

MANTALK

David Young



* Gissa job, but don't put me in the hotseat

I have a theory. No one really knows what to do when it comes to pitching a job. Or themselves at one. How to greet and sit. When to shut up. How to part company, even. And as for the questions. Jeez!

To put my hunch to the test, I rallied my senses the other day, and set off for a full tilt at a proper, formal, contract-hanging-in-the-balance interrogation.

And I spruced up: trimmed the whiskers; tidied the locks; and donned a dapper suit and no-nonsense shoes. The kind of get-up that would allow you introduce yourself with a double O. And smirk, and glare, and be downright menacingly suave.

Anyway, there I was — gingerly stepping out of my car; straightening my tie, and patting down my light grey suit, with time to spare. Ready for business.

But just as I entered the building, my mojo evaporated. Unable to stop myself, I bounded several flights of stairs, CSI-style, knock-knocking on every available portal.

Bursting into a pokey room, with a single roof window, I found a crumpled trio, pinned behind a short table. While my alarmed hosts half stood for the perfunctory handshake, I tried to curb my renegade zeal.

No good. I rooted a chair out of the way, and thrust my hand into their midst. I still can't tell if I shook all three at the same time. There was fumbling, loose fingers, and limpness.

Then, I ad libbed, as I've never done before — attempting a shuffle in my seat. You know, the kind of up-down/side-to-side movement, demonstrated with consummate confidence by European football managers.

Natural, like. As if here we were. All four of us again. Old comrades. After years of conquering our own corners of the world. Reunited by good fortune. And shared cleverness, of course.

Primed — you could say — to thrash out getting the old team back rocking and rolling, like we used to. "Okay guys? What's on your minds? How do you wanna play this?" I nodded to myself.

"Mr Young, what are your strengths and weaknesses ... and what would you do to make yourself a better person?" steamed one of them.

While the questions pinged, a solitary bead of perspiration ran down my stomach. Even though it hadn't blotted my sky-blue shirt, I knew I was in trouble — it was way too late to remove my suit jacket.

As the patches under my arms began to grow, I contemplated damage limitation. Keep the outer layer on, and attempt to cover the creeping damp or whip it off, and reveal drench marks.

Twigging the lost cause, I resolved instead to stick with intense eye contact, and statuesque stillness.

"Well, I'm very... approachable ..." I uttered, wistfully longing for the window to fly open, and revive the lot of us. And I began to wonder how long they'd all been stored in here.

An hour elapsed, and the troika still gunned along — unfazed by the human central heating unit installed opposite them.

We were veering into 90-minute territory, and the inquisition was still writing, and folding pages, and finding bloody new ones.

My earnest staring technique wasn't helping me articulate anything other than the inane.

It felt like everything was dissolving, with only my tie shielding the leak running down my belly, pooling in my navel. I leant forward to bring my lapels a little closer together, and buy myself some time.

And as I manoeuvred, a terrible thought fizzed through my mind. How much longer could my 'Miami Vice' suit hold out?

Would my examiners eye the tropical heat print between my shoulder blades, as I removed myself from the room? And ponder if I was even suitable to be in the building.

I was going to have to shoot my way out. Ramping up the pace, I batted questions left, right and centre.

Mid-asking, I'd cut queries off at the pass, clipping along with the cadence of a man who was losing air fast.

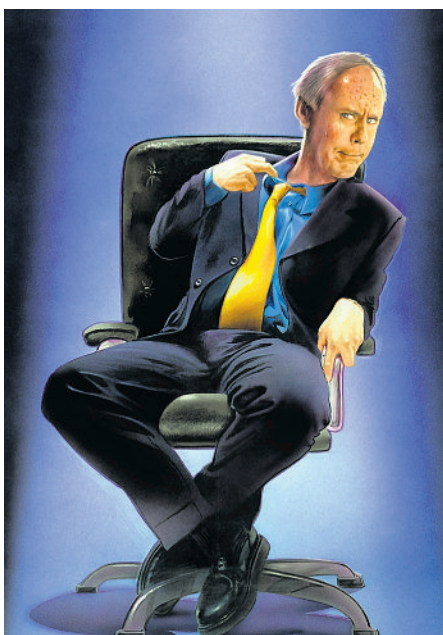
Snatching at a rare pause in proceedings, I grabbed the chair handles; hoisted myself up, and offered my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to jaw jaw with them all.

On my feet, I offered a salute. But they wanted a good hand grip before granting me freedom. I tried to fix eyes. With them all. Which proved quite tricky, and a little jerky. And short-armed.

I backed my way to the door, inching my arse out the gap. Thanking, nodding, and all but winking my way out of sight. Stopping short at introducing my own clicking language.

I'm not so sure they were impressed. I'll tell you when I get the letter. You see — no one really knows how to do these things. ☑

'It felt like everything was dissolving, with only my tie shielding the leak running down my belly'



THE FEAR FACTOR

Get scared on a funfair ghost train? You might want to give the Nightmare Realm in Cork a miss then. Scare-seekers, on the other hand, will love the live walk through the scare house (Navigation House on Albert Quay).

The house has been kitted

out by talented set designers, sound and lighting crews and make-up artists, who use movie-quality props and special effects to created an asylum of the damned. The Realm is also in Tralee.

Tickets from www.thenightmarerealm.ie — if you dare...



CARRY ON CARLOW

Carlow is making the most of the autumnal colour with the Carlow Walking weekend (see www.carlowtourism.com) and with the popular bilingual festival Féile an Fhómhair, which has an environmental theme this year, based around the town and runs until next Sunday.

Events to suit all ages, tastes (and linguistic ability!) are listed in brochures in parish centres and tourist offices, or to download from www.glorcheatharlach.ie. Enquiries to 059 9158105.

CONKERS BONKERS

Airfield House and Gardens in Dundrum, Dublin, is in the swing of its Autumn Festival. Tomorrow is Bonkers with Conkers from noon to 4pm — ruler shooter conkers or conker rally, anyone? For the rest of the month's events, see www.airfield.ie. Family season tickets are a good bet for year-round value.



THINGS TO DO

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