all, the challenge is one: ‘how to imprint an IDEA / IMAGE in the brain of my reader / listener?’

Although he chose an excellent THEME (COACHING), the applicant did as bad a job as did the Russians in [selling Alaska to the Americans](#). Why? He made mistake #3.



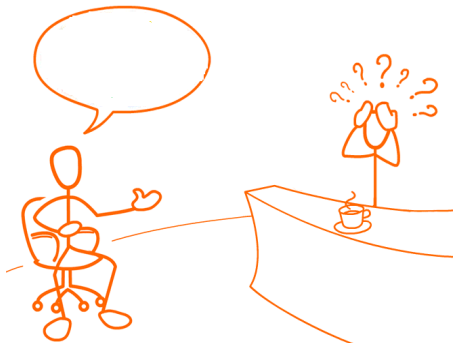
“What has been your greatest accomplishment so far?”

**ANSWER:**

Sure...let me see... hum hum... I was working in a small divestment from a large international corporation, where the idea was to negotiate directly with the current management for a Leveraged Buyout. If you don't know about it, well, OK. Well, we help companies finance management or leveraged buyouts on an "all debt basis" that makes it possible for management to gain operating and financial control of the company either upon completion of the buyout or over time, as the financing is repaid. Ok?

... Under the supervision of a Director and a VP and assisted by two analysts, I started calculating the future cash flow for the company valuation. You know, the real risk of a leveraged buyout is the financial pressure all of the debt places on the company. Buyouts are also dependent on precise calculations of the future cash flows required to satisfy creditors. That is why I had to do my job carefully. With the client's different offices working on the process, it was difficult to balance their requests and those from the company under divestment. They wanted to make sure that everything was on track, because, you see... uh, if some unforeseen event occurs, it is possible for all the investors to lose their entire stake in the deal. Ok?

Let me continue my story... (he insists...)



7

Show rather than tell!

We went over the initial stages of discussions and realized that the issue was in the management. My consulting experience taught me much about handling reactive clients, so I could coach Tony on conducting such valuation. He led a crucial negotiation while I was in NYC, and attended the final meeting with our director. Later I heard the valuation front was successful and that the client remarked Toni's performance as exceptional. Eventually, the management acquired the company in a competitive process but for a value twice their first offer. The project showed me that supporting others on tasks beyond our direct responsibility is as important to the overall process as it is to accomplish our own duties outstandingly. Bank X received above expected success fees and both Tony and I were very well appraised.

