**Narcissists do better in job interviews. Here's why**



Carlos Davila / Getty (April 10, 2012)

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By Linda Carroll , msnbc.com contributor

While most of us are careful to avoid over-advertising our talents, that may not be the best way to land a job, a new study shows. Researchers have determined that when it comes to interviews, narcissists do it better because they’re not at all shy about self-promoting, according to the study published in the Journal of Applied Social Psychology.

“The point is that these guys – and girls – are very successful in interview settings,” said the study’s lead author, Peter Harms, an assistant professor of management at the University of Nebraska. “Under high pressure they increase their self- promotion. They talk a lot and they talk fast. And people tend to mistake that fast talking as a sign of competence and intelligence. They think that fast talkers have a lot to say and know the material so well that they don’t need to pause and think about it.”

While narcissists are good at landing the job, they ultimately tend to bring a toxic component into the office environment, Harms said. “It’s a terrible strategy long term to behave the way they do,” he added. “They have shorter relationships. And people [rate](http://lifeinc.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/04/10/11101305-narcissists-do-better-in-job-interviews-heres-why?lite) them more negatively.”

To look at how well narcissists score in job interviews, Harms and his colleagues rounded up 72 college students and asked them to do a simulated job interview for a position as a research assistant. Before the interviews, however, the students were given IQ tests and a survey designed to ferret out the narcissists among them.

The study volunteers were told that the simulated job [application](http://lifeinc.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/04/10/11101305-narcissists-do-better-in-job-interviews-heres-why?lite) was a way to hone their interviewing skills – and some probably assumed their performance might eventually turn into an actual job, Harms explained.

All of the simulated interviews were videotaped so that they could be reviewed later. Some of the interviewees were told that their interviewer was a lowly assistant, while others were told that the interviewer was an [expert](http://lifeinc.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/04/10/11101305-narcissists-do-better-in-job-interviews-heres-why?lite) in the field.

Most of the volunteers were comfortable doing some self-promoting  –  except when they were talking to an “expert” interviewer who challenged them. The “normal” volunteers backed down when they felt they were being held accountable, but the narcissists just turned up the heat.

“When they feel challenged, they tend to double down,” Harms said. “It’s as if they say, ‘Oh, you’re going to challenge me? Then I’m not just great, I’m fantastic.’ ”

And that strategy, apparently works. In the second part of the study , 222 raters – some students and some [experts](http://lifeinc.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/04/10/11101305-narcissists-do-better-in-job-interviews-heres-why?lite) in psychology – judged the competence of the videotaped job-seekers.

Sure enough, most people were more impressed by the narcissists than the “normal,” applicants. Harms was surprised to see that the experts,  graduate students and faculty from the psychology department who were well versed in narcissistic behaviors, were just as impressed with the narcissists performance in  interviews as everyone else.

The study should be a lesson to us all, Harms said. If we can learn to be a narcissist for just the day of the job interview we might manage to level the playing field, he added. Until then, “they’re going to beat us.”