Gift of the Gab is Not Enough for Group Discussion & Interview

by Sarrfraj Ahmed

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THE CAT 2011 results were declared in January, bringing disappointment to the overwhelming majority of the test takers, but for the lucky few who crossed the first hurdle, a new round of suspense has just begun. If you are also appeared in the CAT exam then you can check the official website of CAT i.e www.catiim.in for CAT results. Itâ€™s time for them to start preparing for the group discussion (GD) and interview round, and their experience will serve as the template for the next lot of hopefuls.

Let us start with the ground rules in a group discussion. Before you go for your group discussion, you need to know what you must set out achieve in your group. Your primary objective should be to get noticed as having contributed meaningfully to help the group reach a consensus.

It is great if you can start the discussion because it will mean you will get noticed by the panel. If you arenâ€™t naturally so, you will have to learn to be so at least for those 15 critical minutes.

Assertiveness does not mean being bullheaded or being arrogant. You must just ensure that the group hears you out. If the group gives you its time, so will the evaluator. That does not of course mean you shout at the top of your voice and be noticed for the wrong reasons.

Most importantly, you have to take any chance that comes your way. Many group discussion participants often complain that they do not get a chance to speak. The truth is that in no group discussion will you get a chance to speak. And there is nothing more unacceptable in a GD than keeping your mouth shut or just murmuring in the most inaudible manner.

Remember, if you do not kick start the group discussion and are not among the first five speakers, and find that everyone in the group is talking for the topic, then it makes sense to take an alternative route and oppose the topic even if you initially intended to talk in favour of the topic.

It also helps know how the other members of the group who take a stand diametrically opposite to yours will articulate their arguments.

That will help you be prepared with counter- arguments. Everybody else will state the obvious. So highlight points that are refreshingly different. The different perspective that you bring to the table is bound to be appreciated by the panel as long as you express it clearly.

If you have not been able to start a discussion, the other way to get noticed is to bring the discussion to a conclusion. It will be clearly seen as an attempt on your part to build a consensus. Gaining support of your colleagues or influencing them to think like you is the path taken by successful business leaders.

Nobody expects a group of ten intelligent and assertive people, all with different points of view on a potentially controversial subject, to actually arrive at a consensus. But did you make an attempt to nudge your group to a consensus? One of the best ways to prepare for a group discussion is to participate in as many practice/ mock group discussions as possible. In the case the group discussion topic is something that does not ring a bell, donâ€™t open your mouth immediately.

Instead, listen to the others and figure out what they are saying, develop a strand of an argument, and launch yourself in the discussion. Pick one of the threads of the discussion, one on which you may have heard something about or may have some views.

And how does one go about preparing for the interview. For starters, take care of two aspects of your personality that tell a lot about you. Confident body language and overall composure is very important for the interview. Sometimes, the admission committee may subject you to a stressful interview, especially if you have written that you perform well under pressure in your personal form. Those who have some holes in their CV should be prepared to explain the gaps. The best way to learn, of course, is to be in touch with those who have crossed the Rubicon. Talk to your seniors who have cracked the CAT Exam and they will be able to guide you.

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Sarrfraj Ahmed - About Author:
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