

## **Outstanding Employment Interview Strategist**

I want to nominate my colleague, Komal Parekh, for the Outstanding Employment Interview Strategist award. Komal works with me at Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) as the Employment Communication Workshop (ECW) Coordinator. Employment Communication workshop is a 4-week workshop to help newcomer professionals blend into the Canadian labor market and achieve their employment goals. She helps clients tailor resumes, cover letters, mock interviews, LinkedIn, presentation skills, and networking. I choose to nominate her for the award because she is selflessly assisting various new immigrant professionals on their journey to achieve their Employment Goals. She has researched & understood in detail how the job search process is different in Canada compared to other countries. She has then been successfully passing on the information and research in guiding the professionals

It is all about how she deals with each client on their job search process. She understands the importance of tailoring the resume and cover letter and tailoring the interview answers as per the job description. She is aware of the dos and don'ts of the interview process. Regarding training the clients with interviews, she first discusses the Value Proposition. She asks the clients to identify their skills, expertise, education, experience, accomplishments, desired industry, company, and types of jobs the client wishes to apply. Komal then studies the Job Description with the client and highlights the keywords. Next, she discusses traditional interviews, behavioral/ situational interviews, and case interviews with the clients. She also shares various strategies for telephone interviews, video interviews, and in-person interviews. She recommends clients use the SAR answer format for the behavioral questions. She is very calm and patient; a good listener who understands people well. She guides the clients about their attire, background, and presentation skills. She does not leave a stone unturned. She practices mock interviews with the clients. She also arranges for a technical mock interview with industry professionals. She gives thorough feedback about the mock interview and sets for another interview with the clients. Once the client is ready, she gives a heads-up to the client. I remember an incident where she was practicing how the client should stand, screen placement, and the client's background.

Komal also tries to send a motivational email to the clients a few hours before the interview and talks to them. She boosts their morale. After the interview, she calls the client and does an interview debrief. In the interview debrief, she notes all the details and guides the clients on what they can do better for the following interview. She uses the Sandwich method for feedback and encourages clients to be positive. She also encourages clients to send a "Thank- You" note to the interviewer within 24 – 48 hours. 85% of the clients have achieved their Employment goals from January 2021-May 2021. Thus, I would like to nominate Komal Parekh for the outstanding employment interview strategist award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank You,

Adriana Cervantes

Corporate Outreach Liaison,

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

## **Client Example 01**

This is an example of a client from the Employment Communication Workshop (February-March 2021). During the workshop, while presenting, the client was demotivated. He was not confident, and this affected his answer quality during the mock interview. Komal made the client feel comfortable. She asked him to be positive, and she would practice interviews with him every day for a week. As the client was not comfortable being interviewed while sitting, Komal encouraged him to stand and answer. She helped him with the screen placement and the background. Then, she encouraged him to write his answers to various interview questions using the SAR technique for a behavioral interview. She guided the client with tailoring different responses and helped him practice his answers for online interviews. The client used all the strategies shared by Komal and had a couple of job offers within 2 months of his training. Today, he is working with Deloitte as an IT Assurance Consultant.

### **Client Testimonial**

I really appreciated the time I spent with Komal. She is a great tutor. I felt much less alienated knowing she was there to reach out to anytime, any day. I believe that in itself is extremely valuable.

### **INTERVIEWS**

She coached me for my interviews when I was getting frustrated. The sessions enabled me to identify my true strengths using STAR techniques and gain more confidence in my abilities. The sessions also helped me articulate my success stories and convince the hiring managers that I am the best candidate for the position(s) and I usually go to interviews without feeling the least bit intimidated.

### **PRESENTATION SKILLS**

Your coaching was exceptional, and it truly made a difference in my presentation to CCIS clients while sharing my success story. My gestures and eye contact with the audience were natural. As discussed, two keys were to rehearse and be grounded. I'll continue to practice the other areas we explored, especially about being expansive.

I cannot thank you enough.

### **HANDLING STRESS**

You taught me to keep a positive attitude, accept that there are events that I cannot control, be assertive instead of aggressive, learn and practice relaxation techniques, try meditation and yoga for stress management, exercise regularly, and eat healthy, well-balanced meals.

“Komal is an amazing employment counselor. She drilled me with resume critiquing/tailoring of resume, cover letters, LinkedIn, mock interviews while I was preparing to be interviewed for a role at one of the Big 4 and I got the job. She will follow-up and give advice where necessary.”

***Client name: AB***

## Client Example 02

This is an example of a client from the Employment Communication Workshop (April 2021). The client had been applying for various jobs since October 2020. For applications made between October 2020 to April 2021, he did not receive any interview calls. Komal assisted him with tailoring his job application according to the job description. The client did not believe her at first and was not keen on tailoring his application. Komal encouraged him to give it a try. After tailoring his application, he started receiving interview calls. Komal also explained the importance of tailoring his interview answers as per the job description to avoid being an overqualified/underqualified candidate. The client was from the oil and gas industry and found it challenging to transition into any other industry. Komal shared various strategies for approaching companies with the client. The client used the strategy and was called for an interview. As the interview answers were tailored and practiced in advance, the client was confident about his interview. The client had 3 rounds of interviews and was offered a Project Management role in an I.T. company. The client did not have any experience in I.T. industry; however, he was offered a job based on his skills and how he marketed himself during his interview. After the workshop, the client received 7 job offers in 3 days.

### Client Testimonial

After four months of job search and over 200 job applications sent without one response, I met Komal at the ECW workshop. I was skeptical when she spoke to the class about rebuilding our resumes, and I was not a fan of creating my base resume (a resume that contains the totality of my experience). However, my goal at the ECW workshop was to dedicate myself to do something different from what I had done the last four months, and that is when Komal introduced the concept of tailoring your resume. The ECW class, including myself, sent our tailored resumes and job descriptions to Komal. Komal took her time to review and make sure we were highlighting only the applicable transferable skills for the job. In addition, she spent time individually coaching class members on interview techniques, handling stress during interviews, and, most importantly, answering questions using the STAR technique.

I remember finally landing my first interview (a project coordinator role) and talked about my entire work experience, which made the interviewer focus the next 30 minutes on why someone with my breadth of capability would want to come to her company. I appreciated her offering and coaching us for short notice interviews outside of her work hours. After Komal's support with resumes, cover letters, interview skills and feedback on the Canadian cultures, I landed over 26 interviews within two weeks of my ECW class, including seven offers in a three-day window. I went from a person looking to take up a survival job to get Canadian experience to getting multiple job offers ranging from a project coordinator role to a director position in a multinational Canadian company. Today, I am working as a senior technical program manager at a technology company because Komal challenged the class to think outside the box. After finding out about the company's planned merger with a US company, I interviewed my company. I sent them an email with the problems they would be experiencing and highlighted my transferable skills that could help them solve those problems.

You wouldn't find anyone who can outwork Komal. She is one of the most caring and dedicated persons I know. I consider myself lucky to have met her, and I am sure you will feel the same if she is part of your team.

**Client name: DM**

## Handouts Used by Komal at Employment Communication Workshops

### Understand your Value Proposition

It is very important to know yourself before applying for any job. You must have a thorough inventory of:

- Area of expertise (specialty, level, stature)
- Background (education, experience, accomplishments)

**Accomplishments** are positive things you have achieved while working through your roles and responsibilities. On your resume, you should give specific examples of how your actions helped a situation. It could be a problem which you resolved, something you improved, or something you did well. Everyone has personal **accomplishments**.

**Write a list of your achievements.** Rack your brains, think about your past professional positions, and write a list of accomplishments. Think about any positive comments you've received from your bosses and colleagues, problems you've dealt with, any honors or awards you've received, and if you've reached or surpassed any targets.

Using numbers to demonstrate the value of your accomplishments is effective. If you've improved performance or efficiency, surpassed your targets, increased sales, generated a readership, or improved exams results, you can quantify it with numbers.

For example, you can say "Improved office efficiency by 15%," "Surpassed my sales targets by 10%," or "Saved the company \$5,000 by improving efficiency."

- Style (personality, individuality, dreams)
- Exclusivity (unique offerings, special strengths)



## Know Your Target

- The industry (career field, historical & current trends, future forecasts)
- The company (products, culture, hiring manager)
- The job (objectives, responsibilities, requirements)

